



## **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA & NORTHERN NEVADA**

### **OFFICIAL STATEMENT: VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA IMPLEMENTS PROTOCOLS IN HOMELESS SHELTERS AND HOUSING FACILITIES TO REDUCE RISK OF EXPOSURE TO COVID-19 VIRUS**

*Sacramento, California – Friday, March 13, 2020* – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), persons experiencing homelessness may be at greater risk for infection during the COVID-19 outbreak and has published interim guidance for homeless service providers. CDC has developed recommendations for service providers about how to plan, prepare, and respond to this emerging public health issue.

Following CDC advice, Volunteers of America (VOA) is working to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 virus by increasing protections for the 4,060 veterans, families, seniors, people with underlying health conditions, and other individuals experiencing homelessness, living in shelters, in permanent supportive housing, or in other VOA programs across Northern California & Northern Nevada. VOA is implementing the following prevention strategies to mitigate unnecessary spread of virus:

- Directing all staff to stay home if they are sick.
- Posting signage and educational information about communicable disease prevention techniques, symptoms, and response protocols at entrances and other strategic places at all shelter and housing sites.
- Advising all staff to report any recent international travel to a geographical area identified by the CDC as being a locus of COVID-19 (China, Italy, Iran) or if they are experiencing flu-like or respiratory symptoms.
- Advising all staff and program participants to vigilantly practice respiratory hygiene etiquette.
- Conducting in-service training for all staff on communicable diseases and the use of universal precautions and educating residents and clients about the daily preventative actions they can take.
- Encouraging diligent use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as latex gloves, shoe shields, and face masks for use in public areas, when handling belongings, and when caring or attending to a client.
- Ensuring that common areas in all facilities are following good practices for environmental cleaning and increasing the frequency of cleaning of common touchpoints including door knobs, light switches, handrails, bathroom surfaces and fixtures, trash cans, computer keyboards, desks and phones.
- Increasing our supply of soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, tissues, trash baskets, and disposable face masks, and placing additional hand sanitizing stations at all shelters.
- Continuing to daily monitor staff and residents' health, particularly with respect to flu-like symptoms.
- Cancelling or postponing all donor, volunteer, and outreach events scheduled through end of April.
- Limiting visitors to all shelters and housing programs.

Volunteers of America remains committed to the health and safety of our staff, clients, and volunteers. As additional information becomes available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), VOA will update our protocols as needed.