

CDC reviewing 'stunning' universal testing results from Boston homeless shelter

[Drew Karedes](#)

BOSTON — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now "actively looking into" results from universal COVID-19 testing at Pine Street Inn homeless shelter.

The broad-scale testing took place at the shelter in Boston's South End a week and a half ago because of a [small cluster of cases there](#).

Of the 397 people tested, 146 people tested positive. Not a single one had any symptoms.

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"It was like a double knockout punch. The number of positives was shocking, but the fact that 100 percent of the positives had no symptoms was equally shocking," said Dr. Jim O'Connell, president of [Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program](#), which provides medical care at the city's shelters.

O'Connell said that the findings have changed the future of COVID-19 screenings at Boston's homeless shelters.

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"All the screening we were doing before this was based on whether you had a fever above 100.4 and whether you had symptoms," said O'Connell. "How

much of the COVID virus is being passed by people who don't even know they have it?"

The 146 people who tested positive were immediately moved to two different temporary isolation facilities in Boston. According to O'Connell, only one of those patients needed hospital care, and many continue to show no symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now "actively looking into" results from universal COVID-19 testing at Pine Street Inn homeless shelter.

"If we did universal testing among the general population, would these numbers be similar?" said Lyndia Downie, president and executive director at the Pine Street Inn. "I think there are no many asymptomatic people right now. We just don't know. We don't have enough data on universal testing to understand how many asymptomatic people are contagious."

Hundreds of tests are now set to be conducted at additional Boston homeless shelters in the coming days.

"It tells you, you don't know who's at risk. You don't know what you need to do to contain the virus if you don't actually have the details or facts," said Marty Martinez, Boston's chief of Health and Human Services.

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About 250 people are expected to be tested on Thursday and Friday at the men's Southampton Street shelter run by Boston Public Health Commission.

"Our goal within the next three or four days is to test everybody so we have

a good understanding of who has it and who doesn't," added Martinez.

More than 900 isolation beds have been set up locally [for people who are homeless](#). The majority of those beds have not yet been used, but local and state health officials aren't sure if that could change after more testing is complete.

[[Emergency shelter opens in Cambridge](#)]

Have you been sick or know someone who has been impacted by the coronavirus? Click here to [share your story with Boston 25 News](#).

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