

Guidance for Shelters on Communicable Disease Reporting:

When to Report an Illness to Your Local Health Department

Communicable Disease Reporting

Timely and complete disease reporting allows public health agencies to rapidly respond to communicable disease issues and helps ensure that preventative measures and resources reach the right people.

The NCDHHS Division of Public Health reminds shelter operators to take the following actions:

- Notify the local health department (LHD) if they become aware of a case or suspected case of a [reportable disease](#). Reportable diseases are those for which public health notification is required by state statutes and rules (see examples in table below).
- Report all suspected outbreaks to the LHD, regardless of whether the outbreak is caused by a reportable or non-reportable disease.
 - Outbreaks may include respiratory, gastrointestinal (GI) or rash illnesses. Some common examples are shown in the table below.
 - Outbreaks should be reported even if the specific virus or bacteria causing the illnesses is not known.

Below are examples of common illnesses that can assist shelter staff in determining when to report

DISEASE	WHEN TO REPORT
Any reportable condition Common examples for shelters: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pertussis (whooping cough)• Measles• Varicella (chickenpox)• Meningococcal disease• Salmonellosis• Shigellosis• Tuberculosis	The LHD should be notified of a single case of any known or suspected reportable disease Follow the reporting timeframe for each disease in the reporting rule (immediately, within 24 hours or within 7 days)
Non-reportable respiratory illnesses Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID-19• Influenza• RSV• Other general respiratory illness	The LHD should be notified of two or more cases of respiratory illness in the same shelter within 14 days. Lab confirmation is not necessary.
Non-reportable GI illnesses (“stomach bug”) Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Norovirus• Other general GI illness	The LHD should be notified of two or more cases of GI illness in the same shelter within 14 days. Lab confirmation is not necessary.
Other common non-reportable conditions Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scabies• Hand, foot and mouth disease• Other general rash illnesses	The LHD should be notified of two or more cases of rash illness in the same shelter within 14 days. Lab confirmation is not necessary.

SURVEILLANCE AND MASS CARE SERVICES:

- Conduct daily health screenings of all shelter residents, including symptom assessments and temperature checks if needed.
- Have plans in place for prompt medical evaluation and treatment of suspected and confirmed cases.

DISEASE REPORTING:

- Work with the LHD for the county in which the shelter is located to determine how suspected cases and outbreaks should be reported. The North Carolina Communicable Disease Branch's 24/7 epidemiologist on-call line is available 24/7 at 919-733-3419 for consultation.
- Maintain accurate records of suspected (based on symptoms) and confirmed (positive lab, such as a rapid COVID test) cases, including symptoms, exposure history and treatment provided.

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION:

- Provide information to shelter residents about the importance of hygiene and disease prevention measures.
- Post clear signage regarding infection control practices (e.g., [pages 58, 61, and 69 of APIC guide](#)).

INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES:

- Isolate individuals with suspected communicable diseases in designated areas.
- Ensure adequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities for handwashing.
- Promote good hygiene practices and regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces.

Refer to NCDHHS [disaster/shelter resources](#) for more information and guidance

