

## SHELTERED

### 1. Is Ramsey County creating isolation spaces for residents experiencing homelessness who test positive for COVID-19?

Homeless shelters located in Ramsey County typically operate at or near capacity. This places persons in these shelters in proximity to each other for extended periods. Ramsey County has already opened additional space to shelter those with symptoms or who are confirmed COVID positive. The former Mary Hall has been opened as a respite center for up to 140 individuals. The former Boys Totem Town is being reopened to house up to 80 people if Mary Hall reaches capacity. The opening date of Boys Totem Town is unknown at this time.

Ramsey County has also protective housing space to move 60 individuals over the age of 60 and with underlying health issues out of the Catholic Charities Higher Ground into a nearby hotel.

In addition, Ramsey County has issued a “Request For Quotes” to area hotels and other large facilities (like college dormitories) to move approximately 420 individuals out of congregate homeless shelters to ensure social distancing within large shelters in conformance with social distancing in conformance with the [Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\) guidelines](#).

### 2. Will symptomatic individuals in congregate settings (e.g. halfway houses) be able to utilize one of the designated quarantine locations?

If symptomatic individuals have their own room or only share with one person, they should continue to quarantine in their room. If they develop further symptoms, then they should seek medical treatment through their local hospital. Service providers may need to adjust operations to encourage physical distancing.

The COVID Respite Center at Mary Hall is an isolation and quarantine location intended to serve symptomatic people or COVID positive persons who are experiencing homelessness.

### 3. Are there any isolation spaces available for residents of congregate housing sites (not shelter, but shared baths/kitchens, with similar profile of high-risk clients)?

There are no isolation spaces for social distancing being planned for settings where clients have their own room and share other facilities. If sites have concerns, Ramsey County will work with them on safety procedures. Residents with their own rooms should isolate in place and the site supervisor should work to separate folks who have a roommate.

## UNSHELTERED

### 4. How is the County protecting people sleeping outdoors from transmission and how close are these supports to being delivered at scale?

# Housing & Homelessness Questions

Ramsey County supports the unsheltered population by funding homeless outreach providers in partnership with Heading Home Ramsey, Outside In and the City of Saint Paul. Outreach providers play a critical role in building relationships and providing necessities to those who sleep outside. Ramsey County has also provided sanitation provisions such as pot-a-potties, hand washing stations and water to the five City of St. Paul authorized homeless encampments. Ramsey County will continue to prioritize and focus resources where the needs are the greatest and efforts will help the most people during this crisis. As noted above, the immediate priority is to provide support and relief for large congregate shelters

## 5. How are the County coordinating efforts with community partners providing outreach?

Ramsey County has regular check-ins with the outreach teams. The City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County are active participants in all the work serving unsheltered residents of Ramsey County. All service provisions are now coordinated with all partners, including those operating day programming. The partners coordinate 14 outreach workers serving homeless people living in Ramsey County: Saint Paul has taken the lead in monitoring the status of residents living in encampments and coordinates much of our work; Ramsey County departments are assisting with coordination, access to supplies, community engagement and coordination.

## 6. Is there a central information hub where individuals providing homelessness response services can share and obtain updated information?

Ramsey County is developing a central hub of information which will be shared soon. In the meantime, information is posted on both the Ramsey County website for [Community Resources](#) and the [Heading Home Ramsey webpage](#). Ramsey County also operates a Customer Contact Center for questions about coronavirus and Ramsey County Services that you can call at 651-266-8500 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or contact via email at [coronavirus@ramseycounty.us](mailto:coronavirus@ramseycounty.us).

Additionally, the unsheltered partners meet three times a week to identify priorities, discuss critical needs, coordinate efforts and resources. This meeting is an open meeting and partners serving unsheltered are welcome to attend. Please contact Maria Wetherall at [maria.wetherall@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:maria.wetherall@co.ramsey.mn.us)

## YOUTH

7. Is the county planning to extend the youth hotel shelter beyond April 27<sup>th</sup>?  
Ramsey County will continue housing youth at the Holiday Inn through May 31, 2020.

## LGBTQ+, IMMIGRANT, REFUGEES, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR

8. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic nationwide. What specifically is Ramsey County doing to address these disparities during this time?

# Housing & Homelessness Questions

Ramsey County is currently in the process of developing a COVID-19 racial equity impact assessment tool that will help identify neighborhoods to target regarding sharing COVID information. The County is looking at racial, economic, health, and age data to determine neighborhoods that are most vulnerable to COVID-19. When it comes to racial data, this tool will give extra weight to communities that have higher populations of African-American residents.

Under the direction of the County Manager, a Racial Equity and Community Engagement Response Team (RECERT) was formed in April 2020. Recognizing the importance and value of leading with race, to address compounded disproportionality, and ensure community voice is in decision making, the response team is forming a RECERT Community Advisory Committee. The advisory committee will advise the RECERT Response Team on the plans, priorities, policies, systems and environmental changes with a racial equity lens. Members serve as one source—among several—with whom the county can consult and co-create solutions to help elevate the needs, wants, and voices of racially and ethnically diverse communities during the COVID-19 response.

## 9. Does Ramsey County provide single-sex or gender specific housing options for residents who cannot reside in co-ed shelters for religious reasons?

Ramsey County continues to prioritize the needs of its residents. Currently our shelters are divided by gender using the split floor model. Currently, there are no gender-specific respite centers.

## 10. Are there shelter services available for active substance users?

Most shelters in Ramsey County are low-barrier shelters that allow those that use alcohol or drugs to stay in shelter, but prohibit the use of substances within the shelter itself. Active substance users must use off-site.

