



## **EFFECTS OF COVID-19: CODE RED OPERATIONS**

In accordance with NYCDOH COVID-19 guidance, the following program areas are expected to be impacted during Code Red events of 2021:

**Code Red Notifications:** To assist in program areas in operational expectations during Code Red events, DSS Emergency Management will differentiate between normal Code Red operations and COVID Code Red until New York is out of a phased reopening and back to normal operating procedures when Phase 4 ends (i.e. *NYC DHS CODE RED – LEVEL 1 NOTIFICATION* vs. *NYC DHS COVID CODE RED – LEVEL 1 NOTIFICATION*).

**Drop-in Centers & Shelters:** All designated cooling areas within a drop-in center must allow and instruct clients to maintain six feet distance and provide and require face masks/covering, encourage those who enter to wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.<sup>1</sup> The physical distancing requirement will reduce the maximum capacity previously held by these spaces. Vacancy Control and Outreach must ensure there is sufficient space to safely accommodate a client in the designated cooling area(s) prior to making the referral. Drop-in center staff are responsible for ensuring safe conditions within the designated cooling areas, including physical distancing and the use of face covering, and must report overages to Vacancy Control and the appropriate program administrator. Individuals will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms, using the standard DHS tool, and those who present with COVID-19 like illness (CLI) must be isolated and referred for placement in an isolation shelter. Before accessing a new shelter, clients undergo a symptoms screen including temperature check.

**Emergency Department Waiting Rooms:** Due to physical distancing measures, ED waiting rooms will not be able to accommodate clients who are street homeless, unless they present for or are found to need medical attention. If an individual experiencing homelessness does not need medical attention but accepts/requests DHS services, the ED will call the DHS Joint Command Center (JCC) (*see Medical Director's memo to hospital partners*).

**Street Homeless Outreach:** During Code Red Level 2 events, Street Homeless outreach teams will continue End-of-the-Line operations. The remaining outreach staff will continue with priority client outreach, where possible. Preparedness measures were added for conducting outreach operations in a pandemic. Outreach teams wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and offer PPE to clients. Teams engage each client and survey if the client is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms (i.e., do you have a cough or fever? Have you been in contact with anyone who is experiencing symptoms or who has COVID-19? Etc.). Teams document each survey. If a client indicates they have symptoms, they are offered transport by Outreach and taken by EMS to a hospital for testing. At the end of each shift the teams submit their survey reports to the JCC.

Thank you & stay safe!

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<sup>1</sup> See latest Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention guidance.



## OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING

James K. Whelan  
Executive Deputy Commissioner

**DHS-PB-2021-007**  
(Replaces DHS-PB-2020-008)

| Policy Subject: | Applicable To:  | Effective Date: |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| Code Red        | All Directly-operated or Contracted Street Homeless Solutions, Single Adult, Adult Family, and Families with Children Facilities/Programs Serving Individuals who are Homeless, DSS and DHS Staff, and Collaborating Agencies | May 25, 2021    |

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are appropriately served during extremely hot weather. It provides instruction concerning DHS' Street Homeless Solutions (SHS) and emergency shelter operations and outlines support provided by DSS' Emergency Management (EM).

### POLICY

#### Declaration of Code Red

NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM) activates the Citywide Heat Emergency Plan during periods of extreme heat and humidity, as defined by the National Weather Service (NWS). This policy is consistent with NYCEM's Citywide Heat Plan Activation triggers which include the following:

**Code Red Level 1:** declared when the NYCEM Citywide Heat Emergency Plan Criteria are met (primarily issued as a Heat Advisory). This occurs when the forecasted heat index reaches 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for one day or more or heat indices are forecasted to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit or higher at any point for two consecutive days or more.

**Important Note:** Code Red Level 1 is in effect from 12:00 PM (noon) to 8:00 PM on the day for which it is to be implemented. Code Red will be issued no later than 4:00 pm the day prior to Code Red activation.

