

The Link's Answers to Commonly Asked Questions regarding COVID

1. What unanticipated COVID-19 needs are you experience? What resources would be most helpful?

- The top priority would be additional funding.
- Advocacy with Congressional Members, state reps and local elected officials to include additional funds for emergency shelter, housing and healthcare services for people experiencing homelessness and/or sex trafficking in their COVID-19 responses and beyond.
- Help with getting items that are hard to find right now such as Hand Sanitizer, Disinfectant Wipes, Spray Bottles, Masks (although obviously health care should have these first!).
- Expedited budget revision requests or flexibility to move funds between budget line items as needed to respond to the current situation.
- Allow for flexibility and extensions on grant reporting and suspend monitoring visits during this time.
- Allow flexibility and understanding of outcome and workplan requirements.
- Drop the attendance requirements for meetings during this time-even if they are over the phone at this time as again many of our staff are working around the clock to keep everything running.
- All of the providers are receiving a lot of surveys and requests for our COVID-19 plans and wondering if these requests could somehow be streamlined.

2. Are you seeing an increased need for your services?

Yes!

3. Are you planning to expand or change your capacity in response to COVID-19? If so, how?

Yes we have had to make a lot of changes. The Link is obviously still required to be open and we WANT to be but here is a summary and please see attached statement for more information.

- All of our site based 24/7 programs are still operating 24/7 (Juvenile Supervision Center, Lindquist Apartments, Passageways Emergency Shelter, Passageways Housing Program, Northside Prevention Program, Housing First, Project Live Out Loud, Suburban RRH).
- Our C.O.R.E. Drop-In Center is maintaining its hours at Grace Church however any work outside of drop-in hours is now being done 1:1 with youth and/or remotely as much as possible.
- Traditional street outreach is being changed accordingly to meet the needs of our agency and community (may keep changing regarding several things including changes with encampments, our own shelter coverage needs, etc.)
- We are trying to serve as many additional youth and young families as we can within all programs.
- We have implemented screening questions, have worked as best we can to identify isolation areas or rooms in each program, will utilize masks with sick youth if they become available and have/are following all cleaning and hygiene protocol set out by the CDC/MDH.

- We are training our staff and youth regarding all kinds of things like social distancing, hygiene, above protocols, etc.
- We are assisting youth who had jobs and lost them with unemployment enrollment and also helping to cover their portions of their rent (as we always would).
- Implemented guest bans, no tours, no volunteers-basically no one is allowed into any of our sites except for the youth and Link staff.
- We've implemented staffing contingency plans within some sites already as several staff are out due to being sick, pre-existing conditions that make them more vulnerable and/or having children. (We are qualified for the first responder day care-however-it just started yesterday and is only for kindergarten-6th grade so parents with younger children and who's daycares are closed don't have that option and some are worried about having all the first responders children together due to coming from homes with higher contact with others)

4. Are youth agencies coordinating around this?

Yes-we always do but especially during times like this-very thankful for incredible partnerships!

Federal Level: National Network 4 Youth, True Colors, A Way Home American and National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Coalition for Juvenile Justice

State Level: Youth Services Network, MN. Coalition for the Homeless, Safe Harbor Grantee Network

Local Level: Hennepin County Youth Collaborative, TOG (The Outreach Group), Streetworks