IWILEI HOMELESS SHELTER TO BE TEMPORARY ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE SITE AS PART OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND HOMELESS STATEWIDE UNIFIED RESPONSE GROUP

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HONOLULU – As a way to step up efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and lower the number of rising cases, the Behavioral Health and Homeless Statewide Unified Response Group, composed of state, city, and nonprofit agencies, is taking swift, decisive action to intervene.

I.H.S, The Institute for Human Services Sumner Men's Shelter in Iwilei is being temporarily established as a quarantine and isolation facility after 7 new cases were identified through the latest round of testing. The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness, The City and County of Honolulu and the Institute of Human Services (IHS) will be continuing to partner together to contain the community spread of COVID-19 in this elevated strategy for disease management by having shelter guests remain in place and complete their isolation or quarantine requirements without moving to another location.

Over the last several days IHS, the City and County, and the State had been systematically relocating guests identified in contact tracing who had tested positive to quarantine offsite. But the latest cluster of cases indicated community spread had occurred within and the safest and most efficient path to suppressing the current outbreak is to transition into a quarantine facility. "At this juncture, isolating the positive cases at the shelter and providing quarantine beds and wrap-around services for the other occupants to stay in place is the best strategy for preventing the spread of the virus," said Eddie Mersereau, DOH deputy director of the Behavioral Health Administration. "We are working with IHS, the City and County, and community partners to provide the necessary services to support the men affected by this need to quarantine, many of whom are employed and who are choosing to do so for the greater good of our community. I am extremely proud of the proactive response of the partners and the residents in the effort to do our part in managing the wider issue of community spread of COVID-19."

"With widespread disease transmission throughout Honolulu, we knew this might be an eventuality and we planned and prepared for it," said IHS Director Connie Mitchell. "As part of the Behavioral Health and Homeless Statewide Unified Response Group, we will be working with our State and City and County partners to meet the needs of the individuals we have sheltered here

as they responsibly quarantine to prevent any further spread of the virus. It's a sacrifice that many in our community are being called upon to emulate."

The Sumner shelter provides rest and respite services for up to 112 adult men each night since social distancing had already reduced their capacity. On Aug. 5, the shelter learned of its first positive case. On Aug. 7, Project Vision Hawai'i began testing guests identified as most at risk based on contact tracing and first positive test results were received on Aug. 8.

The shelter will be temporarily closed to new admissions for reorganization and thorough cleaning as individuals in isolation and quarantine complete their stay there for at least 14 days. IHS is working with DOH on case investigation, outreach, and testing to determine when the shelter may reopen and resume normal services and the City and County are assisting with support. "Time is of the essence as we work to control the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We will continue to work with our partners at the Department of Health, and the IHS Men's shelter, to support the quarantine and isolation effort at IHS, and to adapt to further needs in this very vulnerable population," said Marc Alexander, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Housing. "With the current level of community spread occurring on O'ahu, it's going to take all levels of government, as well as the public to effectively curb the spread of this virus."

All necessary resources will be leveraged to provide services at the shelter as we wrap the shelter, its staff and the residents with medical, meals, counseling and other services. The partners welcome any support that other organizations or the community are interested in offering. Organizations interested in providing support may contact IHS Community Relations Officer Jill Wright. Increased outreach services for individuals who are homeless in the community served by the Sumner shelter are being planned and will be conducted in coordination with Partners in Care and the Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness.

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PDF: Iwilei homeless shelter to be temporary isolation and quarantine site as part of Behavioral Health and Homeless Statewide Unified Response Group