

BELMONT HOUSING AUTHORITY

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COVID-19 POLICY (3/13/2020)

The following policy is being adopted in response to the recent spread of COVID- 19. The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to staff concerning a response to this virus and recommended procedures which are to be implemented.

I. Background

The following background is for informational purposes only and is based on the information from the CDC as of this date. For the most recent information, consult the CDC website.

A. What is COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new disease and the manner in which it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it may spread in the United States, is still being determined. The CDC continues to update the information and recommendations on the virus. For the most up to date information, please refer to the CDC website (www.cdc.gov).

B. How is COVID-19 Spread

More information is being provided every day. Here is what we are currently being told about how the virus spreads:

I. Person-to-person spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with COVID-19, but it is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

2. Surface-to-person exposure

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Current information suggests that the virus can survive on a surface, although the exact amount of time is still being confirmed.

C. What are the Symptoms.

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed COVID-19 cases. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

II. Protocols

Based on the current level of response, staff should be aware of and implement the following procedures:

A. Maintenance

Common Areas: Staff should use a disinfectant to clean all frequently touched surfaces in the building. This includes doorknobs, railings, mailboxes, door glass, entry systems, and common area countertops and tables. If possible, this process should be done each morning and at the end of each workday. For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

Apartment Entry: Prior to entering any apartment for repairs or otherwise, the resident must be asked whether they or any person in the apartment has any of the aforementioned symptoms, OR have been either mandated or voluntarily quarantined OR have traveled outside of the U.S. or outside of Massachusetts within the last 14 days.

If Yes to any of the foregoing questions, then the staff is NOT to enter. If the entry is for a non-emergency issue, staff should reschedule the access. If it is an emergency or for work that cannot be delayed, you should then call the local Board of Health to confirm whether entry is allowed and the recommended means to do so. While the efficacy of the following are yet to be confirmed, if access is to occur, regardless of the response to the above questions, all occupants should be required to sequester in a room away from the work for at least 6 hours, the staff entering should use an appropriate mask and gloves before entering and ensure that they have no contact with the occupants during the entry. After the entry, the staff should dispose of the gloves, disinfect their hands, and avoid touching their face until they complete this process.

In the event of a non-emergency issue (i.e. routine maintenance, etc.) we recommend that we defer such work pending further updates from the CDC.

B. Community

Residents should be provided with written notice as to the measures which are being taken and their role in this process.

1. Ask residents to make sure they are washing their hands as much as possible, especially before they leave their apartments and when they return. Purell or other hand sanitizers should be used when soap and water are not available. Avoid touching your face.
2. Residents should practice social distancing and try to stay 6 feet from others.
3. All community events should be postponed if they involve a gathering of more than 5 people. This includes community events, board meetings, annual meetings, etc.
4. Residents should be told that they are **STRONGLY** urged to call the management office if they or any person in the apartment has any of the foregoing symptoms, **OR** have been either mandated or voluntarily quarantined **OR** have traveled outside of the U.S. or outside of Massachusetts within the last 14 days. If they do report this, notify the Executive Director and the Board of Health.
5. Residents should be asked to limit entering the management office unless by appointment or in response to an emergency. All other communications may be via phone or email.

C. Staff Protocols

1. Staff should be reminded to wash their hands as much as possible. Hand washing has been identified as one of the best means to avoid contracting this illness. Purell or other hand sanitizers should be used when soap and water are not available. Also, avoid touching your face.
2. Staff should practice social distancing and try to stay 6 feet from others.
3. All surfaces in the office should be disinfected on a daily basis. Disposable wipes that are commonly used on surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be used to wipe down such surfaces each day before use or diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

4. If a staff member displays any symptoms of the virus (fever, cough, shortness of breath) they should immediately go home or stay home and report this to the Executive Director.
5. Staff meetings should be avoided and conducted remotely if possible.
6. Staff are not to attend any seminars, conferences, or other group events.
7. In the event any resident reports that they have tested positive for, or believe that they have been exposed to COVID-19, staff should immediately notify senior staff and a communication will be sent to all residents reinforcing these protocols and seeking additional guidance from the local or state Health Departments.
8. Please post the attached posters in the common areas.

This policy is intended to provide immediate guidance for staff on this evolving issue. If you have other concerns or issues arise, please contact the Executive Director or, in the event of an emergency, seek guidance for the State or Local Health Department.

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

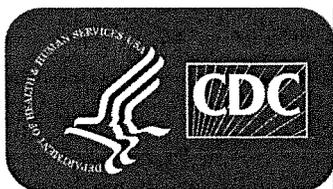
If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.



If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, follow the steps below to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home

People: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Animals: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) for more information.

Call ahead before visiting your doctor

If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Wear a facemask

You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can; immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

Avoid sharing personal household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean your hands often

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Clean all "high-touch" surfaces every day

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Monitor your symptoms

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). **Before** seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.

Ask your healthcare provider to call the local or state health department. Persons who are placed under active monitoring or facilitated self-monitoring should follow instructions provided by their local health department or occupational health professionals, as appropriate. When working with your local health department check their available hours.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. [g]he decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

