

# 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

December 3, 2020

# 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



**Simone Thompson**  
*Director of Shelter Services*  
*Care for the Homeless*

**EJ Bryant-Mazauskas**  
*Resident*  
*Susan's Place*



Source: VICE, Activist Playbook

Full documentary at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0Gt34ubpKs&feature=youtu.be>



**Kandra Clark**  
*Vice President of Policy & Strategy*  
*Exodus Transitional Community*