



## Minimizing Risk of COVID-19 Exposure in Shared Housing National Park Service

February 17, 2022

### Executive Summary

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledges that shared housing<sup>1</sup> increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19. The health, safety, and well-being of National Park Service (NPS) employees, concessioners, and other commercial service providers, leaseholders, volunteers, and partners (hereinafter collectively referred to as partners) is a top priority of the NPS.

The NPS considered current information on how the COVID-19 virus spreads, transmission rates, the availability of testing, and the availability and effectiveness of vaccinations in deciding to make the following updates to the COVID-19 shared housing policy. This guidance applies to all in-park housing, including that for partners.

- **Each park unit with shared housing must develop, and the superintendent must accept, a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan** for NPS employees and volunteers residing in the park. **Each NPS partner with employees or volunteers residing in a park unit also must develop a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan** and submit it to the NPS superintendent for review and acceptance. The COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan must include a risk assessment, a plan to manage the need for quarantine and isolation, and strategies to prevent and mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in shared housing. See *Developing a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan* for more information.
  - The quarantine and isolation portion of a park or partner’s COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan should use the most recent CDC [quarantine and isolation guidance](#) unless more stringent state and local requirements apply. The CDC adjusts the guidance using the best scientific information available. Currently, the quarantine guidance distinguishes between individuals that are [up to date](#) on their vaccinations, including booster dose(s) when eligible, and those that are not. This distinction impacts the number of individuals that may need to be quarantined and the length of the quarantine, and therefore, the number of separate and safe onsite or offsite living quarters the park or partner reserve for quarantine purposes per their COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan. Employers should recognize that some vaccinated people may still need to quarantine following a close contact exposure to a COVID-19 case if they are not “up-to-date.”
- The latest information from the CDC indicates that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. Therefore, **fully vaccinated people may share sleeping space.**
- As unvaccinated individuals are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 (if exposed) and a higher risk of severe illness (if contracted), **unvaccinated individuals should not be assigned to shared bedrooms** but may share common space. If the superintendent or partner determines that there is a compelling need for unvaccinated individuals to share bedrooms with other unvaccinated individuals, the COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan must include stringent prevention and mitigation strategies including a COVID-19

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, shared housing is defined as any arrangement where two or more unrelated persons can share a bedroom, bathroom, or a kitchen.



screening testing program and adequate reserved housing necessary to support longer quarantines and the possibility of severe illness. Fully vaccinated individuals may not share sleeping space with unvaccinated individuals outside of their family unit.

Parks and partners should continuously monitor risk levels and mitigation strategies that could alter their operations (e.g., if confirmed COVID-19 cases increase in the local community, parks and partners may decide to decrease shared housing operations). Likewise, the NPS may need to adjust the servicewide approach as circumstances continue to evolve. The NPS will update this document as the CDC updates its guidance.

For more information on how to implement this guidance in developing shared housing plans, including questions about rental rates, see the supplemental [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).

### Vaccinations

Per the CDC, currently available vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with all known COVID-19 variants. However, [breakthrough infections](#) in people who are fully vaccinated can occur. Fully vaccinated people who become infected can spread the virus to others. Also, people with weakened immune systems, including people who take immunosuppressive medications, may not be protected from severe disease even if they are up to date on their vaccinations.

The CDC recommends staying [up to date](#) on vaccinations by receiving a booster dose when eligible. Per the [CDC](#), data from clinical trials showed that a booster shot increased the immune response in trial participants and protected against severe disease. Additionally, current CDC guidance is that individuals that are up to date on their vaccinations do not have to quarantine if they have a close contact exposure unless the exposed individual develops symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 (in that case, the exposed individual should isolate). The updated CDC quarantine guidance should help parks and partners in determining the amount of housing that needs to be reserved for quarantine and isolation as part of their COVID-19 Shared Housing Plans.

### Developing a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan

Any park or partner with shared housing must develop and implement a plan to manage the risk of COVID-19 in shared housing. To develop a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan, the NPS recommends using the steps in Table 1.

**Table 1: Recommended Steps and Resources for Developing a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan**

#	Action
1	Use the <a href="#">NPS Risk Assessment Tool</a> and the <a href="#">Shared Housing Plan Review Tool</a> to determine risk and gather information that will inform the COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan. <b>Note:</b> The tools should be used regularly to monitor as the risk level will change.
2	Review DOI, NPS, and CDC guidance to inform the COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan. Refer to the following sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan Version 2.1</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NPS Coronavirus Response Information</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NPS Action Steps for COVID-19 Case Management and Reporting</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NPS Self Screening Guidance</a> and <a href="#">Testing for COVID-19</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NPS Public Health COVID-19 FAQs</a></li><li>• <a href="#">NPS “If/Then” Table for COVID-19 Scenarios</a></li><li>• <a href="#">CDC Quarantine and Isolation</a></li><li>• <a href="#">CDC Considerations for Owners and Operators of Multifamily Housing Including Populations at Increased Risk for Complications from COVID-19</a>.</li></ul>



