



San Francisco Department of Public Health

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For immediate release

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San Francisco Department of Public Health Reschedules March 4th Project Homeless Connect Event

**Decision coincides with release of CDC guidance for mass gatherings and
community events to assist event planners going forward**

***City's decision reduces risk of exposure to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in a
vulnerable population at a centralized location
Services will continue to be available to individuals experiencing homelessness***

San Francisco, CA -- The Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced that the quarterly Project Homeless Connect event at Bill Graham Auditorium will be rescheduled from March 4th in order to reduce the risk of exposure to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) among people experiencing homelessness. Out of an abundance of caution for this particularly vulnerable population, DPH has determined with Project Homeless Connect that the supportive services will be better deployed through existing homeless service channels and not at a single centralized gathering.

The DPH decision coincides with the release of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for mass gatherings and community events, which will help event planners make decisions going forward. Though San Francisco has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date, we are preparing for cases and community spread of the disease, based on changing patterns in the Bay Area, the state and the country. San Francisco started local testing for COVID-19 on Monday, March 2.

As part of San Francisco's preparation and response to novel coronavirus, DPH has prioritized protecting the populations that are most vulnerable to becoming very sick or dying if they get COVID-19. That includes the elderly and people with chronic diseases and underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease and lung disease. People who are homeless in San Francisco are considered a vulnerable population because they are older as a group and typically have multiple chronic medical conditions.

Project Homeless Connect is an event that brings community services together in one centralized location. The event is staffed by hundreds of volunteers, including health care professionals, and typically draws up to 1,000 participants to receive various services throughout the day. However, given the increased risk to medically vulnerable people for



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complications if they get COVID-19, the DPH and Project Homeless Connect determined to reschedule the event at this time. The event connects people to city services, such as DPH's Street Medicine Team, vision care, employment services, and other important care provided by hundreds of service providers and nonprofits. Those programs remain open and available to serve this population. Project Homeless Connect will share additional information in the coming days on where people can go to continue receiving these services on their [website](#).

DPH is not generally recommending the rescheduling of public events in San Francisco. However, those that involve vulnerable populations should be carefully reconsidered at this time. We advise all event planners to review CDC [recommendations](#) on mass gatherings released on March 2nd.

For more information about COVID-19, visit [sfdph.org](https://www.sfdph.org) and the [CDC](#)'s coronavirus website.

CDC Recommendations (March 2, 2020)

Detailed information can be found at: (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>)

Summary:

- 1) Review the existing emergency operations plans for your venues
 - **Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team at your venues.**
 - **Establish relationships with key community partners and stakeholders.**

- 2) Address key prevention strategies in your outbreak response plan
 - **Promote messages that discourage people who are sick from attending events.**
 - **Promote the daily practice of everyday preventive actions.**
 - **Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies at your events.**
 - **Plan for worker absences.**
 - **If possible, identify a space that can be used to isolate staff or participants who become ill at the event.**
 - **Plan ways to limit in person contact for staff and participants at your events.**
 - **Develop flexible refund policies for participants.**
 - **Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel events.**

- 3) Communicate about COVID-19 and every day prevention actions
 - **Update and distribute timely and accurate emergency communication information.**
 - **Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to event staff and participants.**

If there are additional questions not covered by the CDC guidance, the Emergency Operations Center has established an email where you can submit your questions about a specific event: coronavirus_event@sfgov.org