



Preventing the Spread of Covid-19: *Congregate Housing Considerations for Direct Service Providers*

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Disasters and influxes of displaced arrivals may require housing large numbers of people in congregate settings (e.g., hotels) for a temporary period of time. While families may be housed in separate rooms, shared spaces may facilitate congregation. Given that most of these settings house people of multiple generations and different vaccination statuses (with some fully vaccinated, some partially vaccinated, and others remaining unvaccinated), there is an increased risk of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions expects an ongoing surge of COVID-19 cases in the coming days to weeks as the new [Omicron variant](#) continues spreading across the United States. The Omicron variant spreads more easily than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus, but how easily Omicron spreads compared to Delta remains unknown. CDC expects that anyone with Omicron infection can spread the virus to others, even if they are vaccinated or don't have symptoms. More data is needed to know if Omicron infections, and especially reinfections and breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated, cause more severe illness or death than infection with other variants.

Current vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant. However, breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are likely to occur. With other variants, like Delta, COVID-19 vaccines have remained effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.

If they are not already fully vaccinated, all Afghan evacuees five years of age or older should be encouraged to become fully vaccinated as soon as possible. For those who received one or more doses outside of the United States see [applicable CDC guidance](#).

The recent emergence of Omicron further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and boosters. People are eligible for booster shots:

- 5 months after their second dose of Moderna/Pfizer
- 2 months after the one dose of Johnson & Johnson or
- 6 months after the last dose of all the recommended doses of a COVID-19 [vaccine listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization](#) (WHO-EUL) or a completed mix-and-match series composed of any combination of FDA-approved, FDA-authorized, or WHO-EUL COVID-19 vaccines received in another country

This means that many Afghan evacuees may not yet be eligible for their booster shots.

With all these factors, this means that Afghan evacuees may be at a significantly increased risk for infection from Omicron. Below are a few recommendations for preventing, mitigating, and managing COVID-19 in congregate settings:

Arrival to Housing

- Before Arrival:
 - Consult with housing management to determine whether COVID-19 educational materials can be posted in public places prior to arrival of clients.
 - Determine a staff member(s) who will serve as a point(s) of contact for guests who may have any COVID-related questions and/or concerns.
 - Identify interpreters who will work with staff point(s) of contact.
 - Tip: Depending on the context and cultural appropriateness, both female and male interpreter(s) may need to be available.

- Provide points of contact (staff and interpreters) with training materials related to how to answer COVID-19 questions accurately and within their scope and role.
- Relevant Resources:
 - Conversation Guides: The National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRC-RIM) has conversation guides available that contain scripted responses to frequently asked questions about the following topics:
 - [General Questions](#)
 - [Boosters and Third Doses](#)
 - [Breakthrough Infections](#)
 - [Children and Youth](#)
 - [Variants of Concern](#)
 - [Employer Vaccine Requirements](#)
 - [Fertility + Parenthood](#)
 - [Wearing a Mask](#)
 - [Immigration](#)
 - [Johnson & Johnson Vaccine](#)
 - [Settle In](#): Clients can ask any questions they may have about resettling in the United States through Facebook Messenger. The service is available in Dari, Pashto, and English.
- **On the First Day:**
 - Provide each family with a COVID-19 kit that contains masks, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, and in-language information about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation (please see materials in the 'Additional Resources' section below).
- **Within the First Few Days:**
 - Have a staff member go to each new family to:
 - Provide COVID health education covering: COVID prevention & mitigation methods, testing & contact tracing, quarantine & isolation, and COVID-19 vaccinations.
 - Check each family member's vaccination status.
 - Coordinate vaccination appointments (if needed) for both adults and eligible children.
 - Establish a method of communication between family and staff point of contact. Stress the importance that clients reach out to their staff point of contact as soon as possible if they 1) receive a positive COVID test result and/or 2) begin to experience any COVID-related symptoms.

Health Education

- Disseminate relevant, translated COVID-19 information (e.g. state & federal COVID-19 mandates, timely COVID updates, general health messaging, etc.) through distribution channels that are preferred by the clients (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, flyers, phone calls, tabling).
 - Tip: Disseminate information in multiple formats (written, audio, video) to accommodate varying degrees of literacy.
- Hold community information/health education sessions to disseminate important COVID-19 information as well as address questions and/or concerns from the clients. If possible, integrate COVID-19 information into Cultural Orientation classes to reinforce health messaging.
 - Tip: These sessions may be most effective with smaller group sizes so that communication can be tailored to each group's questions and/or concerns. This will also help limit crowds of people and facilitate COVID-19 safety and precaution protocol. Cultural considerations, such as whether to hold separate sessions for men and women, should also be taken into account.

Prevention and Mitigation

- Weather permitting, encourage clients to promote ventilation with flow of outdoor air (e.g. opening windows, opening doors if the doors open directly to the outdoor environment).

