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ACTION CALENDAR

March 17, 2020

**To:** Honorable Members of the City Council  
**From:** Vice Mayor Sophie Hahn  
**Subject:** Strategies for Special Populations during COVID-19 Crisis

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to develop and implement strategies to address the needs of populations in Berkeley who face unique challenges during the COVID-19 crisis. Coordinate with public and community agencies and consult appropriate experts as needed, to ensure the special needs of these populations, and of those who work with them, are identified and addressed. Populations for whom special strategies shall be considered include, but are not limited to:

1. People experiencing homelessness
2. Individuals with disabilities
3. Senior citizens (especially low-income Seniors)
4. Single parent households with children
5. People experiencing food insecurity
6. Undocumented residents
7. Stranded visitors

Consider allocating additional resources to City of Berkeley departments and partner agencies to meet identified challenges during the COVID-19 emergency.

BACKGROUND**People Experiencing Homelessness**

COVID-19 is likely to result in an increase in emergency shelter needs, including the need for locations where unhoused individuals can be isolated from others while receiving basic needs and care. In addition, new demands may be placed on individuals working with the homeless including Berkeley's Homeless Outreach and Treatment (HOT) Team and employees of agencies providing shelter and services to the homeless. The City should consider the special needs of our homeless residents and those who work with them, and augment services and resources for the homeless, and homeless services providers, as needed. The following resources are offered for guidance in developing a response:

Interim Guidance for Homeless Shelters, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare-respond.html>

Guidance for Homeless Assistance Providers on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, [https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/hcfc/documents/covid19\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/hcfc/documents/covid19_guidelines.pdf)

Coronavirus and Homelessness, National Alliance to End Homelessness, <https://endhomelessness.org/coronavirus-and-homelessness/>

Infectious Disease Toolkit for Continuums of Care, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Infectious-Disease-Toolkit-for-CoCs-Preventing-and-Managing-the-Spread-of-Infectious-Disease-for-People-Experiencing-Homelessness.pdf>

COVID-19: Coronavirus and Housing/Homelessness, National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), <https://nlihc.org/coronavirus-and-housing-homelessness>

### **Individuals with Disabilities**

Individuals with disabilities may face challenges taking steps recommended to reduce the risk of COVID-19. It may not be feasible for some individuals with disabilities to socially distance themselves from others, particularly if they need regular help from caregivers or others to do everyday tasks. For some individuals with disabilities, washing hands or cleaning house can be difficult due to physical or other impairments. And while a disability alone may not put a person at higher risk from COVID-19, disabled individuals may have a disability or chronic condition that puts them at higher risk, or that makes sheltering in place difficult to achieve without added support. People of all ages, with or without disabilities, are at higher risk for COVID-19 complications if they have certain underlying medical conditions. The following resources are offered for guidance in developing a response:

If You Are at Higher Risk, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Individuals with Access and Functional Needs, California Department of Public Health, March 9, 2020, <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/guidance-for-individuals-with-access-and-functional-needs-03122020.pdf>

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): What do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Need to Know?, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

COVID-19 and Students with Disabilities, National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools, <https://www.ncsecs.org/news/covid-19-and-students-with-disabilities/>

5 Things To Know About Coronavirus And People With Disabilities, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2020/03/08/5-things-to-know-about-coronavirus-and-people-with-disabilities/>

World Institute on Disability; Recommendations for Immediate Action Regarding: The Rights & Needs of People with Disabilities Who Use Personal Assistance Services & Supports Throughout COVID-19 Planning & Response <https://wid.org/2020/03/12/recommendations-for-immediate-covid-19-action/>

### **Senior Citizens (especially low-income Seniors)**

Many seniors live on fixed incomes, and while some have family and friends they can rely on in the area, others may be isolated and need help managing shelter-in-place directives. Some older Berkeley residents live in Senior and group facilities and take meals in common dining rooms, and will be subject to new practices, including reductions in visitors, which may cause loneliness, boredom or anxiety. In addition, early data suggest older people are twice as likely to have serious COVID-19 illness. They are also more likely to have underlying health conditions that make it harder to cope with and recover from illness. The following resources are offered for guidance in developing a response:

