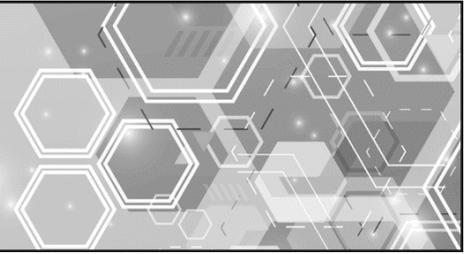




Durham Region Health Department Facts about...



Guidance for community partners that are offering places to stay warm during COVID-19

Overview

Extreme cold is a major public health concern. Exposure to extreme cold can result in the development of cold-related injuries, such as hypothermia, frostnip and frostbite. Cold weather can make existing health conditions worse, such as cardiovascular and respiratory disease and can even lead to death. For more information visit: durham.ca/ExtremeCold

Warming centres (an indoor or outdoor heated site or facility designed to provide relief and protection during extreme cold) are used by many communities to protect the health of our most vulnerable residents during extreme cold weather events. Under the Reopening Ontario Act, the use of masks or face coverings is mandatory in all public indoor settings across the province, including warming centres.

These recommendations are intended to help warming centres/spaces reduce the risk of exposure to illnesses with general infection prevention and control recommendations for staff and visitors of these settings.

Facility Operation Considerations

Staff and Volunteers

Plan for staff and volunteer absences. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training warming centre staff. Encourage ill staff and volunteers to stay home (or be sent home if they develop symptoms while at the facility) to prevent transmitting the infection to others. Provide proper PPE and hand sanitizer for all staff and volunteers.

Visitor Traffic Flow

Traffic flow through the warming centre should be designed to have visitors move in one direction and not have people passing each other in narrow areas such as hallways and entrances. Have visitors enter through a single entrance and then exit the facility through a different door. Post directional signage to assist visitors in understanding which direction they should be moving through the facility.

Screening

Contact information for visitors at the warming centre should be collected and retained for one month in case of a need for contact tracing.

If resources are available, consider implementing [active verbal screening](#) before admitting visitors to the warming centre or post [screening signage](#). Screening will reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in the community. If a staff or visitor is symptomatic (e.g. cough, fever, difficulty breathing) move them to a separate area away from others. If possible, have the symptomatic person contact the Durham Health Connection Line at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 immediately for further direction.



As with all public indoor spaces, everyone in the warming centre must wear a non-medical face mask/covering when inside the facility (i.e. using the washroom), even where physical distancing can be maintained.

Physical Distancing

Maintain physical distancing within warming centres, of at least 2 metres between individuals. Consider separation of furniture and creating spaces for individual family units (families who live together do not need to maintain physical distancing in a warming centre).

If a lack of potential warming centre sites arises, emergency alternatives such as using parked heated buses can be utilized.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Clean and disinfect environmental and commonly touched surfaces routinely throughout the day. Commonly used disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. If an area is heavily soiled, it should be cleaned with soap and water before a disinfectant is used.

Wipe down tables and chairs with a disinfectant wipe/spray between patrons. Provide a safe place for visitors to dispose of garbage.

Please refer to Public Health Ontario's [cleaning and disinfection guidelines for public settings](#) for further guidance.

COVID-19 Prevention Supplies

Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies such as soap, tissues, and trash baskets and alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) with an alcohol concentration of at least 60%, on hand for staff, volunteers, and visitors.

Check liquid hand soap, paper towels and ABHR dispensers regularly to ensure continuous provision. Single-use, disposable products are preferred. If using refillable dispensers, ensure they are cleaned first followed by disinfection between refills.

Ensure staff and volunteers are equipped with and trained to use appropriate PPE. Any visitors that present with COVID like symptoms should be isolated within the warming centre from the rest of the visitors.

If water bottles or hot drinks are distributed at the warming centre, ensure visitors do not share bottles or glasses.

Communication

Post [Stop the Spread](#) of germs and [Cover your Cough](#) posters in visible locations on-site.

Post [screening sign](#) at all entrances and in strategic places providing instruction on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, and mask use.

Additional Resources

[Durham Region Health Department's up-to-date COVID-19 community resources.](#)

[Durham Region's Community Reopening Toolkit: Community centres and public facilities.](#)

[Emergency Supports for Unsheltered-Residents. Local Municipalities COVID-19 Response.](#)

[North Durham Community Resources.](#)

November 17, 2020

