

Contact: 805-212-9484

September 17, 2020

### **Health Officer Order Issued for All Individuals Entering or Residing in Homeless Shelters and H-2A Housing**

Ventura, CA – The County Health Officer, Doctor Robert Levin, has issued a new Health Officer Order requiring temperature screening, self-evaluation and reporting of COVID-19 cases at all homeless shelters and H-2A housing in the County of Ventura. This Order is effective September 18 at 12:00 am.

The new order stipulates the following:

1. All individuals entering or residing in a homeless shelter or H-2A housing shall be screened for COVID-19 symptoms daily.
2. If through daily screening an individual or resident has symptoms related to COVID-19 the individual must immediately self-isolate and notify the manager, operator, owner of the facility or employer.
3. The operator, manager, owner of homeless shelters or the employers providing H-2A housing must immediately notify the Ventura County Public Health Department when there is one case of confirmed COVID-19 in the homeless shelter or H-2A at 805-981-5201 .

Public Health strongly recommends that homeless shelters and H-2A housing utilize stable groups to reduce potential transmission of COVID-19 in these types of housing. The screening listed in this order has already taken place throughout the pandemic response at homeless shelters in the County of Ventura. The shelter partners are screening for symptoms including temperature checks multiple times per day. This includes the publicly and privately funded emergency shelter programs. These screening efforts are also taking place at agricultural facilities and businesses throughout the County.

Providing direct outreach to farmworkers has been a top priority throughout the County's COVID-19 response efforts. A Ventura County Health Education Program called Cultivating Health in Agriculture takes important resources to the farms. The effort includes Ventura County Medical Center Doctors in partnership with Public Health, the Farmworker Resource Program and Logrando Bienestar. The team provides medical and mental health and wellness outreach where physicians visit the farms to answer questions, test and provide prevention information.

The Ventura County Health Care Agency has waived fees and costs related to any respiratory or COVID-19 related treatment during the response efforts. The clinics have also provided expanded multi-lingual tele-health efforts to answer questions and provide guidance. Drive through testing sites were launched in Oxnard, Moorpark, Ventura and Santa Paula offering no cost COVID-19 testing for all community

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members. The testing is offered during later evening hours at all sites and on weekends at the Oxnard site.

In April, the County, in collaboration with the County Executive Office, the Farmworker Resource Program, Farm Bureau of Ventura County, Ventura County Agricultural Association, many local growers and the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, issued an Advisor for Agricultural Worker Protection to be used during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Advisory provided information for employee hygiene emphasizing hand washing, staying home when sick and social distancing to avoid the spreading of illness during work activities and breaks. The advisory also provided guidance for employers to have soap or disinfectant, potable water and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and throughout facilities. Instruction for routine environmental cleaning in high traffic areas, training and limiting nonessential visits and travel were included in the advisory.

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office also issued 1,000,000 masks to agricultural sites throughout the County. These measures have helped to protect farmworkers. Farmworker cases are 3.80% of the total positive cases. Other vulnerable populations include 65+ years at 9.4%, Healthcare Workers at 5.4%, Long-term care facilities at 4.9%, and Service Industry workers at 2.30%.

The Public Health team responds when there is any report of an outbreak to a facility. Testing is provided and contact tracing begins so that those who may have been exposed to a positive case are alerted and provided with guidance for self-quarantine. This immediate response has helped to limit additional spread. Public Health also provides alternative temporary housing at local hotels for those who have been exposed or tested positive to COVID-19.

In addition to the Advisory, mask distribution and site visits there has been on-going multilingual educational outreach. This includes resource information with Farmworker paychecks, WhatsApp messaging, videos in multiple languages, social media messaging in partnership with community partners, public service announcements, outreach at local businesses, churches and schools, digital sign board messaging and streaming of press conferences, board meetings, doctor question and answer time and town halls in English and Spanish.

In addition to this outreach, early on the County funded expanded evening hours for Food Share pop-up sites allowing for more accessibility to food and a rental assistance program was launched to provide funding for those who cannot afford to pay rent due to COVID-19 impacts. The [Farmworker Household Assistance Program](#) is also open for applications for \$1,500 for household expenses.

The County's Farmworker Resource Program coordinators serve the agricultural community throughout the year. They have been conducting regular outreach throughout the pandemic. The program is staffed by trilingual employees who speak indigenous languages like Mixteco and are knowledgeable about the agricultural industry and serve as outreach resources to farmworkers and their employers.

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