COVID-19 and Homelessness: The Massachusetts Response

MA COVID-19 Response Command Center

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### Background: Three categories across the infectious disease spectrum

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<td>Decongregation, also known as depopulation, is used to maintain appropriate social distancing protocols within shelters by expanding available shelter space.</td>
<td>Quarantine is used to minimize contact between healthy individuals and individuals who may develop COVID-19 due to their exposure history.</td>
<td>Isolation is used to keep individuals with COVID-19 out of community until no longer contagious.</td>
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<td>Decongregation sites are populated with healthy individuals who have not been exposed to COVID-19.</td>
<td>Quarantine sites are populated with individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 but are not demonstrating symptoms themselves.</td>
<td>Isolation sites are populated with individuals who have either tested positive for COVID-19 or who are symptomatic and have been instructed to isolate by their health care provider.</td>
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Decongregation and Quarantine: Establishing sites across the state to minimize spread of COVID-19 within shelters

- With the Baker-Polito Administration’s support, communities across the Commonwealth are standing up:
  - **Decongregation sites** to improve social distancing within homeless shelters
  - **Quarantine sites** to provide a safe place for homeless individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 but are not symptomatic themselves

- These sites can be established in **existing facilities** or in **outdoor tents**

- The Administration created an **expedited process** for homeless shelters and municipalities to **request equipment and supplies** for these solutions
  - **Equipment includes**: heated tents, portable showers, portable toilets, hand-washing stations, generators, beds/cots, pillows, and blankets
  - **Supplies include**: hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, and personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, gowns, etc.)

- To date, **twelve communities** have received supplies to support their decongregation and/or quarantine efforts: Brockton, Cambridge, Fitchburg, Framingham, Greenfield, Haverhill, Hyannis, Lowell, Southbridge, Taunton, Waltham, and Worcester

- Some communities have established their own solutions in addition to the state-supported decongregation and quarantine sites
Decongregation and Quarantine: Examples of state-supported tent solutions

Decongregation and quarantine tents have been set up to be as small as 10-bed solutions or as large as 75 bed solutions (across multiple tents).
Isolation: The State has launched five Isolation & Recovery Sites for homeless individuals that have tested positive for COVID-19.

The Baker-Polito Administration has launched 550 beds at “Isolation & Recovery Sites” (I&R Sites) for homeless individuals that have tested positive for COVID-19. This is supplemented by 732 beds established by the City of Boston for the same purpose.
Isolation: Intake and departure criteria for I&R Sites

### Intake Criteria

**Financial Eligibility**
- Individuals that are **experiencing homeless or housing instability** (i.e., people who normally sleep at a shelter, on the street, for whom home is unsafe due to violence, or who do not have a permanent address); **OR**
- Individuals in households **making less than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level** in need of a safe place to isolate

**Clinical Eligibility**
- Individuals with a **positive COVID-19 test result**

Individuals must be able to safely isolate without intensive medical supervision. These sites are **NOT** available for individuals who:
- Require assistance with Activities of Daily Living from on-site staff;
- Require medication administration (except for methadone); or
- Require the level of care provided at a Skilled Nursing Facility.

### Departure Criteria

To discontinue isolation, guests must fulfill one of two criteria:

**If symptomatic at any point during stay:**
- At least 72 hours have passed since recovery (defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in respiratory symptoms); **AND**
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared or positive test result (whichever occurred most recently)

**If asymptomatic for entirety of stay:**
- At least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 test and they have had no subsequent illness
Isolation: At I&R Sites, guests are provided with all necessary services to ensure a safe recovery period, similar to if they were isolating at home.

1. Homeless individual tests positive for COVID-19 but does not require medical care. Qualifies for I&R Site.

2. As a guest at an I&R Site, individual is provided their own hotel room along with 3 meals per day. Additional services on-site include nurse oversight, security, behavioral health supports, laundry and cleaning services, and linkages to other state services (e.g., DMH, DDS, MassHealth enrollment support).

