



# HOMELESSNESS EFFORTS DURING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

Austin Neighborhoods Council General Membership Meeting  
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## Emergency

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- Activation of Austin/Travis County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on March 2<sup>nd</sup>
- COVID-19 poses unique dangers for homeless population
  - Emergency shelters – congregate facilities with high numbers of people
  - Closed businesses and public facilities, loss of income and donations
  - Food access, testing, other services set up for drive-thru service
  - High incidence of underlying severe health conditions and advanced age
  - Designated as priority population by CDC

Homelessness  
Task Force

EOC Social  
Services  
Branch

## 4 Primary Response Areas

1. Hygiene resources for unsheltered individuals
2. Food/Water access for unsheltered individuals
3. Infection control protocols for congregate shelters / Planning
4. Isolation & Protective lodging (ProLodges)

# Hygiene Resources for Unsheltered Individuals

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- ❖ Public showers and restrooms in City parks / trails
- ❖ 5 Rec Center shower access sites, M-Sa 10 am – 3 pm
- ❖ Portable toilets and handwashing stations in 20 areas
- ❖ Contracting with nonprofit to run mobile shower/hygiene trailers
- ❖ Violet Bag (trash pick-up) sites near high activity areas – daily service
- ❖ Masks, hand sanitizer, toilet paper distributed w/ food bags

# Food Access – Eating Apart Together (EAT)

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- ❖ Shelf-Stable Food Distribution (10 weeks)
  - 1,000 weekly bags containing 5-6 days worth of food for unsheltered individuals outside downtown core
  - 1,000 weekly bags containing 5-6 days worth of food for unsheltered individuals in the downtown core, and for recently housed individuals
- ❖ Also distributed in bags: dog food, hygiene supplies, feminine hygiene supplies, toilet paper, face masks, COVID-19 educational flyers and Census informational cards, drinking water
- ❖ Revolution Foods contract for prepared meals to be distributed by nonprofit and faith-based agencies

# Infection Control Protocols for Emergency Shelters

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- Weekly meetings to share expert guidance and protocols from APH, CDC, DSHS, HCH, HUD and others
- Working with ECHO to assess all shelters
  - Determining how shelters are adhering to CDC protocols
  - Identifying gaps and resource needs
- Working with CommUnity Care and Dell Med School (Healthcare for the Homeless Team) on active surveillance testing

# COVID-19 Homeless Services Strategic Planning

## with support from national consultants

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- Objective 1:** Deploying comprehensive screening processes for sheltered and unsheltered people
- Objective 2:** Securing and operating sites/rooms to provide alternative living arrangements for people experiencing homelessness
- Objective 3:** Implement purposeful, coordinated, & efficient approaches to support people transitioning from alternative living arrangements established & across the time period for economic recovery
- Objective 4:** Ensuring proper social distancing, safety, & hygiene protocols at existing emergency shelters
- Objective 5:** Addressing the needs of people who are unsheltered, including people in encampments

# Isolation & Protective Lodging

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**Isolation Facilities (ISOFAC)** - for individuals who are under monitoring, under investigation, or are COVID-19 positive AND cannot safely self-isolate.

**Protective Lodging (ProLodge)** - Temporary shelter options for people experiencing homelessness who are at high risk of severe complications if they become COVID-19 positive; for persons in congregate shelters with potential exposure; and for individuals experiencing homelessness who have recovered and are being discharged from ISOFAC



# Isolation & Protective Lodging

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## **ISOFAC**

Isofac1            Capacity for 204 guests (capacity fluctuates)

## **Protective Lodging**

ProLodge 1      110 guests (at capacity)

ProLodge 2      65 guests (at capacity)

ProLodge 3      55 guests (at capacity)

ProLodge 4      65 guests (remaining spots held for Isofac transfers)

City  
Departments  
Services and  
Activities

Austin Public Health (APH)

Downtown Austin Community Court  
(DACC)

Austin Homelessness Advisory Council  
(AHAC)

HOST & EMS

# Austin Public Health (APH)

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- ❖ Public Health Orders, Testing, Contact Tracing, Case Investigations
- ❖ Contracting with nonprofits for social services funding (RISE funding, federal CARES funding, other funding)
- ❖ Staffing operations at ProLodges
- ❖ Homelessness Task Force Lead

# Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC)

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- ❖ Triage case management, M-F, 8am – 5pm
- ❖ Intensive case management (remote)
- ❖ Bed management team assesses and refers to Isofac & ProLodge
- ❖ Staffing operations at ProLodges
- ❖ Working with ProLodge guests on individual housing plans for safe exits

# Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC)

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Council coordinated by DACC and surveys facilitated by Communities for Recovery

- ❖ COVID-19 impacts
- ❖ Worked with City on digital communications strategy
- ❖ Providing input to the City on their work related to the community Communications and Education cabinet

# Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) & EMS Community Health Paramedics (EMS CHP)

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- ❖ COVID-19 education and resources
- ❖ Direct services / referrals
- ❖ EMS – coordinate donations and delivery
- ❖ Assess immediate needs
- ❖ Infection surveillance
- ❖ Care coordination
- ❖ Build highest priority list of medically vulnerable for target outreach admission to ProLodge sites

# Questions ?

[www.austintexas.gov/homelessness](http://www.austintexas.gov/homelessness)