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Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State Health Services

John Hellerstedt, M.D.
Commissioner

Screening Individuals at General Population Shelters in Texas during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Purpose

To limit the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), it is important to promptly identify and separate people who are ill. The following screening tool can be used to identify people with possible symptoms of COVID-19. Although not every person who has symptoms will have COVID-19, conducting screenings of all people before they enter a shelter facility can help identify those who may need medical care or may need to be placed in isolation. These actions along with the prevention measures below will reduce exposures for other shelter clients and help prevent the spread of disease within a shelter facility.

This document should be used in conjunction with the DSHS Interim Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters during the COVID-19 Pandemic on the DSHS COVID-19 website.

Screening Tool Instructions

All people entering the shelter (i.e. shelter clients, staff, volunteers, and visitors) should be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Each person in a group should be screened individually using the screening tool. Screening should occur before entering the facility, preferably in an outdoor environment. Screening should be in place every day to accommodate screening of new arrivals and returning shelter staff, volunteers, visitors, and shelter clients. Although people may have undergone screening at different points during the evacuation process, individuals may become ill or decompensate from an underlying medical condition during transport. Further information about screening and setting up an intake area can be found in the DSHS Interim Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters during the COVID-19 Pandemic on the DSHS COVID-19 website.

The screening tool can be found at the end of this document. Actions for shelter staff to take after shelter clients have undergone screening can be found below:

If the shelter client has been directed to an isolation area:

1. Remind the shelter client to practice COVID-19 prevention measures (outlined below).
2. Direct the shelter client to an isolation area within the shelter or at another location, according to a predesignated plan.
3. Let the shelter client know:
   - They should notify shelter staff immediately if their symptoms worsen.

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- They should not leave the isolation area except to use the restroom.

If the shelter client has been directed to a quarantine area:

1. Remind the shelter client to practice COVID-19 prevention measures.
2. Direct the shelter client to a quarantine area in the shelter, if available.
   - If there is no quarantine area, advise the shelter client to strictly adhere to prevention measures at all times and continue to monitor themselves for fever and symptoms twice daily.

If the shelter client has been allowed to enter the general population shelter:

1. Advise the shelter client to practice COVID-19 prevention measures.
2. Direct the shelter client to the general population shelter.

If the shelter client is showing any COVID-19 warning signs:

1. Seek emergency medical care immediately by calling 9-1-1.
2. If there is suspicion of COVID-19, tell the operator that this is a suspected case of COVID-19.
3. COVID-19 warning signs include:
   o Trouble breathing,
   o Persistent pain or pressure in the chest,
   o New confusion,
   o Inability to wake or stay awake, and/or
   o Bluish lips or face

COVID-19 Prevention Measures

A face mask or cloth face covering should always be worn by shelter clients in a disaster shelter setting, except when not practical, such as when eating or showering. If not already wearing one, a face mask or cloth face covering should be provided to all individuals working, visiting, volunteering and arriving at disaster shelters. Shelter clients, specifically, should be advised to practice COVID-19 prevention measures, including:

- Wearing a face mask or cloth face covering during the screening process and reminded to continue wearing the mask or cloth face covering while inside the isolation area, quarantine area, or general population shelter. If a cloth face covering cannot be tolerated, shelter clients should be advised about cough etiquette and provided tissues. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

- Practicing social distancing while in a shelter facility by maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet between themselves and others who are not from their household or group.
- Practicing frequent handwashing and proper respiratory etiquette.

Staff, volunteers, and visitors who screen positive for COVID-19 symptoms should be sent home immediately, if feasible, and advised to follow CDC recommended steps for persons who are ill with COVID-19 symptoms. If staff or volunteers are also clients of the shelter, they should be directed to an isolation area.

Instructions for screening for fever

Non-contact temporal thermometers are preferred. Temporal thermometers use an infrared scanner to measure the temperature of the temporal artery in the forehead. Shelter screening staff should keep as much distance from shelter clients as they can, wear a face mask or cloth face covering and provide one to the shelter client to wear if they are not already wearing one. Shelter screening staff need to wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) regularly and between screening each shelter client. Shelter screening staff should use gloves if available.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the specific thermometer device being used. To determine if fever is present, follow these criteria:

- **Fever:** A measured temperature of 100.0° F or greater is considered a fever.
- **No fever:** A person with a measured temperature of 99.9° F or below is considered not to have a fever. However, such a person should not continue into the shelter if they are experiencing other COVID-19 symptoms. Any person experiencing COVID-19 symptoms needs to be sent immediately to an isolation area. COVID-19 symptoms are listed in the DSHS screening tool found at the end of this document. Additional information on COVID-19 symptoms can be found on the CDC webpage for Symptoms of Coronavirus.

Clean the thermometer with a new alcohol wipe (or isopropyl alcohol on a new cotton swab) between each shelter client. Do not re-use items used for cleaning thermometers.

Screening Tool

Shelter screening staff should visually assess individuals for signs of COVID-19 while asking the questions below. Any person with signs of COVID-19 should be directed to an isolation area.

1. Determine if the shelter client has a fever (100.0° F or above), by taking their temperature using a temporal thermometer, <u>AND</u> asking "**In the past 14 days, have you felt feverish?**"

    ☐ If no measured fever <u>AND</u> shelter client does not feel feverish, continue to next question.

    ☐ If measured temperature is 100.0° F or above <u>OR</u> shelter client felt feverish, direct the shelter client to an isolation area.

2. Ask the shelter client **"In the past 14 days, have you had a new or worsening cough?"**

    ☐ If NO, continue to next question.

    ☐ If YES, direct the shelter client to an isolation area.

3. Ask the shelter client, **"In the past 14 days, have you had new or worsening:**

- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?**
- **Fatigue?**
- **Muscle or body aches?**
- **Headache?**
- **New loss of taste or smell?**
- **Sore throat?**
- **Congestion or runny nose?**
- **Nausea or vomiting?**
- **Diarrhea?**
- **Chills or repeated shaking with chills?"**

    ☐ If NO, continue to next question.

    ☐ If YES to any of the symptoms, direct the shelter client to an isolation area.

4. a. Ask the shelter client, **"Have you tested positive for COVID-19?"**

    ☐ If NO, skip to question 5.

    ☐ If YES, continue to question 4b.

  b. Ask the shelter client, **"Have you been cleared from isolation by your healthcare provider or local health department?"**

    ☐ If NO, direct the shelter client to an isolation area.

    ☐ If YES, continue to next question.

5. a. Ask the shelter client, **"Have you been in close contact* with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19?"**

    ☐ If NO, the shelter client may enter the general population shelter.

    ☐ If YES, continue to question 5b.

  b. Ask the shelter client, **"Has it been more than 14 days since you have been in close contact* with the individual who tested positive for COVID-19?"**

    ☐ If NO, direct the shelter client to a quarantine area.

    ☐ If YES, the shelter client may enter the general population shelter.

*Note for question 5 in this screening tool: A close contact is defined as being within 6 feet from an individual testing COVID-19 positive for at least a period of 10 minutes to 30 minutes or more during the past 14 days.

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