3. Once recovered, guest returns to their originating shelter and may be connected to additional social services.
Isolation: Step-by-step outline of I&R Site process

1) Individual tests positive for COVID-19
2) Shelter, health care provider, municipality, or other individual contacts intake vendor
3) Intake vendor determines eligibility and assigns individual to closest I&R Site
4) Intake vendor arranges for transportation team to pick up individual at current location and bring to I&R Site

Services included throughout duration of guest’s stay:
- Guest provided with individual room and welcome package (toiletries, water, etc.)
- 24/7 nursing team checks vitals twice daily, with additional check-ins as needed
- 24/7 security team provides supervision of common spaces and hallways
- Individualized in-room food service provided three times daily
- Laundry service provided for towels, linens, and clothing
- Behavioral health services provided on an ad hoc basis (in-person or via telehealth)

1) Clinical team determines that guest has completed all CDC isolation requirements
2) Guest is provided with “Discontinuation of Isolation” form, allowing re-entry to shelters
3) Intake vendor is informed of guest’s readiness for departure and arranges transport
4) Transportation team returns guest to originating location (e.g., shelter, halfway house)
5) After 24 hours, cleaning service decontaminates room and prepares for next guest
Isolation: I&R Site team structure

- The Command Center and MEMA work together to oversee the I&R Sites.
- Commonwealth Care Alliance (CCA) manages day-to-day site operations, coordinating across sites and escalating questions to leadership when required.
- Each location has an on-site manager who supervises operations and triages issues as needed.
- In addition to clinical and security staff, each site has:
  - Hotel staff who manage room assignment and provide janitorial services.
  - “Runners” who inventory supplies, go on shopping runs as needed, etc.
Isolation: Clinical services provided at I&R Sites

Multi-level team provides clinical oversight to I&R Site guests, ensuring that individuals with worsening or acute symptoms can be diverted to an appropriate medical facility. When possible, sites partner with local community health centers to support with staffing.

- **Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)**
- **Home Health Aides**
- **Registered Nurses (RNs)**
- **MD support (as needed)**
- **Pharmacy Assistance line**

- **COVID-19 symptom monitoring**
- **2x/day vitals**
- **Chronic condition medication support**
- **EMS coordination as needed**
- **24/7 translation services**
- **Telehealth services**
Isolation: Detailed process for Pharmacy Assistance line

Should the clinical team determine that an I&R Site guest needs a prescription (new or refilled), they coordinate with a centralized Pharmacy Assistance line for timely delivery:

- **Request**
  - I&R Site clinical team identifies prescribing need and contacts Pharmacy Assistance line

- **Prescribing**
  - Pharmacy Assistance line attempts to fulfill prescription through guest’s existing prescriber
    - If existing prescriber cannot be reached/identified, backup prescribing provider is contacted and briefed on case details
  - Once prescription is written, Pharmacy Assistance line coordinates with local pharmacy to fill and provides I&R Site team with delivery estimate

- **Delivery**
  - Filled prescription is delivered to I&R Site; I&R Site confirms delivery with Pharmacy Assistance line

Additional support teams are available as-needed to discuss SUD-specific medication requests
Isolation: Behavioral health services provided at I&R Sites

I&R Sites serve as a unique opportunity to address guests’ behavioral health needs, as facilitated through partnerships with several local BH providers.

**Project for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness**

**MA DPH Overdose Prevention Program**

**Community Mental Health Centers**

- **MSWs**
- **LICSWs**
- **Psychiatrists (remote)**

**SUD medication continuation**

**Tele-psychiatry/tele-counseling**

**Support for self-administered MAT**

**Recovery coaching**

**Case management**

**BH Community Partner linkages**

**De-escalation training for staff**
Isolation: I&R Site supplies list

All I&R Sites are supplied with a “hotel kit” that includes supplies necessary to open safely. Site managers can then request additional supplies as needed through MEMA.

Supplies in the hotel kits include, but are not limited to:

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)** – N95 masks, gloves, gowns, etc.
- **Sanitizing equipment** – hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap, bleach
- **Vital sign monitors** – blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, pulse oximeters, glucometers with test strips
- **Emergency equipment** – Narcan, AMBU bags, wheelchairs
- **Medication** – Tylenol, ibuprofen, first aid kits, medicine cups
- **Comfort supplies for guests** – toiletries, snacks, cough drops, socks and underwear, water bottles, etc.
3 Isolation: I&R Sites are set up to meet both staff and guest needs
Isolation: As of April 30th, 206 homeless individuals have been served by an I&R Site

Cumulative individuals served by I&R Sites

Current guests

Total guests

Departure #s began growing on 4/14, two weeks after initial intakes
Isolation: Of the 206 people served, 82 (40%) have completed their isolation period and have safely returned to community.

Current status of individuals served by I&R Sites

- **Currently isolating***: 119 (58%)
- Completed isolation: 82 (40%)
- Non-compliant departures: 5 (2%)

Non-compliant departures include guests who chose to leave early or who were removed due to failure to comply with site rules.

*Includes individuals transferred to a higher level of care, with I&R Site beds held for them for use upon hospital discharge.