

**Shelter, Support & Housing Administration**  
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**To:** All Shelter / Respite / Drop-in Providers

**From:** Gord Tanner  
Director, Hostel Services

**RE:** **2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)**

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As you may have heard, Toronto Public Health (TPH) has reported on two cases of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) this week. This virus is new to all of us and the topic has received much public attention.

This situation has undoubtedly resulted in some questions from shelter staff and clients. Basic information about the novel virus and common questions and answers can be found at TPH's website and a link to the TPH fact sheet is provided below. At this time, as per TPH, the risk to the general public remains low. Shelter Support and Housing Administration is working with Inner City Health Associates, TPH, and other partners to monitor and share information to prepare appropriate responses to keep staff and clients safe.

The 2019 novel coronavirus has been identified at the same time as local circulation of influenza is common in Toronto. As a result, please take the usual measures to reduce the spread of influenza and other respiratory illness in shelters:

- Engage in and reinforce routine practices. For information on routine practices see [Toronto Public Health's Infection Prevention and Control Guide for Homelessness Service Settings](#).
- Review the importance of proper hand hygiene with staff and clients. Avoid touching your face with unclean hands. Post [Hand Washing](#) and [Hand Sanitizing](#) posters.
- Review the importance of engaging in good respiratory etiquette (e.g., cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze into your sleeve and not in your hand) with staff and clients. Post [Cover your Cough](#) posters.
- Ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection is performed on a routine and consistent bases.

- Discourage sharing of items that come into contact with the mouth (e.g., drinking utensils, drug-use equipment, cigarettes).
- Encourage uptake of the yearly influenza vaccination, available from clinics and pharmacies.
- Limit exposure to those who are ill. Attempt to maintain at least two metre separation between yourself and someone who is coughing or sneezing.

Those who return from recent international travel, become ill with respiratory signs and symptoms (e.g., cough, fever, difficulty breathing) and require medical assessment, should be seen by a healthcare provider. If you are sending a client to healthcare, inform the healthcare provider, Toronto Paramedic Services, or hospital of the client's symptoms and travel history prior to their visit.

There is no basis for limiting admissions to any shelters at this point. Additionally, staff in shelters need not be wearing masks during regular shelter operations.

We will provide shelter, respite and drop-in operators with updated information, as it becomes available to us.

For the most up-to-date information about this novel coronavirus, please visit TPHs [webpage](#), which also has resources available, including a [2019 Novel Coronavirus fact sheet](#).

Contact your Agency Review Officer or me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Gord Tanner  
Director, Hostel Services