**Code Red Level 2:** declared when NYCEM Excessive Heat Emergency Plan criteria are met (primarily issued as an Excessive Heat Watch or an Excessive Heat Warning) as defined by the NYCEM Citywide Heat Emergency Plan. This occurs when the forecasted heat index reaches 105 degrees or more Fahrenheit for any duration or heat indices are forecasted to reach 95 degrees Fahrenheit for four days or more.

**Important Note:** Code Red Level 2 outreach is *continually* in effect (day and night) from the time that it is declared through the duration of the Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Watch, or Excessive Heat Warning. DSS EM will advise when the Code Red Level 2 ends.

## **BACKGROUND**

Minimum annual review of this policy and any changes will be completed in collaboration among DHS, DSS Emergency Management, and as needed with additional stakeholders.

SHS will meet with outreach (OR) teams to review and plan for the season in the spring. OR teams will maintain and submit lists of clients who are vulnerable to SHS as well as report during alerts how many current clients are vulnerable for the Code duration as well as identify locations or subways stations that may be particularly hot and require checking during activation.

## **AGENCY REQUIREMENTS**

### **Activation & Coordination of Code Red**

DSS/DHS' Code Red policy is activated by DSS EM when the above criteria are met. DSS/DHS will take the following steps for activating and coordinating Code Red:

Code Red Alerts are to be issued by the DSS EM to the Code Alert Distribution List as soon as it is issued, but not later than 4 PM on the day prior to the onset of Code Red activation. All efforts will be made to do this by 4 PM but if there's a change in weather, we will issue it. For last-minute forecast changes, DSS EM will disseminate the notification as soon as possible.

- DSS Emergency Management will input the activation into CARES.
- Adult Services and SHS Contracted Providers will coordinate the following subtasks:

1. Ensure that OR staffing levels are sufficient and deploy them to the field.
  2. Identify and regularly monitor clients who may be at risk for heat-related injuries during hot weather.
  3. Assist at-risk clients to voluntarily come indoors to facilities/locations that are adequately cooled and well-ventilated, while maintaining physical distancing guidelines.
  4. Arrange for voluntary (or involuntary, as indicated) transport of individuals suffering from heat illness to a hospital emergency department.
  5. Assist and engage at-risk clients in accessing citywide heat-related interventions, such as cooling centers, open hydrants, public pools, cool public spaces, etc.
  6. Encourage clients to hydrate themselves with plain water.
- All outreach (OR) teams will submit their reports to the Street Homeless Solutions (SHS) division by 8:00 AM of the day following a Code Red event. Reporting for Code Red Level 2 runs from the start time until 7 AM the following day. The second reporting period runs from 7 AM the previous day until 7 AM the second day. This pattern continues until the final day of the Code Red Level 2 when the reporting period runs from 7 AM the previous day until the end of the Code Red Level 2. DSS EM DSS EM will share data with NYCEM via e-mail.
  - DSS EM will share Outreach reporting data with NYCEM via e-mail. It is important to note that:
    1. These data are the same data DSS EM receives from Outreach after Code Red is completed.
    2. The On-Call DSS EM coordinator will send this data to NYCEM.
    3. While these data are sent internally to DSS EM, the expectation is that the data will be sent by DSS EM to NYCEM upon a NYCEM Activation and when there are data inquiries.

### **Code Red Operations – Outreach**

For outreach, safe havens, and shelters, DSS Central and DSS/DHS will take the following steps for activating and coordinating Code Red:

**Code Red Level 1:** SHS teams will contact clients on the priority list at least once during the Code Red period. They are also responsible for the following:

- SHS subway teams will check on their priority stations at least once during the Code Red period.
- When necessary, teams will call the Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) for assistance when entering secluded or dangerous areas to check on clients who are at risk.

