

Safety Practices for COVID-19/Coronavirus Mutual Aid Projects

The document outlines recommended safety practices for supply distribution mutual aid projects responding to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic to lessen the risk of spreading the virus.

Background

COVID-19/Coronavirus is a contagious virus and can be spread rapidly by people who are unwitting carriers. Infection can be life-threatening, especially for elderly and immunocompromised people.

The virus is believed to be transmitted most commonly person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within ~6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes

A person can also get infected by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. The virus can live for up to 3 days on various surfaces (as low as 1-24 hours for cardboard and fabric, longest for non-porous surfaces like metal).^{1 2}

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest), but may also be contagious in the 1-14 days before they show any symptoms. As they recover and become asymptomatic, people continue to shed the virus, usually for 8-37 days. People may also be contagious even if they never show symptoms.^{3 4 5}

This means that someone could become infected by proximity to an infected stranger in a crowded space or by touching a contaminated surface. In the days before they experience any symptoms, they could then unwittingly spread the virus to anyone they come in contact with or touch the same surfaces as.

Accordingly, mutual aid participants should take careful precautions to decrease the risk of contracting the virus or spreading it to others, especially to elderly and immunocompromised people whom the mutual aid effort aims to support.

Safety practices

- Closely self-monitor your health.
 - If you have been exposed to anyone who is or has become ill or if you experience any symptoms of COVID-19/Coronavirus such as fever or coughing, follow [CDC guidance](#) and have someone else pick up your mutual aid tasks.
- Implement social distancing at all times, including in your personal life.
 - Avoid crowded spaces - public transit, bars, restaurants, gatherings, etc.
 - Maintain 6' distance with others.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html?>

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DqfSnlaW6N3GBc5YKyBOCGPfdqOsqk1G/view>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html?>

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/coronavirus-can-stay-infectious-for-days-on-surfaces/2020/03/12/9b54a99e-6472-11ea-845d-e35b0234b136_story.html

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/14/health/coronavirus-asymptomatic-spread/index.html>

- Avoid touching the same items as others (like serving spoons, board game pieces, and joints/pipes/cigarettes/vapes).
- Use additional precautions when handling mutual aid supplies.
 - Pick up supplies at off-peak times from less crowded stores/places.
 - When shopping, sorting, or distributing supplies and interacting with other participants and recipients, wear gloves and a mask. Due to low availability of the most effective surgical masks, you can make a DIY version.
 - Between tasks and after touching any surface that may have the virus (like your face or phone), change out gloves and wash hands for at least 20 seconds.
 - Routinely clean and disinfect storage and transport spaces (see guide [here](#)).
 - Clean and disinfect sealed nonporous items before distributing them (see guide [here](#)).
 - Transport items by bike, car, or foot instead of using public transit.
- Minimize physical interaction between mutual aid participants.
 - Avoid multiple participants being together to pick up, drop off, or manage supplies. Use individual or small shifts.
 - Instead of handing supplies off directly to recipients, deliverers can leave items outside recipients' buildings or doors and knock/text/call the recipient; maintain at least 6 feet of distance between deliverers and recipients at all times.
 - Host mutual aid project meetings via phone or video conference.

Adoption and communication

- Ensure each participant understands and agrees to the safety practices of the mutual aid project.
 - This can take the form a list of mutually agreed-upon principles/practices for different levels of participation, so no individual person has to enforce them.
 - For those that don't or can't agree to the safety practices (ex. people who must continue to travel on public transit and/or work in close proximity to others, are caring for infected loved one, or personally refuse to adopt safety practices), see if there is a remote/digital role they can play instead.
- Coordinate distribution of gloves, masks, cleaners, and disinfectants to people who join the mutual aid project.
- Communicate regularly with other participants about safety practices. Create open channels for concerns and ideas. Keep up-to-date with evolving guidance from health officials.
- Publicize the mutual aid project's safety practices and work with other mutual aid projects to develop theirs.
- Watch for signs of stress, trauma, and burnout amongst participants. Encourage self-care, breaks, and honesty about individual and group capacity.

Related Resources

Excellent guides from QueerCare available [here](#) include:

- Delivering items to someone who is immunocompromised protocol
- Leafleting protol
- Policy doing support work during COVID-19 pandemic
- Principles and assumptions for doing support work in the covid-19 pandemic