



June 8, 2020

The City of Bellingham, in partnership with Whatcom County and Lighthouse Mission Ministries, is working to relocate the Drop-in Center low barrier emergency shelter facility from its temporary location at Bellingham High School. The destination facility, which will serve as the new host for the Drop-in Center, must provide for adequate physical spacing that allows guests to sleep with a minimum of six feet of space between guests. This will greatly reduce the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak among guests, staff, and volunteers at the shelter, and by extension reduce risk to the community at large.

COVID-19 infections have been shown to be much more likely when individuals are unable to maintain six feet of physical distance from one another. In congregate sleeping facilities, such as low-barrier emergency shelters, the risk is even greater. It is extremely important that people experiencing homelessness are provided safe shelter for the sake of their wellbeing and that of the broader community.

Although an available vaccine would dramatically reduce the need for physical distancing, current estimates suggest that a vaccine is unlikely to become available soon. The most optimistic predictions suggest that a vaccine could be available in 18 months, but it is possible that it could be many years before a safe and effective vaccine is identified, produced, and distributed.

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