

The Weekly Update includes news items related to the COVID-19 Homeless Response in Santa Cruz County. The Shelter & Care Task Force was established to oversee homeless services during the COVID-19 pandemic, focused on minimizing the spread of the disease by isolating sick and vulnerable individuals and supplementing existing services impacted by the outbreak. Led by the Santa Cruz County Department of Human Services, the task force consists of staff from the County and cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville, as well as community-based organizations' experts.

Weekly Update for May 6, 2020

New Shelter Referral Process Launched – The County of Santa Cruz has developed a new referral process to fill vacancies at these new sites as well as the existing shelters. All shelter sites in the county now use this single-point-of-contact system to simplify the search for available shelter beds. Questions about this referral process can be sent to COVID-19homelessresponse@santacruzcounty.us.

Armory “Pavilion” Now Open – A new sprung structure, located adjacent to the main National Guard Armory building at DeLaveaga Park, is now functioning as a day center with plans to open soon as a 24/7 shelter, with participants provided a tent, cot and/or sleeping bag, three meals a day, snacks, 24-hour staffing to provide support, showers, and a variety of entertainment options. Participants may leave for essential travel but are subject to safety protocols upon return.

COVID Response Comes to Coral Street and Benchlands – Encampments in Coral Street and San Lorenzo Park Benchlands areas in Santa Cruz are transitioning from unsupervised camping areas to Homeless Outreach Support Sites with additional services provided. Following CDC and state guidelines, new services include safely distanced and demarcated tent sites, sanitation and security. Provision of additional supportive services including COVID-19 public health information and medical screening, facial coverings, food and connections to safety nets services are in development and will be first rolled out at Coral Street and then the Benchlands.

Hotel Shelter Program Now Operational – Following guidelines from the CDC and State’s Project Roomkey program, three hotels are now under contract with the County as part of its Isolation/Quarantine Shelters program to provide private rooms for persons experiencing homelessness who are vulnerable to COVID-19 and/or being isolated or quarantined from exposure. Currently, there are no confirmed local cases COVID-19 within the population of those experiencing homelessness. Between the three hotels, there are a total of 117 rooms, with 63 now in operation and the remainder expected to be available within the next week. Isolation/Quarantine Shelter participants are provided transportation, a private room, three meals a day, snacks, and laundry service. These shelters have security and other staff on-site 24 hours, seven days a week. Public Health Nurses are regularly on site to address health needs.

Shelter Now Available for Young Adults – Simpkins Family Swim Center is now open as a temporary indoor shelter facility for young adults or so-called “Transitional Age Youth” (aged

18-24) who are experiencing homelessness anywhere in Santa Cruz County. The facility utilizes a tent-based model to provide greater social distancing between participants. The facility is expected to be replaced soon with 10 trailers provided through the State's Project Roomkey program, to be located at a site in Mid-County.

Watsonville and Santa Cruz Vets Halls Serving as Shelters – In addition to the existing shelter network throughout the county, expanded temporary shelter capacity has been established at the Watsonville Veterans Memorial Building and the Santa Cruz County Veterans Memorial Building in downtown Santa Cruz. Both shelters continue operations, with a combined capacity in excess of 90 beds. Both sites are accepting referrals through the shelter referral process. Clients are provided three meals a day, along with hygiene and other services, and most have individualized tents to help shelter-in-place.

Help Wanted - Multiple Positions Available – The County of Santa Cruz is hiring Disaster Service Workers to work in temporary shelters, homeless related outreach, and Isolation/Quarantine Shelters in Watsonville and Santa Cruz. Positions include Shelter Host and Shelter Site Supervisor. Additional pay is available for bilingual candidates. Training and personal protective measures are provided. Learn more at www.santacruzcountyjobs.com.

Donated Books Benefit Shelter – Local nonprofit Friends of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries donated a variety of books to the temporary shelter at the Veterans Memorial Hall in Santa Cruz. For use by shelter participants, the books are a boon in the ongoing effort to find a variety of comforts and stave off boredom while shelter-in-place guidelines are in effect.

Learn more about Homeless Action Partnership, the work of the Shelter & Care Task Force, and the County's response to COVID-19 at homelessactionpartnership.org/COVID19.

The Homeless Action Partnership is a collaboration of the County and each city within Santa Cruz County, along with local homelessness service providers. It acts as the federally-designated continuum of care for Santa Cruz County and helps allocate State and federal funding to address homelessness. The County of Santa Cruz serves as lead agency for the HAP.