COVID-19 Guidance for Older Adults, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/covid19-guidance.html>

If You Are at Higher Risk, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

Identifying Vulnerable Older Adults and Legal Options for Increasing Their Protection During All-Hazards Emergencies, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/emergency/pdf/guide.pdf>

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): What do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Need to Know?, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

How to Protect Older People From the Coronavirus, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/health/coronavirus-elderly-protection.html>

CMS Announces New Measures to Protect Nursing Home Residents from COVID-19, U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-announces-new-measures-protect-nursing-home-residents-covid-19>

### **Single Parent Households with Children**

Single parents face significant strains at this time if they must report to work, or if they are able to work from home but need to care for their children simultaneously. If a single parent were to fall ill, there may be a need for childcare or for assistance in caring for a child who is sick simultaneously. If a single parent is hospitalized, children will likely need to be cared for by relatives or friends. To undertake food shopping and other essential activities, young children will need to be brought along if other arrangements are not available. All of these challenges are exacerbated for low income single parents, and some of these challenges exist for two parent/adult households as well. The following resources are offered for guidance in developing a response:

Coronavirus And Parenting: What You Need To Know Now, NPR,  
<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/13/814615866/coronavirus-and-parenting-what-you-need-to-know-now>

Women's Domestic Burden Just Got Heavier With the Coronavirus, The Guardian,  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/16/womens-coronavirus-domestic-burden>

### **People Experiencing Food Insecurity**

About 1 in 5 people suffer from food insecurity in Berkeley, with communities of color disproportionately struggling against hunger. For those experiencing food insecurity, COVID-19 presents a unique challenge. In addition, residents who lose employment may suddenly find themselves without adequate food and other basic resources. As schools, child care centers, and adult meal providers close or reduce service, people may lose access to the food and nutrition programs on which they rely. Moreover, prior experience suggests that viral outbreaks may disproportionately impact the poor and food insecure. The following resources are offered for guidance in developing a response:

FNS Program Guidance on Human Pandemic Response, USDA Food and Nutrition Service,  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic>

Preparing for the Impacts of the Coronavirus on Health, Well-being, and Food Security, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), <https://frac.org/blog/preparing-for-the-impacts-of-the-coronavirus-on-health-well-being-and-food-security>

Coronavirus: A Public Health Crisis That Threatens the Economic Security of Low-Income People, CLASP, <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/coronavirus-public-health-crisis>

The new coronavirus affects us all. But some groups may suffer more., American Association of Medical Colleges, <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/new-coronavirus-affects-us-all-some-groups-may-suffer-more>

### **Undocumented Residents**

Non-citizens are much more likely than U.S. citizens to be uninsured, potentially reducing their access to treatment in the event they experience COVID-19 illness. Among the nonelderly

population, about a quarter of lawfully present immigrants and more than 4 in 10 undocumented resident immigrants are uninsured. Moreover, recent changes to U.S. immigration policy, such as the public charge rule, may be causing fears among immigrants that could lead to declines in coverage and discourage them from seeking medical treatment. In addition, some immigrant groups may be experiencing stigma because of COVID-19, potentially subjecting them to social avoidance and denial of healthcare. The following resources are offered for guidance in developing a response:

Reducing Stigma, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/reducing-stigma.html>

Health Coverage of Immigrants, Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants/>

### **Stranded Visitors**

Travelers stranded in Berkeley face unique challenges. Many face travel restrictions, cancellations, or suspensions due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Moreover, many stranded travelers may not have access to healthcare in the U.S., due to insufficient travel insurance or limited funds. Some travelers who are unfamiliar with local laws and practices, or who face a language barrier, may simply be confused about how to access care.

Travel, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Communication Resources for Travelers, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/communication-resources.html>

### **Other Groups**

Additional populations who may need added support include, but are not limited to, healthcare workers and employees of businesses, agencies and organizations that continue to provide services during the emergency.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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