

Infection Control Among the Homeless during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background

- Homeless population in Columbus has doubled in one year
- 37 homeless camps in Columbus removed last summer
- 2020 attendance at homeless shelter exceeded capacity
- Health disparities are higher among the homeless
- Top health problems among Bartholomew county's homeless are mental health, substance abuse, dental care, skin integrity, & infection
- Lack of resources makes this population more vulnerable during a pandemic as they are unable to utilize optimal infection control methods and CDC recommendations

Purpose

Mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless population by providing them with protective equipment and education on infection control using limited resources

Method

200 bags were handed out between three hot meal sites. Each bag contained two reusable cloth masks, hand sanitizer, and education. To evaluate effectiveness, the percentage of participants who arrived wearing masks the day of the intervention was compared to the percentage who arrived wearing masks at the same site the following week.

Results

Handout Locations & Dates	Masked Before	Masked After	Percent Increase
First Christian 10/23/2020	11.11%	26.67%	240%
First Presbyterian 11/6/2020	24.49%	57.89%	236%
First United Methodist 11/9/2020	29.17%	64.52%	221%


Paired t-test shows a 2-tailed significance of $p=0.047$, a statistically significant increase in mask wearing after the intervention. The project was effective in increasing the use of personal protective equipment among the homeless population during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Resources


- CDC. (2020a). Coronavirus disease 2019: *How to wash masks*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html>
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- Potts, D. (2020). *Part of wearing a mask is washing a mask: Here's the best way*. Loma Linda University Health. <https://news.llu.edu/health-wellness/part-of-wearing-mask-washing-mask-here-s-best-way>
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COVID-19 Infection Control


*Before & after putting on mask, wash hands with soap in warm water for 20 seconds. If water is unavailable, rub hand sanitizer into hands until dry.




*Wash masks daily in warm, soapy water. Rub vigorously and rinse well or launder with clothing in washing machine. Masks can also be soaked for 5 min. in a solution of 1 tablespoon bleach plus 3 cups of water.



*Dry masks in the dryer on high heat or in midday sun for at least one hour on each side. UV light from the sun will kill 99.99% of pathogens.



*When not in use, fold masks in half with outer side facing out and store in a paper bag to reduce contamination.



References

CDC. (2020a). Coronavirus disease 2019: How to wash masks. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html>

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Potts, D. (2020). Part of wearing a mask is washing a mask: Here's the best way. Loma Linda University Health. <https://news.llu.edu/health-wellness/part-of-wearing-mask-washing-mask-here-s-best-way>

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