- To reduce the risk of heat-related injury for clients who are not at imminent risk but who refuse to go indoors/access a cool space, OR teams will distribute supplies, such as water and sunscreen. OR will encourage all clients to be transported to a safe, cool place.<sup>2</sup>

**Code Red Level 2:** SHS teams will contact clients on the priority lists at least two times per shift during a Code Red Level 2. They will also be expected to continue to monitor clients throughout the duration of the Code Red Level 2. They are also responsible for the following:

- SHS subway teams will check on their priority stations at least two times per shift during a Code Red Level 2. They will also be expected to continue to monitor these stations throughout the duration of the Code Red Level 2.
- All OR teams are required to submit a 24-hour coverage plan that ensures adequate staff coverage during Heat Emergencies with the most intensive coverage during daytime hours.
- All SHS OR teams will submit the Code Red Report to DSS/DHS Emergency Management, Street Homeless Solutions, Adult Services, and Families with Children, and when needed, other stakeholders by 9:00 AM of the day following a Code Red Level 2.
- SHS OR leadership will be informed by DSS EM of NYCCEM resources available during a Heat Emergency, such as cooling centers, and offer these to clients they encounter.

### **Drop-In Centers and Shelters**

During a Heat Emergency, DHS conducts additional outreach to New Yorkers who are unsheltered, and DHS drop-in centers where a cool space will be open to serve as many clients as possible. People who are homeless and experiencing heat-related discomfort are also able to access the designated cooling area at any shelter. During a Code Red Emergency, the following applies:

- During Code Red Levels 1 & 2, shelters will not suspend from shelter any individuals currently in the shelter system.
- During Code Red Levels 1 & 2, Single Adult clients can access any shelter, not only the client's "official shelter." Once client undergoes COVID screening, including temperature check, the shelter will confirm with Vacancy Control to determine if a vacancy exists and, if so, the client will be given a bed. If no bed is available, the client will be given the option to remain in the current facility without an assigned bed or be transferred to another shelter where an overnight bed exists.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>3</sup> If it's extremely hot outside, and the person's temperature is taken immediately as the person comes in, with an infrared/forehead thermometer, their temperature may be falsely elevated. Unless someone has other symptoms of COVID, their temperature should be taken again at least 30 mins later after being in a cooler environment before sending to isolation. Keep client in a cool room by themselves during these 30 mins.

- In the wake of the current pandemic & in accordance with NYCDOH COVID-19 Guidance for Congregate Settings, all designated cooling areas within the shelter must allow clients to maintain 6 feet distance. This requirement will reduce the maximum capacity previously held by these spaces. Vacancy Control and Outreach must ensure there is sufficient space to safely accommodate the client in the designated cooling area(s) prior to making the referral. Shelter staff are responsible for ensuring safe conditions within the designated cooling areas and must report overages to Vacancy Control & the Program Administrator. Individuals who present with COVID-19 like illness (CLI) must be isolated & referred for placement in an isolation shelter.<sup>4</sup>
- Single adult shelters will make available any beds within the system to accommodate all clients brought in by outreach or those who walk in during Code Red Levels 1 & 2. Shelter staff will engage all clients brought to shelter by SHS OR teams during a Code Red the following morning to encourage them to remain indoors using the available cool space and to access various services.
- Shelters will store clients' belongings overnight during a Code Red Level 2.
- Families with children and adult families determined ineligible for shelter will be offered transportation to a cooling center with available capacity given physical distancing guidelines, during Code Red Level 1 and will be granted overnight or conditional placement during Code Red Level 2.
- Families with children and adult families determined ineligible for shelter will not be logged out of shelter during Code Red Level 2

### **Collaboration Among City Agencies & Supporting Community Organizations**

During a Citywide Heat Emergency activation, the following City agencies assist with identifying and reporting on clients experiencing homelessness who are potentially at risk for exposure (and involuntary removals, if appropriate):

- MTA-NYC Transit
- NYC Parks Department-Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP)
- NYC Department of Sanitation (for encampment cleaning)
- NYC Department of Transportation

As needed, the following City agencies and other organizations may be requested to assist with the identification and reporting on homeless clients who are potentially at risk for exposure (and involuntary removals, if appropriate):

- NYC Department of Education-Division of School Facilities (DSF)
- NYC Health + Hospitals (H + H) and private hospitals
- Greater New York Hospitals Association (GNYHA)
- NYC Emergency Management: Public-Private Initiatives (for private sector building and property issues)
- New York Public Library Security & Emergency Management

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- Brooklyn Public Library
- Queens Public Library

### **Hospital Emergency Departments**

The DHS Medical Director's Office will release an annual memo to New York City Health + Hospitals (H+H) and the Greater New York Hospital Association to distribute to all NYC hospitals to request their cooperation during Code Red Plan activation.

