

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are alternative care sites and alternative housing sites needed?

When an outbreak of a disease reaches the point where it is actively spreading in a community, the community, community organizations, and local and county governments must work together to help slow the spread and reduce demands on the health care sector so the most seriously ill people get the supportive care they need.

The County of Monterey has taken a series of significant actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among vulnerable populations and protect Monterey County residents. In other words, while the community is doing its part by strictly adhering to the Shelter-In-Place Order and social distancing protocols, the County is doing its part in working to drastically flatten the curve. The Care and Shelter Strategy is one of many strategies used to slow the spread of COVID-19, so as not to overwhelm the healthcare system.

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with each other (within about 6 feet). Many community members, typically extremely vulnerable populations, have no option to self-quarantine or isolate, thus continuing the spread of the disease.

There continues to be a growing number of people infected with the virus and is anticipated to continue for several months.

The Care and Shelter Branch has worked to develop an aggressive, two-pronged approach to meet the medical care and housing needs of Monterey County communities in response to the anticipated surge of COVID-19 cases over the next several months. This approach uses Alternate Care and Alternate Housing Sites.

- **Alternative Housing Sites** are needed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and reduce demands on the health care system so the most seriously ill people get the medical attention they need. COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with each other (within about 6 feet). Many community members, typically extremely vulnerable populations, have no option to self-quarantine or isolate, thus continuing the spread of the disease.
- **Alternative Care Sites** are needed to support an increased surge of patients beyond the capability of the local hospitals.

2. Where are the sites located?

The County team scouted and consulted with private building owners, cities, CSUMB, and Federal installations to identify the most advantageous locations. Alternative Care Sites and Alternative Housing Sites are planned to be strategically placed throughout the county to meet

the needs of the whole community. The Monterey County Emergency Operations Center has currently identified Alternative Housing Sites at:

- Monterey County Fairgrounds, City of Monterey
- San Lorenzo Park, King City
- Salinas Valley Fairgrounds, King City
- Sherwood Hall, Salinas

An Alternative Care Site will be located at:

- Marina Airport, City of Marina (Joby Aviation facility)

3. How were these sites chosen?

Sites are chosen based on the demand by the community, level of medical care needed at the facility, and the pre-existing infrastructure of the location, such as proximity to healthcare facilities, distance from supply chains, square footage, trailer hook-ups, transportation routes, security, to name a few.

4. Who qualifies for Alternate Housing or Alternate Care Sites?

Alternate Care and Housing Sites are specifically for COVID+ people and persons under investigation by the Health Department. The Monterey County Health Department is the agency that makes referrals to these sites. Individuals cannot request this type of housing or care; no walk-ins are accepted at any of these sites.

Here are examples of those who would be referred for Alternate Housing or Care.

Alternate Housing:

- Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and cannot isolate themselves or return to their housing situation and
- Who are under investigation by the Health Department and living in congregate living conditions,
- Who live in congested conditions,
- Who are minimal acuity patients requiring minimal support,
- Who are currently hospitalized but can be discharge to a lower level of care and have no housing alternative,
- Who live in a congregate living facility (such as long-term care, group homes) and need to be moved out of the facility, and
- Who are living in the general population and cannot return to their place of residence for social distancing reasons.

Alternate Care:

- COVID-19+ with higher acuity patients requiring closer monitoring or medical care.

5. I think I qualify for Alternate Housing, what should I do?

The Monterey County Health Department decides who qualifies for Alternate Housing. A limited number of entities can make referrals to the Health Department for housing. These entities are:

- Hospitals
- Monterey County Department of Social Services
- Primary Care Physician
- Clinics
- Congregate Living Facilities
- Ag Employers
- Homeless Service Providers – utilizing HMIS.
- Transitional Housing Facilities for homeless people

6. Who decides when someone needs to go to an alternative location?

The Monterey County Health Department.

7. Why are some patients being sent to housing sites and others sent home?

Many community members, typically extremely vulnerable populations, have no option to self-quarantine or isolate, thus continuing the spread of the virus.

8. How many individuals will be housed in alternate sites?

Each site has different capability levels ranging from 1 person to 200 people.