- Reinforce the importance of COVID-19 prevention and mitigation precautions using in-language posters/flyers.
- Have masks, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies available throughout the hotel.
- Have designated staff to encourage mask usage while clients are outside their hotel rooms and in congregate settings for eating or prayer.
- Relevant resources
 - CDC's "[Please Wear a Mask](#)" ([Dari](#), [Pashto](#))
 - CDC's "[Stop the Spread of Germs](#)" ([Dari](#), [Pashto](#))
 - NRC-RIM's "[Wearing a Mask](#)" Fact Sheet ([Pashto](#))

Testing and Contact Tracing *Contact your local public health agency for case investigation, contact tracing, and testing guidelines and potential support.

- If possible, acquire adequate COVID-19 testing supplies/arrangements for clients in the hotel in advance. Contact your local health department or local COVID-19 testing site to learn more about how to acquire testing supplies and/or ways they may be able to support.
- Clients should be tested on a regular basis while living in congregate settings.
 - Tip: If self-test kits are used, as testing instructions are often only available in English (and sometimes Spanish), it may be helpful for staff to walk through/demonstrate with an interpreter how to use the kit and how to report test results to the staff member designated as their point of contact.
- Clients should be instructed to report to staff point of contact as soon as possible if they 1) receive a positive COVID test result and/or 2) begin to experience any COVID-related symptoms.
 - If a client receives a positive COVID test result and/or begins to experience any COVID-related symptoms, the point of contact should:
 - Test or facilitate testing of client and any family members/individuals who have had close contact with the client.
 - If anyone tests positive, the staff point of contact should share in-language information to the client, the client's family, and the designated caregiver about how to [care for a sick family member](#), how to [quarantine/isolate](#).
- Relevant resource:
 - The CDC has archived this document, "[Guidance for Large or Extended Families in the Same Home](#)," that may contain relevant information, particularly around how to isolate a sick family member, how to care for a sick family member, and how to quarantine when exposed to someone who is sick (these are also available in [Dari/Pashto](#)).

Quarantine and Isolation *Contact your local public health agency for quarantine and isolation guidelines and potential support.

- Staff should prepare/arrange for delivery of livelihood needs (e.g. food, hygiene items, etc.) for any client/family that is undergoing quarantine or isolation.
- Staff point of contact should regularly check-in (via phone or if in person, with appropriate mask usage and social distancing) with any client/caregiver who is undergoing quarantine or isolation to address any questions, needs, or concerns. Ideally check-ins would be daily, even if just over quick texts, but if capacity is an issue check-ins should be every other day to make sure clients and their families are doing okay.
- Relevant resources:
 - CDC's [10 Things You Can Do to Manage Your COVID-19 Symptoms at Home](#) ([Dari](#), [Pashto](#))
 - CDC's guidance on [Quarantine and Isolation](#)

Additional Resources

Please also see the CDC’s curated [resource page](#) for Operation Allies Welcome (resources available in English, Dari, and Pashto). In addition, below are resources in print, audio, and video that may support your work.

Print

These resources can be used as flyers to be posted and as materials to be handed out. The following resources include COVID-19 prevention guidance from the CDC in addition to COVID-19 vaccine materials developed by NRC-RIM.

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Title	Agency/Organization	Languages
Please Wear a Mask	CDC	Dari , Pashto , English
Stop the Spread of Germs	CDC	Dari , Pashto , English
What To Do When You Are Sick with COVID-19	CDC	Dari , Pashto , English
10 Things You Can Do to Manage Your COVID-19 Symptoms at Home	CDC	Dari , Pashto , English
COVID-19 Vaccine Facts	NRC-RIM	Dari and Pashto (English translation)
After Vaccination Fact Sheet	NRC-RIM	Dari , Pashto , English
Vaccines for Children and Youth	NRC-RIM	Dari , Pashto , English
Wearing a Mask	NRC-RIM	Pashto , English

Audio/Video

For audiences who may have varying levels of literacy, audio and video PSAs may be effective methods to distribute information. These resources may be played on screens in areas of high traffic or viewed privately through individual phones. The following are a selection of PSAs from the [NRC-RIM website](#). Please see the website for the full collection of PSAs available.

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Title	Description	Languages
Welcome and the Current COVID-19 Context	Welcome video describing the current COVID-19 situation in the US.	Dari: Video Pashto: Audio English: Script
PSA: COVID-19 Vaccines are Safe and Effective	COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Side effects are normal and mean the vaccine is teaching your body how to fight the virus. You CANNOT get COVID-19 from the vaccine. Protect yourself. Protect your community. Get vaccinated.	Dari: Audio Video Pashto: Audio Video Farsi: Audio Video English: Audio Video
PSA: COVID-19 Vaccines are Halal and Do Not Change Your DNA	The COVID-19 vaccine is halal. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain any animal products. The COVID-19 vaccine does not change your DNA. The vaccine has been proven safe for thousands of people, including those of different races, ethnicities and ages. Protect yourself. Protect your community. Get vaccinated.	Dari: Audio Video Pashto: Audio Video Farsi: Audio Video English: Audio Video
PSA: Stay Safe After Being Vaccinated	Stay safe after being vaccinated from COVID-19. Right now, experts don’t know how long the vaccine will protect you. Even after getting the vaccine, continue to wear a mask, practice social distancing, wash your hands often, and disinfect high-touch areas frequently.	Dari: Audio Video Pashto: Audio Video Farsi: Audio Video English: Audio Video