

MASK ON A homeless person, with a mask just below his nose, is putting away his belongings before he transfers to another area to stay at for the day.



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While most have the advantage of quarantining from the comfort of their home, the homeless population does not share that same luxury. Those who are experiencing homelessness have a higher chance of being exposed to and contracting the coronavirus due to their lack of shelter and clean resources.

Following the spread of covid-19 in early 2020, employment declined significantly. According to the state Legislative Analyst's Office, 2.6 million people lost their jobs between March and April last year. The stay-at-home order enacted by California Governor Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti placed preventative guidelines on a multitude of businesses.

Photos by **Ivan Delgado** | The Mirror Photo Editor

HOMELESS & VULNERABLE



DAILY ROUTINE An unidentified person poses for a portrait while organizing his items to make space for his bed.



Various establishments were legally obligated to temporarily shut down in order to slow the spread of the virus.

This led to a decrease in sales, which ultimately caused some businesses to go and others to downsize. Although the federal government has provided some aid to businesses, many renting space still had trouble paying their rent while landlords were still allowed to evict them. The result is an increase in homeless population numbers.

The Center for Disease and Prevention (CDC) explains that because many people who are homeless are older adults or have underlying medical conditions, they often are at an increased risk for severe illness than the general population.

Part of this disadvantage can be explained by the living conditions that most homeless individuals often face, including living in close proximity to one another and having little to no access to quality medical care.

Covid-19 testing for homeless individuals is limited and not easily accessible. With homelessness rates in Los Angeles being so high, an estimated 66,436 people, the lack of care and testing can be dangerous.

According to the CDC, those who are homeless and wish to get tested must meet the "criteria for testing" which includes having symptoms for covid-19 or being in recent contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus. The criteria must then be approved by their healthcare provider. After gaining approval,

KICKED TO THE CURB Unidentified people are organizing their possessions since the police repeatedly kicked them out due to the large homeless population in the area.



homeless individuals will be directed to homeless healthcare clinics or street medicine clinics to receive free testing.

For those without a healthcare provider, a covid-19 test can be provided by some street medicine clinics and shelters.

Treatment is also more difficult to get if a homeless person becomes ill with covid-19 because many struggle to afford over-the-counter medication to relieve symptoms and are not always guaranteed a bed to rest in while recovering.

The CDC recommends that homeless people with coronavirus isolate themselves from others and wear a face mask. In terms of sanitation, there is not much that can be done due to the lack of resource accessibility.

If masks and other supplies are needed, most homeless shelters can help provide these resources. Homeless shelters continue to provide housing for the homeless despite the pandemic due to the increased need for shelter. This need sprouts from the higher risk of contracting the virus when sleeping on the street and coming into contact with high numbers of individuals. Social distancing and masks are required in shelters to maintain the safety of both staff and the homeless.

Recently, various homeless shelters and clinics across California have begun administering the coronavirus vaccine for the homeless, which can aid in increasing safety for homeless individuals.



How to help the homeless

California has the third-highest homeless population in the US making the issue of homelessness undoubtedly a concern. Though it may seem like the extent to which you can offer support is limited, you can play a part in helping those experiencing homelessness.

A simple greeting: Saying a friendly "Good Morning!" or "Have a nice day!" to homeless individuals is a small, impactful act of kindness which anyone can do while walking down the street.

Donating: Giving clothing, food and supplies to your local homeless shelters helps the homeless population receive essential resources.

Giving: If you have the financial means, purchasing a snack or drink for someone in need can make their day.

Volunteering: Spending time helping out at a homeless shelter or local soup kitchen is helpful as these facilities are often understaffed.

Respect: Treating the homeless without judgement or prejudice helps change the issue of inhumane behavior towards homeless people.

WAITING FOR A RIDE

An unidentified person is waiting for the bus while also taking care of her belongings which she carries with her on a daily basis.