9. How will those in these sites have their needs met if they must isolate?

Each site is self-sustaining. Food, hygiene, linen laundering, and hazardous waste management will be provided, and the site will be staffed for 24-hour operations. Because this housing is set up to isolate patients, there will be strict adherence to physical distancing including ample space between patient areas including tall privacy partitions.

10. What kind of services are available at these Alternate Housing Sites?

Alternative Housing Sites will have 24-hour medical staff on site to attend to basic medical needs. Behavioral Health staff will be at the site in the event mental health services are needed and 24-hour Site Management staff to assist guests.

11. How long will ‘guests’ at care sites need to stay at these locations? How long will these sites be open?

Alternate Housing Sites will be open for as long as they are needed to care for residents; all guests will stay until they are released by the Health Officer. Patients will stay until they are medically released.

12. How will the community be protected from COVID-19 positive patients who are in these locations?

Alternate Housing Sites

Persons being housed at Alternative Housing Sites will undergo a referral and screening process and will be asked to sign a code of conduct to stay at the location. Once at the site, they are not allowed to leave before being released by the Health Officer. Once released, they will be transported back to their place of residence/origin.

To better understand how the Alternate Housing Site referral and intake process works, here is a step by step walkthrough of the process from intake to release:

- A referral for housing is made to the Health Department. The Health Department accepts the referral for a patient or person to be transferred to Alternative Housing. The patient/person is notified they have been accepted to a housing site and agree to be transported.
- The patient/person is taken to the Housing site by arrangements made by the County Emergency Operations Center
- Arrivals are checked into the facilities, which includes a security check and the patient/person signs a code of conduct.
- The patient/person is provided an area for spending their isolation/quarantine. Those using this housing are separated by gender and families. “Rooms” are divided by partitions that maintain separation between clients.
- Medical staff is onsite 24 hours to oversee patients and evaluate if any additional medical care is needed
- In the event of a medical emergency, patients will be taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital
- Behavioral health, social services assistance is available on site to address any needs patients may have.

- Each site will have 24-hour security teams to handle issues which may arise and to maintain the security of the housing site. Patients are not allowed to leave the fairgrounds.
- When the patient's isolation/quarantine is completed, they will be transported back to their home location using arrangements made with Monterey County's Emergency Operations Center

In the unusual event that a patient wishes to leave the quarantine early or is unable to comply with the code of conduct, they will be transported from the Housing Site back to their home location even if their quarantine time is not yet completed.

Alternate Care Sites

Alternate Care sites are an extension of hospital treatment and procedure. While at an Alternate Care Site, patients will be under the same type of care and routine as if they were in a hospital.

13. If there is a medical emergency involving one of the people in the care sites, how will it be handled?

Alternative Housing sites will have 24-hour medical staff. Should more than routine health services be required, patients needing assistance will be transported to the nearest hospital.

14. Will there be services available to the general public, like testing or walk in clinics?

Walk ins will not be accepted. Testing is not available.

15. What type of security is at these sites:

Each site will have high-level security on hand to safeguard both the community and patients. Security teams will be tasked with location safety, ensuring patients abide by quarantine rules and routine, low-level disturbances that can be quickly addressed. Should a situation escalate, local law enforcement would be called upon. In the unusual event that a patient cannot comply with the Housing Site code of conduct, that patient will be allowed to elope from the program and will be transported by Emergency Operations Center staff to their home location.

16. Is there a plan?

Yes. The Care and Shelter Branch of the Monterey County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 3/18/20 to implement the [Monterey County Operational Area Care and Shelter Plan](#) (Approved by the Board of Supervisors on [September 17, 2019](#)), an Annex to the [Monterey County Emergency Operations Plan](#). The Care and Shelter Plan, which addresses traditional

emergency housing and shelter needs during natural hazards events, has been modified to address the specific requirements of caring for individuals in congregate and non-congregate settings during a highly infectious pandemic, at the guidance of the Health Department. This plan will be reviewed and updated with new policies and procedures that have been developed during response in the After Action Review post pandemic.

17. Concerns? Complaints?

The Monterey County Health Department COVID-19 Hotline 831.769-8700 or 831.755.4521 or email covid-19@co.monterey.ca.us