Looking Back and Moving Forward: Lessons from COVID-19 Isolation Hotels and Promoting Long-Term Health & Housing

Moderator: Ted Houghton
President
Gateway Housing
Poll the Audience

#1 True or False? More than 100 New Yorkers experiencing homelessness have died from COVID-19.

#2 At peak, approximately how many hotel beds did the City use to reduce density of congregate shelters?

a. 800,  b. 3,000  c. 10,000,  d. 20,000
Meet our Panelists

Molly Park
First Deputy Commissioner
NYC DHS

Simone Thompson
Shelter Services Director
Care for the Homeless

EJ Bryant-Mazauskas
Resident
Susan’s Place

Kandra Clark
VP Policy & Strategy
Exodus Transitional Community
DHS’ Use of Hotels as COVID Response

Health and Housing Consortium
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DHS COVID Hotel Overview

- **Isolation:** At peak, 700+ beds across 5 hotels
  - Currently ~150 beds at 1 hotel
  - For clients who have tested positive and/or exhibiting symptoms
  - Largely current DHS clients, but also referrals from other systems (e.g. Rikers)

- **Density Reduction:** ~10,000 beds, 61 hotels
  - All single adult sites operating at reduced capacity with some/all clients relocated in to hotels

- **Quarantine:** currently ~100 beds in two hotels (plus a non-hotel site)
  - Asymptomatic clients tested at intake and pending test results, plus those who have traveled out of state

- **Stabilization Beds:** ~300 beds, 3 hotels
  - For clients experiencing unsheltered homelessness
  - Although services are not COVID-specific, significant ramp up in capacity in response to subway shutdown
  - Additional beds in non-hotel settings
Benefits/Challenges of Hotel Use

• Benefits:
  • The social distancing possible in hotels has played a major role in keeping clients and staff safe during the pandemic.
    • Positivity rate from most recent round of testing: 0.4%

• Challenges:
  • Hotels in NYC tend to be tall buildings with many access points – difficult to operate
  • NIMBY
  • Not all hotels located near original shelter; hard to maintain connection to neighborhood-based services
Looking Forward

• DHS will be guided by science; working closely with DOHMH to determine when/how to return to shelter safely

• OTDA released guidance on shelter operation on 9/29/2020
  • Required all localities using hotels as part of COVID response to “provide a phased-in plan to OTDA for transitioning persons out of hotels/motels”
  • DHS plan under review with OTDA

• Requirement for 6 feet between beds means DHS will continue to use hotels for some time
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Director of Shelter Services
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Vice President of Policy & Strategy
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Source: VICE, Activist Playbook
Full documentary at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0Gt34ubpKs&feature=youtu.be