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# LESSON LEARNED

## Quarantine and Isolation: Homeless and Transient Populations

### SUMMARY

Federal, state, and local public health officials should address homeless and transient populations in their response plans for an infectious disease outbreak.

### DESCRIPTION

During the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak, a homeless shelter in Toronto, Canada was placed under quarantine after a homeless man displaying SARS-like symptoms was admitted to a local hospital. The shelter's lack of a preparedness plan for quarantine and isolation procedures made it difficult to implement the order effectively. Although the homeless man eventually tested negative for the disease, Canadian health officials point to the poor response during this incident as an example of the susceptibility of homeless and transient populations.

In a report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of Louisville School of Medicine recommends that federal, state, and local public health officials should develop a quarantine plan for an infectious disease outbreak within the homeless and transient populations. The report specifically suggests that federal funds be available to rent buildings capable of housing numerous homeless and transient individuals.

### CITATION

- University of Louisville School of Medicine. *Quarantine and Isolation: Lessons Learned from SARS*. 30 November 2003.  
(<http://www.louisville.edu/medschool/ibhpl/publications/SARS%20REPORT.pdf>)

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