

Frequently Asked Questions *April 27, 2020*

Background

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 fragile hospitals and healthcare system.

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

Why is Project Roomkey important for my community during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Project Roomkey will protect the most vulnerable people in our communities, prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect capacity in our healthcare system. In addition, in this period of economic uncertainty, Project Roomkey is keeping local businesses open and members of our community employed, with local tax revenue benefiting local cities.

Who will be staying at the hotel?

Hotel 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 qualify 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 are significantly more likely to need hospitalization, and require critical care if infected with COVID-19. That surge of infection would severely impact our healthcare system.

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

How are the hotel occupants assigned to hotels?

The goal of Project Roomkey is to protect communities by preventing the spread of COVID-19.

With that in mind, the selection of clients who are eligible to participate in the program is intentional and community-focused.

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.

At the end of the pandemic, what will happen to people staying at the hotels?

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 participants are staying at these hotels, 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.

How is the County identifying hotel/motel site locations?

The County has partnered with hotel associations to identify sites that meet the operational needs of the program. Hundreds of properties have been explored and contacted.

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.

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.

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 will enter into an occupancy agreement with a hotel or motel for a 3-month period, with options to extend during the pandemic.

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 client 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 participants upon entry into the program and remind them of its provisions over the course of their stay.

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.

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.

What is the referral process for Project Roomkey?

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority is working closely with community-based service providers and outreach workers in the communities where Project Roomkey sites are located to identify individuals who are eligible for placement in a Project Roomkey site.

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.

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 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 hotel. 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.

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

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, please visit:

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

