

Frequently Asked Questions: Cities and Municipalities

April 27, 2020

Overview

Project Roomkey is a collaborative effort by the State, County and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to secure hotel and motel rooms for vulnerable people experiencing homelessness. It provides a way for people who don't have a home to stay inside to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Project Roomkey aims to not only protect high-risk individuals, but to also prevent the spread of the deadly virus in our communities and protect the capacity of our hospitals and healthcare system by providing a place for individuals to safely isolate.

In this period of economic downturn and unemployment, Project Roomkey is also helping keep local businesses open and members of our community employed.

Participants

Who will be staying at the hotels and motels?

Hotel and motel rooms will provide temporary housing for people experiencing homelessness who are not COVID-19 positive or symptomatic, but are vulnerable to complications should they become infected with COVID-19. To participate in Project Roomkey, individuals must be 65 years of age or older, or have underlying medical conditions, or be medically compromised. This group of people is significantly more likely to need hospitalization and require critical care if infected with COVID-19. That increase in the need for hospitalization would severely impact our healthcare system.

To participate in Project Roomkey, clients must be referred to the program by a homeless services provider, health care provider, law enforcement, or other service provider.

How are the clients assigned to Project Roomkey hotels and motels?

Homeless services providers, working in the communities they serve, are first identifying clients who are already in the city where the Project Roomkey site is opening. After that, the focus is to identify clients in cities or unincorporated areas surrounding the Project

Roomkey site. Once those clients are identified, the focus broadens to include clients throughout the Service Planning Area (SPA) in which the site is located.

Can people walk up and ask for a room?

No. The address of each Project Roomkey site is confidential. Only people who meet the requirements and are referred through appropriate channels can participate. Project Roomkey sites are not walk-up facilities.

At the end of the pandemic, what will happen to the clients of the hotels and motels?

LAHSA, the County, and partners from the non-profit and philanthropy sectors are working together to develop a comprehensive plan for those who receive temporary assistance under Project Roomkey, so that they do not return to the streets once the COVID-19 crisis comes to an end.

While clients are staying at these hotels and motels, on-site service providers are working with each client individually to develop an exit plan, with the goal of moving them to a situation that permanently resolves their homelessness. In cases where this isn't feasible, LAHSA will use existing shelter capacity to move people into an interim housing environment or explore other options.

Hotel and Motel Sites

How does the County identify hotel/motel site locations?

Los Angeles County aims to open Project Roomkey sites throughout the County and the Service Planning Areas (SPAs) to account for need based on the [2019 Point in Time homeless Count](#).

State, County, and private sector real estate experts are working with local hoteliers to determine interest in the program. Through Project Roomkey, business owners can support their enterprise and their employees.

The County has also partnered with hotel associations to identify sites that meet Project Roomkey's operational needs. Hundreds of properties have been explored and contacted.

What is the difference between the County's medical sheltering sites and Project Roomkey sites?

Los Angeles County is working on a separate, but parallel program to use hotels and motels throughout the County to temporarily house individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 and cannot isolate or quarantine in their own home. This program serves anyone in need of an isolation or quarantine site, which can include, but is not limited to people experiencing homelessness. First responders and medical personnel have been quarantined and isolated in medical sheltering sites provided by the County.

How long will a hotel or motel be part of Project Roomkey?

Project Roomkey is a temporary program to provide life-saving, temporary housing for the most vulnerable people who are experiencing homelessness. The County is entering into an occupancy agreement with a hotel or motel for a three-month period, with options to extend during the pandemic.

Is the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) still being paid to cities if these rooms are in use by Project Roomkey?

Yes, the Transient Occupancy Tax is being paid to cities participating in Project Roomkey, subject to the provisions of each city's TOT. In addition, in this period of economic downturn and historic unemployment, Project Roomkey is also helping keep local businesses open and members of our community employed.

Operations

How many hotel and motel rooms are a part of Project Roomkey?

For up-to-date information on the number of hotels/motels participating in Project Roomkey and the number of rooms secured, please visit:

<https://covid19.lacounty.gov/incident-updates/>

Is there security on site?

