

Emergency Housing NOW - COVID-19 Crisis Talking Points

The world, including the State of Colorado, is in a state of emergency. In an effort to protect the lives of millions of people against the COVID-19 pandemic, all health agencies and experts advise that protection from this virus requires “social distancing.” Strict orders have been issued for people to stay at home, stay 6 feet away from others, and not gather in groups more than 10.

- Stay at home and social distancing measures are not possible for people who are homeless in the shelters. The best efforts of shelters to have more distance between beds etc will fall short. Because in these conditions hundreds of people in the same room will share the same air, touch the same surfaces, use the same bathrooms, door knobs, ect. These conditions are contrary to the recommendations of our health professionals. It in addition treats people experiencing homelessness as a lesser class not worthy of protection.
- People on the streets can practice social distancing more readily than they can in the shelters. It is actually safer there than in a concentrated shelter environment. Tents allow for safer social distancing as they are in the open air separated from other tents, plus you have the barrier of the tent itself from airborne risks. Folks outside are not sharing all the same surfaces. However, the government's refusal to provide bathrooms and hand washing stations at encampments leaves the whole community at greater risk. So it is imperative that both bathrooms and hand washing facilities be provided for all encampments.
- Stay at home orders were put in place because we know homes are the safest place to be in this pandemic - for ourselves and the whole community. In a state of emergency the Governor has the authority to issue an order for property to be used for emergency housing. The time for this order is NOW!
- The Governor of Connecticut issued this order to mandate hotels be opened for this need. It is possible. Businesses and workers of all sorts are making sacrifices to slow this pandemic for the public good. Hotels/motels must do their part.
- Hotel and housing owners are not opening their doors out of good will. State, City, and nonprofits have been desperately begging hotel owners for weeks with only 270 available to date in Denver, and far fewer - often none, available in cities across the state. The Governor must issue an executive order and provide resources to ensure housing and hotels are actually opened and people currently living in mass shelters and on the streets get into that safe housing.
- There are at least 9,619 homeless people in Colorado. There are approximately 152,700 vacant housing units in Colorado. We have the resources right in front of us to protect every Coloradan.
- Together with opening safe housing for every Coloradan, the governor must direct the necessary state resources to ensure all people staying in this emergency housing have access to food and any needed supportive services.

Strong, BOLD action is required because LIVES are at stake. The time to act is NOW!