During Code Red, hospital emergency departments throughout the city will accommodate people experiencing street homelessness who walk in or are brought by SHS OR teams. These individuals will be permitted to remain in emergency department waiting areas (or other spaces designated by the individual facility) for as long as possible and without being registered.

### **ACRONYMS**

- DSF - The Department of Education's Division of School Facilities; management of school buildings that should be contacted if there are homeless encamped on school premises
- GNYHA - The Greater New York Hospitals Association
- OR - Outreach
- PEP - Parks Department's Parks Enforcement Patrol peace officers
- SHS - Street Homeless Solutions

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**Appendix I****Contact Information for DHS Outreach Teams**

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|---|---|
| Bronx<br>24-hour number:<br>Director: Juan Rivera   | BronxWorks<br>718- 893-3606<br>917-902-3882<br><a href="mailto:jrivera@bronxworks.org">jrivera@bronxworks.org</a>   |
| Brooklyn/Queens Street to Home<br>24-hour number:<br><u>Brooklyn</u> : Casey Burke<br><u>Queens</u> : Cara Ochsenreiter | Breaking Ground<br>929-218-7360<br>917-753-1837<br><a href="mailto:cburke@breakingground.org">cburke@breakingground.org</a><br>631-875-4353<br><a href="mailto:cochsenreiter@breakingground.org">cochsenreiter@breakingground.org</a> |
| Manhattan Outreach Consortium<br>24-hour number:<br>Director: Erica Strang  | CUCS<br>212-222-9806<br>212-801-3340<br><a href="mailto:estrang@cucs.org">estrang@cucs.org</a>  |
| Staten Island<br>24-hour number:<br>Director: Teisha Diallo   | Project Hospitality<br>347-538-2314<br><a href="mailto:teisha_diallo@projecthospitality.org">teisha_diallo@projecthospitality.org</a>   |
| Subway Outreach<br>24-hour number:<br>Director: Tim Long  | BRC<br>212-533-5151<br><a href="mailto:tlong@brc.org">tlong@brc.org</a>   |



May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Hospital Emergency Department Director:

As we enter the summer, NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) is concerned about the risks that unsheltered New Yorkers experiencing homelessness face during the hot weather months. Many have chronic conditions that put them at higher risk of heat-related health issues.

Similar to prior years, DHS will declare a Code Red Alert under the circumstances described in the attached procedure. Like in 2020, Code Red procedures are modified because of the Covid-19 pandemic and asking hospitals to allow individuals in need to use the hospital ED waiting room or hospital space may be unfeasible. If the pandemic continue in summer 2021, we will seek other options and ask that you work with DHS and its outreach teams to achieve the most appropriate outcome for our clients.

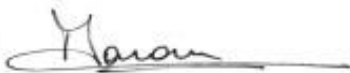
If an individual experiencing homelessness presents to your hospital emergency department, does not need immediate medical care, and requests or accepts DHS services, please call the DHS Joint Command Center at 212-607-6040 or email [SHCCC@dhs.nyc.gov](mailto:SHCCC@dhs.nyc.gov).

On behalf of all New Yorkers, thank you for your help in assisting individuals experiencing homelessness during hot weather emergencies.

For any questions, related to DHS Code Red please contact: Shane Cox at [scox@dhs.nyc.gov](mailto:scox@dhs.nyc.gov).

We appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,



Fabienne Laraque, MD, MPH  
Medical Director

*Effective Immediately*