

# Mental health and COVID-19

FAQs for people supporting individuals who are marginally housed or homeless

## What challenges face people who are marginally housed or homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- They may have to use shelters, where it is harder to practise physical distancing.
- They are more likely than others to have medical conditions that increase the chance of negative outcomes.
- They are more likely to have mental health conditions that can increase stress and lead to a mental health crisis.
- They may have poor access to transportation and social and medical support, making it harder to protect them from infection, and diagnose and treat illness.



## What can my agency do to support people who are marginally housed or homeless during the pandemic?

- Coordinate with your local government and other service providers on a pandemic plan. Share supports and resources.
- Be prepared for an increase in the number of people using shelters.
- Have infection control and environmental cleaning processes in place.
- Develop a plan to identify, test and support people with COVID-19 symptoms.

This information sheet is not intended to be a resource for people who require screening for COVID-19 or who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

For more information, visit [www.camh.ca/covid19](http://www.camh.ca/covid19)

- Create spaces for people with mild COVID-19 symptoms to recover.
- Identify additional supports, such as mental health services or alcohol and other drug supports, that may be needed.
- Make sure staff are taking care of their own physical and mental health.
- See the list of resources below for more in-depth strategies.

## What tips can I give to people who are marginally housed or homeless to help them stay safe during the pandemic?

- Reinforce that feeling extra stress is normal, and suggest talking to a trusted person.
- Encourage them to seek out credible information about the virus.
- Remind them to use their everyday coping skills.
- Suggest how they can adapt public health advice to best protect their physical health.
- Provide information on what to do if they are **at risk of losing their housing**.

## Resources for community organizations

These resources give recommendations for reducing the risks of COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness:

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/homelessness.html>
- <https://www.homelesshub.ca/>
  - <https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/pandemic-planning-how-can-my-agency-prepare-potential-spread-coronavirus>
  - <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/covid-19-response-framework-people-experiencing-homelessness>
  - <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/high-level-policies-and-procedures-guide-isolation-sites-people-experiencing-homelessness>