## 11. Are nursing staff available at shelters to evaluate symptoms? Are there social service representatives available at the shelters?

Medical staff are available to check on people and monitor symptoms within our respite center (those who are already symptomatic). The respite center does not have social workers or other support currently. Ramsey County hopes that individuals would not be there for long periods of time. Ramsey County are working to get individuals released from isolation/quarantine into the hotel spaces and is planning for some supportive services there. Other shelters are partnering with Minnesota Community and resident doctors from United Family Medicine and St. Joseph's to screen people experiencing homelessness for symptoms.

## RE-SHELTERING CONSIDERATIONS

## 12. Is there a plan to temporarily reduce the number of residents in shelter to ensure social distancing guidelines?

The plan is to temporarily reduce numbers in shelters to ensure social distancing is maintained. The focus of our current efforts is to reduce the number of persons living in congregate settings. While specific decisions about sheltering the unsheltered have not been made at this time, it is likely that shelters will not “back fill” and will operate with reduce capacity for the duration of the crisis.

**13. What is the point of entry for residents entering shelter? Will it be through coordinated entry, public health or triage/hotline?**

Ramsey County will share the process for referring and placing people moved from shelter once it is finalized. The process is likely to be coordinated directly with shelter providers.

**14. What is the referral process to utilize the COVID-19 temporary shelter?**

Ramsey County has not yet developed a process for referring/placing people moved from shelter. The process is likely to be coordinated directly with shelter providers.

Referral sources may include:

- People who have completed their 14-day quarantine at Mary Hall
- Referring Shelters: Age and Medical Criteria
- Catholic Charities' Medical Respite Beds
- Medical Staff validate via signature for billing purposes

**15. Is there hotel space available for families needing shelter?**

Some of the current family shelter capacity does include space where families can isolate in place as needed and these families will likely remain where they are. The effort to identify options and move people currently living in shelter is a top priority of Ramsey County.

**16. If residents test positive for COVID-19, will they still be housed and quarantined for 7-14 days and possibly be released to a hotel depending on vulnerability?**

Currently there are no isolation spaces available. Residents with their own rooms should isolate in place and the site supervisor should work to separate folks who have a roommate.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**17. What is one way your partners at this table can assist you in these areas?**

Ramsey County need short term and likely long-term funding to continue providing adequate capacity for sheltering homeless individuals. In addition, immediate support for and creation of affordable housing units to move homeless individuals and their families into permanent, supportive housing options is needed.

In summary, the issue of unsheltered homelessness was significant before the outbreak of COVID-19 and has been a growing issue in our community for some time. Just as before the outbreak, it is also an issue in which the current need outstrips Ramsey County's ability to fully address the issue without state, regional and local partnerships

**18. Are we considering families and individuals who are doubled up, and can't isolate there? How can they access these spaces?**

No, Ramsey County currently is not planning for people who are doubled up since they already have a place to stay. If they become HUD homeless, they are advised to access the emergency shelter beds.

## 19. Is Coordinated Entry still operating during the COVID-19 crisis?

Yes, the Coordinated Entry will still be operating during COVID-19. The [Housing Services and Support](#) webpage includes information on how to access Coordinated Entry for supportive housing.

## 20. How are you coordinating with Saint Paul?

Ramsey County meets and collaborates with the City of Saint Paul on different government issues including housing and homelessness. Saint Paul is a leader and strong partner in all the work serving unsheltered residents.

## 21. When the rent moratorium expires, some families will have unaffordable rent balances and will need emergency assistance. What can be done to help them?

On March 23, Governor Walz signed [Executive Order 20-14](#), which provides for a suspension of evictions and writs of recovery. Currently, it does not exempt renters from owing rent. This is an important concern that county leaders are aware of and working to address, in partnership with other entities. Ideally people who are behind on rent should come forward and request assistance from Emergency Assistance or Emergency General Assistance to avoid being evicted when the moratorium on eviction expires. [Click here for information on how to apply for assistance.](#)

Families may apply for emergency assistance. If families have two weeks or less to vacate their current residence it is advisable to get on the shelter waitlist. There are also some diversion funds available through Catholic Charities. Ramsey County needs to communicate to families that the rent moratorium did not mean they did not have to pay their rent. Families cannot be evicted during this period, but they would need to pay the back rent. Some families have received federal stimulus checks, and some have also received unemployment compensation which is \$600 per week. The County is working on a plan to assist families with emergency assistance who are not receiving other assistance.

Ramsey County has been in communication with both MN Housing and MN Department of Health (MDH) regarding the concern the Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) providers are seeing already. households should arrange for payment plans and/or to pay a little each month towards rent. Households who cannot pay or fear their landlord will not renew their lease should be given the following resources to connect with:

- Homeless prevention providers on <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yTODvEpGaGqZx2Xcalc1jYgRpDqK7W7h/view>
- Southern Minnesota Regional Legal services (SMRLS) intake number: 651-222-5863. SMRLS, provides free civil legal aid and low-income families

## 22. Who is responsible for updating the County community resources site?

There is a team that maintains Ramsey County's Community Resources webpage, but please contact Altreisha Foster-Bentho (Altreisha.Foster-Ben@CO.RAMSEY.MN.US) if you have suggestions on resources to add or comments.

**23. Are there any provisions being made for housing residents being released from correctional facilities during COVID-19?**

Anyone released from a state prison would need to have a pre-established plan that identifies an approved living location, including someone who has been infected with COVID-19. That plan can vary based on individual circumstances. It is also possible that released clients may also have an approved plan to move back and live with a family member or relative, again in an approved location by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and local probation agents.

Updated 4.8.20