



For Immediate Release

**Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice, Good Samaritan Haven, & People's Health & Wellness Clinic
Collaborate to Offer Free COVID Surveillance Tests to Homeless Central Vermonters**

Barre, VT – Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice (CVHHH), Good Samaritan Haven, and People's Health & Wellness Clinic (PHWC) are collaborating to offer free COVID-19 surveillance testing to homeless and displaced Central Vermonters. Tests are available through mid-April at pop-up sites at eight Central Vermont locations, including motels where individuals are being temporarily housed during the pandemic and at Good Samaritan Haven in Barre.

This project is being funded through a grant from the State of Vermont that is being held by Good Samaritan Haven. CVHHH and PHWC are providing planning support, clinical oversight, and staffing to help individuals self-administer tests and to ensure proper procedure is followed for specimen collection and results notification.

Tanya Crawford-Stempel, Public Health Nurse Supervisor for the Barre District Office of the Vermont Department of Health, says that people living in motels during the pandemic are in a higher risk category for contracting COVID because the motels are considered congregate and/or semi-congregate settings. In addition, it was identified that there are barriers for people experiencing homelessness to access resources for COVID testing, and these individuals may also experience distrust or discomfort getting COVID tests.

Rebecca Goldfinger-Fein, Executive Director of PHWC, concurs. "Testing in these settings can greatly reduce the spread of the virus and catch any COVID cases early on, ensuring proper medical care, quarantine practices, and contact tracing." This is especially important, says Rebecca, because many of the people in this community are considered to be particularly vulnerable to COVID due to existing medical conditions and age. Rebecca says that by offering testing onsite, where individuals live, this program reduces time and transportation barriers that may exist for some residents and guests.

The Health Department, PHWC, CVHHH, and Good Samaritan Haven have collaborated in the past to support Central Vermonters experiencing homelessness to get flu and Hepatitis A vaccinations at local motels. Tanya Crawford-Stempel said that prior outreach was beneficial to getting the surveillance testing off the ground. "Key to our efforts are partnerships that allow us to build positive, trusting relationships with this population. We feel fortunate that we have such great community partners in PHWC, Good Samaritan Haven, and CVHHH. They are essential, and it's going to save lives."

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