

**Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center COVID-Recovered Guests:
Update & Frequently Asked Questions
May 27, 2020**

Update about Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center & COVID-19

The City is rolling out several interventions for people experiencing homelessness to help protect them from the spread of COVID-19, including the opening of over 2,000 hotel rooms, an RV Village, and multiple congregate facilities. As part of the City's efforts to make congregate shelter safer, we are planning to transition the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center to a "Post-COVID" congregate shelter. Similarly, the City has converted MSC South and Moscone West to this purpose.

This means that the people currently staying at the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center will be tested for COVID-19 and then transitioned to shelter-in-place, isolation, or quarantine sites depending on the results and their needs. The facility will then be closed, cleaned, and reopened as a shelter for people experiencing homelessness who have been tested, diagnosed with COVID-19, received medical care, recovered, and cleared their quarantine period.

Each person who is placed at the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center will be cleared by the Department of Public Health (DPH) before placement. DPH has stated that the change in the population served at the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center does not pose any risk to the health of the public.

The site will continue to be operated by Five Keys and will continue to comply with existing shelter social distancing, shelter in place, and health screening protocols. Five Keys will continue to provide the same services to guests that they were providing prior to the COVID-19 crisis. All provisions and agreements in the existing MOU between the Port and the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing will remain in effect, including the good neighbor policy, and the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center Advisory Group and dedicated police patrols will continue as before.

The exact timeline for this change has not yet been determined but will be based on Public Health need.

NOTE: This information is accurate as of May 27, 2020. As public health guidance evolves, our practices at shelters will change based on that guidance.

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Are the new residents of the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center tested again for coronavirus or for antibodies to be cleared by DPH?

The Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center will be for people experiencing homelessness who have been tested and diagnosed with COVID-19 and have since recovered. These are the only people being moved from a hotel back into this congregate site. These individuals are going into a "COVID-recovered" shelter. Currently, individuals who are COVID negative or asymptomatic close contacts, are discharged into SIP hotels, not COVID-recovered shelters.

DPH's criteria for discharge to a post-COVID shelter aligned with Return to Work guidelines [and CDC recommendations](#) and include:

- 1) At least ten days since the onset of symptoms or test AND
- 2) No symptoms in the last 72 hours

2) You reference shelter-in-place, isolation, or quarantine sites. How do these three categories differ?

- Quarantine Hotels are specifically for people under investigation (PUIs) awaiting their COVID-19 test results.
- Isolation Hotels are for people who are COVID-Positive to isolate themselves from others while contagious to prevent the spread of the virus and to recover.
- Shelter in Place site are hotels or RVs/trailers for people experiencing homelessness to allow them to shelter-in-place outside of a congregate setting. This protects not only their health but also the health of the entire community. The City is prioritizing vulnerable people who are most likely to have severe cases of COVID-19 if infected, including people over the age of 60 and people with specific preexisting health conditions.
- Shelter in Place Hotels also allows the City to "de-concentrate" shelters across the city, allowing for greater social distancing.

3) How long is the quarantine period for people who have been diagnosed with Covid-19, and who will be placed in the Navigation Center?

- The recommended isolation period for a person who tests positive for COVID-19 is at least ten days since the positive test or the onset of symptoms, and they must be symptom-free for at least 72 hours before discharge.

4) Are they confirmed to be virus-free by the standard of taking and testing negative three times over a multi-day period to confirm they're clear? A single test is usually not sufficient, although I'm sure they've thought this through.

- We are using the "symptom-based strategy" based on [CDC guidelines](#), as outlined above. We recognize that the information and guidance on this

is changing rapidly. We will continue to follow the CDC guidelines and update our practice based on this guidance.

5) Once a test is administered, how long does it take to get results (minutes, hours, days?)

- It typically takes a couple of days for test results to come in. People who have been tested will be moved to a quarantine hotel while their test is pending. Navigation Center guests do not stay at the SAFE Navigation Center while they wait for their results.

6) What steps are taken on an ongoing basis—once they make it into the shelter—to mitigate subsequent outbreaks within the shelter; we don't know that having the virus once prevents one from having it again.

To mitigate subsequent infections and the spread of the virus, the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center will continue to implement the following safety protocols:

- Daily temperature checks and symptom screening
- Enhanced cleaning
- Social distancing protocols in the dorms and common areas
- Face masks
- Increased hand sanitizer stations
- Implementing Shelter in Place protocols to limit the ins and outs from the shelter in alignment with the shelter in place order.

