



STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM STRATEGIES IN LIGHT OF COVID-19



COVID-19/Coronavirus has so drastically changed the way we all live and work. National Network for Youth (NN4Y) is extremely proud of how the RHY community has risen to the new challenges we're all facing. During this unprecedented crisis, the needs of young people experiencing homelessness are in jeopardy. Street Outreach Programs are the first line of defense for these young people by providing basic needs at this crucial time.

At NN4Y, we are seeing firsthand the impact COVID-19 has on young people throughout the country. Our young people are already underserved by our crisis response system. We are talking to young leaders, community partners, and policymakers to bring up-to-date information to programs so they can effectively work with young people experiencing homelessness during this crisis.

Street Outreach Programs (SOP) work with homeless, runaway, and street-connected youth to help them find safe and stable housing and services. SOPs focus on developing relationships between outreach workers and young people that allow them to rebuild connections with caring adults.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STREET OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Young people experiencing homelessness might be disconnected from the news, therefore, providing some basic information on how they can protect themselves will help them protect themselves from contracting COVID-19 as well as prevent them from spreading it to others.

What to communicate:

- You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it.
- The virus can spread to people who are within about 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 when that person coughs or sneezes.
- The virus can spread through direct contact with their saliva or mucus.

More information can be found at:

- Federal website: <https://www.coronavirus.gov/>
- Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance: <https://www.rhyttac.net/covid-19>

How to Continue Providing SOP Services in Light of COVID-19:

1. For youth who are connected with cell phones think about:
 - Outreach to youth via social media (Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok). For example, a drop-in center in Pennsylvania is having virtual groups using Instagram live. Case managers are engaging with youth through this platform and still providing basic services;
 - Provide check-ins to ensure they are well and have the supplies they need;

- Utilize virtual hangouts (e.g. Google Meet, Zoom, Go-to-Meeting, etc.); and
 - Suggest proactive activities such as hiking, painting, crafts. Bring supplies that help young people stay active (e.g. markers, adult coloring books, and others)
- 2.** For youth who are not connected (don't have access to phones/computers, etc.):
- Drop off supplies where young people gather;
 - Create/print pamphlets to let young people know how to keep themselves safe during this crisis; and
 - If a young person does come towards you during outreach, tell them to stop and explain to them what is happening. Social distancing is crucial to ending this crisis.
- 3.** For young people engaged in survival sex:
- If they meet their sex partners online or make a living by having sex, have them consider taking a break from in-person dates. Video dates, sexting or chat rooms may be options for them.
 - More guidance can be found: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-sex-guidance.pdf>

SAMPLE POLICIES FOR CASE MANAGEMENT DURING A CRISIS

These policies are intended for educational examples. Please use these policies as starting points and fit them to meet the needs and operations of your organization.

SAMPLE POLICY

- All case management services will be limited to phone and electronic media unless they can be done face to face at least 6 feet apart.
- Drop-In services will be limited to 4 youth at a time to provide support for basic needs only – limit the amount of time inside so that youth can rotate. The exterior door will remain locked to control access to the space.
- Meals will be served to no more than 4 youth at a time.
- There will be no clothing closet or hygiene supply closet visits, youth can request items and staff will bring items out to the youth or arrange a drop-off offsite.
- Small drop-in rooms are off-limits.
- All computers will be used for meeting basic needs only and be wiped down and disinfected immediately after use.
- Youth will be expected to wipe down all handles/hard surfaces in the shared youth restrooms and shower after each use and provided with supplies to do so.
- The mobile food pantry will continue, food boxes will be dropped off outside the door of youth residences and youth will be notified of the drop off via electronic media.

SAMPLE POLICY TWO

- Staff continues to respond to the crisis, Safe Place, and Youth Connection Helpline calls.
 - Staff complete a COVID-19 screening and obtain a temperature from youth at each in-person contact.
 - Staff complete additional assessment, TAY-VI-SPDAT, etc. from a safe distance following social distancing (CDC recommended distance is 6 feet).
- Staff utilizes a minivan in order to maintain social distancing.

- The minivan surfaces will be cleaned between each use.
- Only one staff person is in the office at a time.
 - The office surfaces are being cleaned as each person exits and enter.
 - Staff shifts do not overlap, i.e. one person leaves 15 minutes before the other arrives.
- The second person on shift is working from home and providing case management
 - Whenever possible case management is being provided and arranged over the phone or video conferencing.
 - When in-person case management takes place the same procedures as crisis response.
- Staff are putting together supply kits to be passed out to clients through street outreach.