#	Action
	If the park is unsure about the level of risk for their unique housing programs, they may consult with a Regional Public Health Consultant.
3	<p>Develop a COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan. The plan must include the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention and mitigation strategies, including, but not limited to vaccination, screening testing, physical distancing, mask wearing, and cleaning/disinfecting.</li> <li>• An assessment of the risk of exposure and the risk of severe illness to tenants in various housing scenarios and a determination of the level of risk the park or partner is willing to allow tenants to assume.</li> <li>• A plan to accommodate unvaccinated individuals and those at <a href="#">high-risk for severe illness</a>.</li> <li>• A plan to manage confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases or exposure for tenants in shared housing. The plan should provide specific details about how to immediately isolate and support the tenant (while protecting their privacy) as well as a strategy to further limit and prevent exposure and illness among other tenants. The plan must include establishing separate and safe onsite or offsite living quarters to isolate or quarantine as indicated in <a href="#">CDC guidance</a>. See <a href="#">NPS Action Steps for COVID-19 Case Management and Reporting</a>.</li> </ul>
4	Once developed, the park’s superintendent reviews the COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan. If acceptable, the superintendent approves the park’s plan and accepts the partner’s plan.

Additionally, the park or partner should consider the following components in the COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan:

- How will new residents be onboarded into shared housing (e.g., what information should be provided during check-in, should any restrictions be added to the lease agreement?)
- How will individuals at [high-risk for severe illness](#) be encouraged to self-identify with their supervisor? Individuals who have an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should consider the risks of shared housing and are encouraged to raise any issues with their supervisor.
- How will clear direction be provided to people living in shared housing on the following requirements:
  - Masks must be worn at all times when inside a shared living facility, but outside of private bedrooms, except when dining, bathing, and sleeping. For more information on the requirement, see the August 16, 2021, [memorandum](#) from the Deputy Director, Operations (exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director).
  - All employees, partners, and volunteers must self-monitor for COVID-symptoms as outlined in the [DOI Workplace Safety Plan](#). If displaying symptoms, stay home and notify your supervisor (preferably by phone).
- How will the COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan be flexible so that adjustments can be made if transmission rates rise? For example, how will the park or partner increase the number of bedrooms/units reserved for quarantine and isolation purposes, if necessary?
- How does the park and partners incorporate screening (testing)?

### Understanding the Spectrum of Risk in Shared Housing Occupancy

The ability to prevent exposure and respond to and mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in shared housing varies, so park leadership must decide the level of risk to assume. Table 2 presents examples of housing scenarios on a continuum of increased risk.



**Table 2: COVID-19 – Shared Housing Scenarios**

Scenario	Description	Risk Assessment	Risk Scale
Scenario 1	Each person has own bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and living room	There is little risk of COVID-19 exposure between people living in shared housing	
Scenario 2	Each person has own bedroom but shares a kitchen, living room, and/or bathroom	There is some risk of COVID-19 exposure between people living in shared housing. Risk is reduced if prevention and mitigation strategies are followed.	
Scenario 3	Two or more unrelated people share sleeping space	There is high risk of COVID-19 exposure between people living in shared housing.	

The table above demonstrates the risk of exposure based on different housing scenarios. However, the difference in developing illness, particularly severe illness, is affected greatly by vaccination. Although partners may not currently be subject to vaccination requirements, any sound COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan should, at a minimum, recommend vaccination as a key component.

It is important to note that a large proportion of transmission occurs through social gatherings in off-duty hours. Strict adherence to prevention and response/mitigation activities at all times should be promoted.

### Commercial Service Provider and Partner Housing

This guidance is applicable to commercial service providers such as concessioners and other partners that have in-park housing as outlined in the guidance above. Failure of the commercial service provider or partner to effectively implement their accepted COVID-19 Shared Housing Plan will be reflected in their performance evaluations and could, if unresolved, result in suspension or revocation of the commercial service provider or partner’s authorization. For more information on NPS partners and COVID-19, visit the [Public Health Information for the Park Partner Community website](#).

### Resources

- [NPS Coronavirus Response Information](#)
- [NPS Risk Assessment Tool](#)
- [NPS Shared Housing Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [NPS COVID-19 Guidance for Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers](#)
- [NPS Action Steps for COVID-19 Case Management and Reporting](#) (for employees and volunteers)
- [NPS Action Steps for Managing and Reporting COVID-19 Cases Among Commercial Service Providers, Contractors, and Partners](#)
- [NPS Public Health COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [NPS “If/Then” Table for COVID-19 Scenarios](#)
- [DOI Employees COVID-19 Information Portal](#)



- [DOI Workplace Safety Plan](#)
- [CDC Considerations for Owners and Operators of Multifamily Housing Including Populations at Increased Risk for Complications from COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Quarantine and Isolation](#)
- [CDC Overview of Testing.](#)