7) How many guests have tested positive for the virus within the adjacent shelter since February 1, 2020?

- To date, no Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center guest has tested positive for COVID-19.

8) Have workers tested positive?

- To date, no Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center staff member has tested positive for COVID-19.

9) What supplies do guests and staff of the SAFE Navigation Center currently have to support mitigating potential spread within the facility, and what is planned to expand on this moving forward?

The City is providing Five Keys and our other shelter partners with supplies needed to protect the health and safety of guests and staff across our shelter system. While supplies continue to be a challenge nationwide, we are committed to continuing to provide these across our system of essential services supplies include:

- Masks and face coverings (staff and guests)
- Personal Protective Equipment (staff)

- Extra cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer stations
- Socially distanced dorms and community space
- Socially distanced dining procedures
- Thermometers for daily temperature checks

If neighbors have supplies that they wish to donate to help support the effort, please let [Emily Cohen](#) know.

10) How many post-COVID guests will be admitted to the shelter once this plan is implemented; what is the max?

- When the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center converts to a Post COVID or COVID Recovered site, the plan is to continue to maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing within the facility. Therefore, the site will not be filled to its capacity.
- We estimate that no more than 100 people will fit onsite with appropriate social distancing.
- Occupancy would certainly not exceed the allowable occupancy as outlined in the MOU.

11) Will DPH staff (in addition to whatever DPH staff are already there) be onsite or just the current staff?

- Like all Navigation Centers, the Embarcadero SAFE Navigation Center will continue to receive onsite health care support from the Department of Public Health. Additionally, the shelter screening protocol is supported by DPH staff if a guest has a fever.
- There is no medical need to have additional medical staff onsite since guests are no longer sick.

12) What will happen after SIP is lifted? Will the folks there stay, or will the current guests who are moving to hotels be moved back in?

- While the city is still largely focused on expanding COVID alternative housing (hotels and congregate), we are also planning for when the crisis ends. Every component of the homeless response system has been impacted by COVID and is being utilized in a new or different way.
- There are many unknowns about the pandemic and how our local response will evolve over time. Given that social distancing protocols will likely be in place in San Francisco long after the shelter in place order is lifted, the ongoing capacity of our temporary shelter system is unknown.
- With that said, we will be using the entire Homeless Response System to respond to guests' shelter and housing needs; this includes shelter, problem-solving, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing.

13) Has the "max capacity" taken into account social distancing been identified? What is it?

- Yes, social distancing will dictate capacity. Capacity will not exceed what is allowed by the MOU but will likely be much less.

- Our current estimate is about 100 people, which will allow for 6 feet of distance between beds.

14) The justification for the likelihood of reinfection in a congregate site, what is the written public health guidance for moving this population out of their hotel/current placement?

- *Current guidance: COVID+ and have since recovered are the only people who are being moved from a hotel back into a congregate site. These individuals are going into a "COVID-recovered" shelter. Currently, individuals who are COVID negative or asymptomatic close contacts are discharged into SIP hotels. These individuals are not going back into shelters.*

15) If somebody has previously tested positive for COVID-19, why are they not being getting re-tested to be negative before they are placed in the Post COVID Shelter setting?

- The test detects pieces of the virus, not just living viruses. Viral remnants that are not contagious may be detectable for weeks past the point when a live and infectious virus is present.

16) Why do you plan to use symptom-based screening when you could test?

- *Tests take days to come back and give us information that is two to five days old. Symptoms give information about right now.*
- *We do not use tests to manage release from isolation because tests detect the non-infectious virus. Instead, SFDPH follows CDC guidance on releasing patients from isolation.*

17) It is unknown how long somebody is contagious. Why do we bring people out of isolation when they can still be contagious?

- *Tests take days to come back and give us information that is two to five days old. Symptoms give information about right now.*
- *We do not use tests to manage release from isolation because tests detect the non-infectious virus. Instead, SFDPH follows CDC guidance on releasing patients from isolation.*
- *This is a novel virus, and we continue to learn about it and adjust our actions accordingly. Using the best available evidence, the CDC has set 10 days since the onset of symptoms as the recommended amount of time that COVID-positive individuals should stay in isolation.*
- *SFDPH follows CDC guidance on releasing patients from isolation. According to the CDC, ten days after the onset of illness, the likelihood of detecting infectious virus approaches zero.*