

MASH Recommended Response to COVID-19 ***(Dated 3/18/20)***

Dear MASH Members,

We take the health and well-being of our members and sober home residents in our State very seriously. In addition to the potential risk to physical health, we recognize that the threat of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) also has an emotional effect on our community. We would like to share our recommended response to this important matter to protect both the physical safety and peace of mind of all residence of sober-living in Minnesota.

A few important points:

- COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus expected to spread through the United States over the coming months.
- Though there have been 77 confirmed cases in Minnesota, no cases have been reported in sober-living at this point, however that is likely to change in the coming weeks and months. (The number of confirmed cases in MN is fluid and will likely grow day by day)
- Of confirmed cases in Minnesota to date, many have been tied to “community transmission” meaning people who have NOT traveled outside of the state.
- Screening individuals is the most effective way to identify potential infection.
- Hand-washing and social-isolation techniques that apply to influenza should continue to be utilized in a sober-living residence.

MASH is recommending the following precautions, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health recommendations:

1. Suspended all non-essential travel
2. Owners and operators should institute screening procedures for current and future residents and volunteers who are likely to interact directly with the residence.
3. Establish a protocol if a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 occurs within the facility (see CDC’s suggested guidelines below)
4. Limit all community gatherings to (10 people) both in the sober house and in community-based twelve step meetings
5. Enact screening procedure of all visitors, volunteers and new residents
6. Daily disinfectant protocol for all facilities
7. Institute safe distance (six feet) requirements for all group meetings
8. Conduct manager and resident training on COVID-19 and prevention measures
9. Educate all managers and residents regarding COVID-19 and prevention measures
10. Daily monitoring of COVID-19 progression and best practices for prevention

The following is interim guidance from the CDC to protect households in America from COVID-19. We have edited this document to make it more relevant to sober house residences in Minnesota.

Interim guidance from the CDC

This interim guidance to households, provided by the CDC, is based on what is currently known [about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). In order to make this document more relevant to sober home residences MASH has replaced the word “household” with “sober house residents”.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. All sober house owners, operators and residents should frequently visit the CDC and MN Department of Health’s websites to ensure you’re receiving the most up to date information.

This interim guidance is to help American households (including sober home residences) plan for community transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages sober house residents to prepare for the possibility of a COVID-19 outbreak in their community.

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus. There is [much to learn about its transmissibility, severity, and other features of the disease](#). We want to help everyone prepare to respond to this public health threat.

- [Before a COVID-19 outbreak occurs: Plan](#)
- [During a COVID-19 outbreak: Act](#)
- [Readiness Resources](#)

Before a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community: Plan

A COVID-19 outbreak could last for a long time in your community. Depending on the severity of the outbreak, public health officials may recommend community actions designed to help keep people healthy, reduce exposures to COVID-19, and slow the spread of the disease. Local public health officials may make recommendations appropriate to your local situation. Creating a sober house plan can help protect your health and the health of those you care about in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community. You should base the details of your sober house plan on the needs and daily routine of your sober house residents.

Create a sober home plan of action-

Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan. Meet with sober house manager, residents, and volunteers who directly interact with your community to discuss [what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community](#) and what the needs of each person will be.

Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications. There is limited information about [who may be at risk for severe complications from COVID-19 illness](#). From the data that are available for COVID-19 patients, and from data for related coronaviruses such as SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV, it is possible that older adults and persons who have underlying chronic medical conditions may be at risk for more serious complications. Early data suggest older people are more likely to have serious COVID-19 illness. If you or your sober house residents are at increased risk for COVID-19 complications, please consult with your health care provider for more information about [monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19](#). CDC will recommend actions to help keep people at high risk for complications healthy if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community.

Get to know your neighbors. Talk with your neighbors about emergency planning. If your neighborhood has a website or social media page, consider joining it to maintain access to neighbors, information, and resources.

Identify aid organizations in your community. Create a list of local organizations that you and your sober house residents can contact in the event you need access to information, health care services, support, and resources. Consider including organizations that provide mental health or counseling services, food, and other supplies.

Create an emergency contact list. Ensure your sober house has a current list of emergency contacts for family, friends, health care providers, employers, the local public health department, and other community resources.

Practice good personal health habits and plan for home-based actions

Practice everyday preventive actions now. Remind everyone in your sober house of the importance of practicing everyday preventive actions that can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles) using a regular household detergent and water.
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent and water prior to disinfection. For disinfection, a list of products with

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved emerging viral pathogens claims, maintained by the American Chemistry Council Center for Biocide Chemistries (CBC), is available at [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Fighting Productspdf icon external icon](#)

- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Select a room in your home that can be used to separate sick sober house residents from those who are healthy. Identify a separate bathroom for the sick person to use, if possible. Plan to clean these rooms, as needed, when someone is sick. [Learn how to care for someone with COVID-19 at home.](#)

Plan for potential changes at your workplace

Learn about your employer's emergency operations plan. Discuss sick-leave policies and telework options for workers who are sick or who need to stay home to care for sick household members. [Learn how businesses and employers can plan for and respond to COVID-19.](#)

During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community: Act

During an outbreak in your community, protect yourself and others by:

- Staying home from work, school, and all activities when you are [sick with COVID-19 symptoms](#), which may include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
- Keeping away from others who are sick.
- Limiting close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet).

Put your COVID-19 sober house plan into action.

Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation. Get up-to-date information about local COVID-19 activity from the CDC and MN Department of Health.

Stay home if you are sick. Stay home if you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#). If a member of your sober home is sick, stay home from work, treatment, school to avoid spreading COVID-19 to others.

Continue practicing everyday preventive actions. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily using a regular household detergent and water.

Use the separate room and bathroom you prepared for sick sober house members (if possible). [Learn how to care for someone with COVID-19 at home](#). Avoid sharing personal items like food and drinks. Provide your sick household member with clean disposable face masks to wear at home, if available, to help prevent spreading COVID-19 to others. Clean the sick room and bathroom, as needed, to avoid unnecessary contact with the sick person.

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent and water prior to disinfection. For disinfection, a list of products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims, maintained by the CDC, is available at [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Fighting Productspdf icon external icon](#). Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.

Stay in touch with others by phone or email. If you live alone and become sick during a COVID-19 outbreak, you may need help. If you have a chronic medical condition and live alone, ask family, friends, and health care providers to check on you during an outbreak. Stay in touch with family and friends with chronic medical conditions. Take care of the emotional health of your sober house members. Outbreaks can be stressful.

Inform your workplace if you need to change your regular work schedule.

Notify your workplace as soon as possible if your schedule changes. Ask to work from home or take leave if you or someone in your sober house gets sick with [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

COVID-19 Readiness Resources

- Visit [cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19) for the latest information and resources
- [COVID 2019 Situation Summary](#)
- [Prevention and Treatment](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick](#)
- [Pregnant Women and COVID FAQs](#)
- [Stigma Related to COVID-19](#)

- [Handwashing: A Family Activity](#)
- [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#)

CDC Interim Guidance for Specific Audiences

- [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

CDC Communication Resources

- [Communication Resources](#)
- [Print Resources](#)
- [Buttons and Badges](#)

We're all in this together, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the MASH office or any MASH member. We greatly value the well-being of all those we serve and are committed to keeping all members of our community safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

John Curtiss, Vice Chair of MASH