Below are some important takeaways from HUD’s 3/20/20 COVID-19 Planning and Resources Office Hours this afternoon:

* The CDC is **correcting guidance previously issued to clarify that the recommended distance between beds in a shared shelter dormitory is 3 feet for people who are not sick**, and, only if isolation is not possible, 6 feet for people who are sick.
* The risks associated with sleeping outdoors in an encampment setting are different than with staying indoors in a congregate setting (e.g., emergency shelter). Outdoor settings may allow people to increase distance between themselves and others. However, sleeping outdoors often does not provide protection from the environment, quick access to hygiene and sanitation facilities, or connection to healthcare. The balance of risks should be considered for each individual experiencing unsheltered homelessness. **Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments** during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread. The CDC has released Interim Guidance for Responding to COVID-19 Among People Experiencing unsheltered homelessness (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>)
* Norm Suchar (Director, HUD SNAPS Office) repeatedly emphasized that **all projects should make COVID-19 response their top priority**. HUD is actively working to find opportunities to **ease regulatory and submission burdens, and will strongly consider the crisis in future monitoring**.
  + HUD is working on regulatory waivers to provide flexibility for projects to better able focus on COVID-19.
  + HUD is working, for example, on a waiver for HQS requirements during the crisis, and indicated that they understand that HQS may not always be feasible and that projects can continue to provide assistance if HQS is delayed.  They suggested, for example, using remote strategies for HQS, like Facetime, when feasible.
  + Norm recommended, if your project needs to deviate from usual practices in order to ensure focus on critical COVID-19 related activities, that you make a brief note explaining the rationale in your project files, so that it is documented for the purposes of future monitoring.
  + Norm recommended that projects and CoCs  focus on COVID-19 and that HUD understands this will impact things like performance and monitoring.
* HUD staff indicated that the **recommended path to secure necessary protective, hygiene, cleaning and other supplies** is through your local county and, as necessary, state departments of health and that those agencies are coordinating requests to the federal government.
* Norm strongly encouraged all housing projects, particularly those where the grantee or subrecipient is the owner or sponsor, to **avoid evictions** whenever possible.  If your project feels you have no choice but to evict someone, he recommended reaching out via the Ask-a-Question portal on the HUD exchange (<https://www.hudexchange.info/program-support/my-question/>) or directly to the SNAPS Office for assistance in problem solving to avoid eviction.
* HUD is working to process grants awarded in the 2019 CoC competition as quickly as they can so that they can be executed.
* They are assessing all options for easing burdens related to the 2020 CoC NOFA and the Unsheltered Homelessness NOFA.
* Though he urged projects to follow guidance issued by local and state authorities, Norm indicated that projects should plan for **continued operations of direct services to clients during any ordered or recommended shut downs of other types of local businesses.**

If you missed the webinar, HUD indicated they would post slides and a recording soon at [**SNAPS COVID-19 Infectious Disease Prevention & Response**](https://hudexchange.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=87d7c8afc03ba69ee70d865b9&id=279e14b120&e=f85ae35650)