Yes, private security will be on site, 24/7, at each Project Roomkey site.

How are Project Roomkey sites staffed?

Every Project Roomkey site is staffed 24/7. Staffing at the Project Roomkey sites consists of:

- LA County Fire – Shelter/Site Manager
- Homeless Service Provider – Client Services Managers and Case Manager
- LAHSA staff
- County and city Disaster Service Workers
- Nursing Staff
- 24/7 private Security

Staff monitors guest behavior to ensure program rules are followed, provides daily health and wellness checks of guests, delivers food to clients' rooms and responds to client needs.

Are there rules for clients residing at the site? How will they be enforced?

LAHSA has established a code of conduct for clients at the Project Roomkey sites, which outlines expectations for those participating in the program. Service providers

explain the code of conduct to clients upon entry into the program and remind them of its provisions over the course of their stay.

While at the hotels and motels, all clients are educated about appropriate social distancing practices, handwashing, and face coverings. Clients are not permitted to congregate in common areas.

The County has contracted with a private security firm to deploy security guards on site 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Security is meant to ensure the safety of everyone on site. At least one professional security guard is present for every 50 rooms.

Will the County provide compensation to the city for calls to first responders related to Project Roomkey?

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department notifies local law enforcement when sites are to become operational. To date, in operational sites, there has not been an increased need for law enforcement. Service providers are skilled at de-escalating situations that could otherwise result in a need to call in first-responders, and security guards assist in securing the property. The goal of Project Roomkey is to keep elderly and sick individuals off the street and protected from community exposure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Can clients in Project Roomkey sites leave the hotel or motel?

Just like all the residents of Los Angeles County, Project Roomkey clients must adhere to physical distancing and Safer At Home guidelines, which means they can only leave the hotel or motel for essential services. Services, including three meals a day and medical monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms are provided on site. Clients are issued an ID and no guests are allowed on site.

What procedures are in place in the event that one of the clients ends up being COVID-19 positive?

Clients are screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to entering the site. After intake, clients and staff are screened for symptoms and have their temperature checked a minimum of two times per day. If a client begins to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19, site staff will activate emergency protocols, contact the Department of Public Health (DPH) and transfer the client to the appropriate location for further care. The County will ensure the appropriate deep cleaning process occurs if a client is found to have tested positive.

How will transportation be handled to and from the sites, including transportation of those persons whose medical condition exceeds the capacity of on-site medical staff?

Transportation to the sites will be arranged by LAHSA and service providers, generally utilizing existing resources. Participants who need to be transferred to other facilities for medical care will be transported using the transportation mechanism that the Department of Public Health and Office of Emergency Management have established for their Quarantine/Isolation sites. Emergency Medical Services will be used in emergency situations.

Will you be engaging with community members/businesses prior to the opening of a Project Roomkey site?

Time is of the essence to implement Project Roomkey, a statewide program that will stop the spread of COVID-19. As we urgently work to bring Project Roomkey sites online, we're enhancing our processes. The County is now notifying cities of its urgent work once negotiations with hotel owners become serious.

In addition, the County has appointed a Temporary Supervisory Administrator to oversee and coordinate Project Roomkey and the parallel, but separate mission to bring online medical sheltering.

We are grateful for the partnership of cities as we work together to save lives, stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the capacity of our fragile healthcare system.

What information will my city get about the program if there is a hotel used for Project Roomkey?

Los Angeles County and LAHSA will coordinate with city management to let them know of planned walk-throughs, opening date, service provider contact info, and to answer any questions. We are committed to ensuring that local officials have information about implementation of the statewide Project Roomkey program in local cities.

How can we refer an individual residing in our community into this program if a hotel is in our city?

If you know of an individual that needs assistance, please contact the service provider assigned to the location within your city. The service provider will assess the individual and determine the most appropriate next steps. Please do not send the individual to the hotel. The hotels are not walk up sites.

Where can I get more information?

For the most up-to-date information on the County's efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through Project Roomkey, visit covid19.lacounty.gov/project-roomkey

