

COVID-19 Update 3/31/20

Situation Report:

- REMINDER: Biweekly phone calls are being recorded and posted to the COVID-19 updates page on the Partners for HOME website
- 3 new additional cases have been identified, bringing the total known case count to 7. The 3 new cases were from individuals who came from 3 different shelters. DPH is aware of the situation and is following up with shelters to do case tracking and symptom screening.
- The CoC is not getting a full report from all area hospitals and facilities and as a result it is difficult to know if the number of cases is higher. There is discussion as to what mechanism can be created to receive this data.

Testing, Transportation, Isolation Beds

- Testing will begin next week in partnership with Mercy Care. Initial phase of testing will start in the 4 large shelters: Gateway Center, Atlanta Mission, Salvation Army, and City of Refuge. All residents of these shelters will be tested. Larger congregate environments are being tested first due to the higher risk for transmission. Individuals from these shelters who test positive will be prioritized for the isolation beds.
- Once testing has been completed at these locations, Mercy Care and its partners will look to extend testing to community-based test sites.
- Transportation to isolation beds has been secured via Grady and will be ready to begin once isolation beds are stood up.
- A downtown hotel has been secured for 100 isolation beds. The number of beds at this hotel can be expanded to 175. If number of positive individuals increases, there will be discussion as to securing additional hotels. The goal for isolation beds to be stood up is by Thursday or Friday of this week.
- Isolation beds will be prioritized for individuals who are positive or need to be quarantined because they have been exposed to a known positive. Access to these units will be via a hotline run by DPH. Additionally, the beds will be prioritized for the health system and hospitals who are keeping patients quarantined but they no longer need hospitalization.
- PFH and its partners are continuing to look for individuals to staff the hotel isolation units in a Resident Assistant type role. Staff would come in some direct contact and engagement with those in isolation.
- PFH and its partners are also looking for a security vendor for the isolation beds. Please let PFH know if any agencies are willing, as their staff will be onsite with positive cases. (Update: Vendor has been identified).

Outreach and Encampments

- Outreach teams are continuing the same work of phase 1 of outreach. Teams were out this weekend “flyering” downtown with updated information about shelters who are open for intakes and when and where food is being served.

- There were two mask hand offs last week to over 35 providers. 1600 masks were given out in total. The medical supplier PFH received the masks from should be able to provide more. Once PFH has obtained more, an email will be sent out with more information on pick up times and locations.
- Thermometers continue to be in short supply. Agencies are encouraged to check out in the community and in local drug or box stores. The need is specifically the type that can be held up to the forehead to take a temperature.
- PFH and its partners are working on getting hand sanitizer. A large batch was received recently and is currently being bottled. This supply is being prioritized for outreach work, specifically the unsheltered population that do not have access to soap and water.

Additional Administrative Updates

- PFH and other partners are continuing to work closely with the COA and DPH to address access to stimulus dollars. Much of the current response efforts will be reimbursable by FEMA.
- The COA is still expecting to receive additional supplemental ESG funds. These funds are not expected until May at the earliest. COA would like recommendations and feedback about what the funds could be used for and what program types could be prioritized. The match requirement will be waved. Agencies should be thinking internally on how they can add capacity in this crisis through this funding.
 - A survey will be sent out to the CoC and community providers to assess and prioritize needs for these funds.
- The Atlanta CoC was part of a call with the HUD field office and other CoCs around the state yesterday. The field office is looking to support HUD funded agencies. Agencies can reach out the field office directly or reach out to PFH to get them connected.
- Additional staff capacity has been added for this work. Two contractors were offered a position and accepted yesterday. Asher Morris (amorris@partnersforhome.org) will be running the isolation unit. Liliana Bakhtiari (lbakhtiari@partnersforhome.org) will be helping coordinate outreach and supporting hotel efforts.

HMIS & Data Sharing Updates

- Screening tool data is now reportable for agencies.
- 692 unique client screenings in the Metro Atlanta. 185 of screened individuals in the Metro Atlanta are have underlying conditions. 136 of the screening individuals in this area are over 55.
- Most of the screenings have been from PSH and RRH providers.

Questions

- Is there a number of positive unsheltered cases?
 - There is no report of any unsheltered cases at this time. This does not mean that there are no cases, but that if there are, they are currently unknown to the system.
- When testing has begun, will the focus solely be on those with severe symptoms? Or will testing be for everyone?
 - Testing is currently limited to symptomatic individuals and those who have been in close contact. There is currently no differentiation in mildly and severely symptomatic.

Everyone in the 4 shelters mentioned above will be tested due to the congregate nature of those shelters and the fact that there is less ability to quarantine. It is the hope that asymptomatic individuals will be captured as well.

- Is there a certain capacity that is needed for the security vendor?
 - The capacity is not the issue here. 2 security officers will be needed per shift. The important point here is willingness to work in an environment with COVID-19 positive individuals.
- When will testing be available for smaller shelters?
 - There is not a clear timeline or answer for this currently. The priority will be testing the ~1000 beds at the larger shelters first. There may not be a shift afterward to testing at all facility-based housing providers.
- What is being done about unsheltered people congregating i.e. Gateway, and the large feeding in parks?
 - Getting public hand washing stations stood up is in the works. Outreach teams have handed out written materials with graphics as well as spoken to unsheltered individuals. PFH has also been in contact with the Atlanta Downtown Ambassadors twice a day for reports on current homeless population numbers. The numbers have been down.
 - PFH will follow up on the large public feeding and possibly engage the COA and law enforcement to help this process be done safely.
 - Gateway has been speaking with individuals in front of their organization multiple times a day and repeatedly explained the issue of congregating. This is a multifaceted issue and goes beyond the current COVID-19 crisis.
 - If youth ages 16-24 who are experiencing homelessness are congregating outside or near your agency, please refer them to Covenant House. aredd@covenanthouse.org
 - Agencies are asked to reconsider closing intake so that shelters that are remaining open are not inundated with clients.

Other Announcements:

- CAP is looking to create a field hospital model for the unsheltered population in downtown Atlanta. This will provide food, centralized screening, sanitation, and security measures.
 - If providers have a need for food or commercial space, let PFH know and the information can be relayed to CAP.
 - Tammy.hughes@atlantadowntown.com
- If any agencies have staff that are furloughed, HOPS House is looking for weekend house managers. Reach out to Carol Collard (ccollard@caringworksinc.org) for more information
- Covenant House is also looking for additional staff. Please contact aredd@covenanthouse.org for more information.