**Dissemination Plan:**

**Who:** Local Leaders--can include but is not limited to the following:

* Directors of local public health departments
* Directors of local social/human services
* Directors of local non-profit organizations
* Leaders of local faith-based communities/organizations
* Local school officials (superintendents, principals, counselors)
* Local government officials (mayors, chiefs of police, county sheriffs)

\*The contact information for these leaders can be found on the websites of local governments, chambers of commerce, or the websites of their individual organizations. In addition, leaders may be reached via social media or public forums.

**What:** Homelessness & COVID-19 in America brief & Coronavirus Communication Checklist graphic

**How:** Since local leaders should be working remotely, this message should be delivered via email with an encouragement to collaborate with other recipients as well.

To: Local Leaders

CC: Local Leaders

Subject: Homelessness & COVID-19 in Your Community

Dear Local Leader,

As I trust you are working tirelessly to keep your community safe from COVID-19, I urge you to take a moment to consider the following message:

Please advocate for those experiencing homelessness in your community. Below is a brief overview of the homelessness epidemic in America, the current recommendations for COVID-19, and a checklist that will guide you in effectively communicating this to those experiencing homelessness in your community. I encourage you to read the following brief, explore the links that I have provided, and collaborate with other local leaders to distribute this critical information to your community

In 1991, the United Nations declared housing to be a fundamental human right. Still, homelessness in America remains one of the most significant public health concerns to this day. In 2019, the [US Department of Housing and Urban Development](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf) determined that, in just one night, 568,000 people were experience homelessness in the United States. This population faces unique health challenges including an increased risk for mental and physical health conditions and substantial barriers to health care and affordable housing. In addition, this population faces decreased access to hygiene and sanitation necessities including running water and hand soap. These factors put those experiencing homelessness at a greater risk of contracting and surviving the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

In response to the recent coronavirus outbreak, President Trump released the [President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America - 15 Days to Slow the Spread](https://dph.georgia.gov/15-days-slow-spread). These guidelines include (emphasis added):

* If you feel sick, stay **home**. Do not go to work.
* If your children are sick, keep them at **home**. Do not send them to school.
* If you are an older person, stay **home** and away from other people.
* If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition, stay **home** and away from other people.
* Even if you are young, or otherwise healthy, you are at risk and your activities can increase the risk for others. It is critical that you do your part to stop the spread of the coronavirus:
	+ Work or engage in schooling from **home** whenever possible.
	+ Practice good hygiene.

\*\*\* In states with evidence of community transmission, bars, restaurants, food courts, gyms, and other indoor and outdoor venues where groups of people congregate should be closed.

It is likely that you have seen these guidelines and have contributed to their distribution as well. The idea of working from home, studying online, and leaving home only for essential needs is impossible for the half-million people experiencing homelessness in America today. Closing “venues where groups of people congregate” without offering safe alternative housing is detrimental to the physical, social, and mental well-being of this community. President Trump is not alone in excluding the homeless population from COVID-19 related communications. The Georgia Department of Public Health offers [information specifically for vulnerable populations](https://dph.georgia.gov/people-higher-risk-severe-illness), but fails to mention those experiencing homelessness.

As local leaders, it is imperative that your COVID-19 communications target every individual in your community at risk for this disease. Further, these communication efforts must be made accessible to all. To address this, the CDC has released the [Interim Guidance for Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) among People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html). Included in their guidance is information on how to best plan, prepare, and respond to the COVID-19 emergency, specific for the homeless population. This interim guidance recommends providing straightforward language that is appropriate to a variety of audiences. Further, these communication efforts should be developed and delivered in partnership with other local leaders within your community and via signs, or visual communication aids, posted in strategic locations.

Use the following checklist\* when developing these visual communication aids to ensure that you have covered the information that those experiencing homelessness in your community deserve to know:

* The most recent information about COVID-19 spread in your area
* Advice to avoid crowded areas if COVID-19 is circulating your community
* Social distancing recommendations
* Hand hygiene instructions, cough etiquette instructions, and advice not to share personal items
* How to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if they are sick
* What to do if their friends, family, or community members are sick
* How to isolate themselves if they have symptoms
* Updated information on where to find food, water, hygiene facilities, regular healthcare, and behavioral health resources if there have been local closures or changes

\*You are also encouraged to use the checklist graphic included within this brief. It provides additional criteria to consider when developing your visual communication aids.

 It is recommended that you also consider the information provided by the CDC’s [Interim Guidance for Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) among People Experiencing Unsheltered](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html) in order to fully plan, prepare, and respond to the COVID-19 emergency in your community.

I thank you for leading your community into safety from COVID-19, but I urge you not to forget your neighbors experiencing homelessness along the way.

Stay healthy,

Logan C. Leggett

B.S.H.P. Health Promotion '21



