



COVID-19 UPDATE

In mid-April, a young pregnant woman living at Nellie's went for a routine prenatal appointment. As a precaution, her doctor tested her for COVID-19 even though she had no symptoms.

It came back positive.

Nellie's staff quickly helped her move into one of the city's quarantine centres to protect shelter residents and staff. But soon after, other women and their children started to show symptoms of the virus.

It's tough, because when your mom gets it, you're likely to get it especially if you're sharing a room with her. To date there has been eleven confirmed cases in the shelter. The good news is that no one has needed to be hospitalized and everyone is recovering well.

In a shelter with 40 beds that was originally only designed for 16, it's challenging to practice physical distancing. There simply isn't enough space. It's the reality of shelter living, especially in an old shelter. This is just another reason why it's so important for us to move into the new shelter as soon as possible. Women will actually have private space and families won't be sharing rooms with single women or other families.

Until the pandemic hit, the conversation around the new shelter had been focused around greater accessibility and greater privacy for residents. Now, that conversation has shifted towards Nellie's ability to increase health and safety measures. Construction and renovations are currently underway at the new shelter but won't be complete until 2021.

To halt the COVID-19 outbreak, all of the women and their children moved out of the shelter and into a nearby hotel. Nellie's is not the first shelter to have to do this. Staff moved to the hotel as well to continue to create positive spaces for the women through our programs and workshops that offer therapeutic healing, personal growth and distraction during this challenging and stressful time.

Every inch of the shelter was thoroughly cleaned and disinfected but a pandemic specialist determined that it wasn't safe for all of the women to return – there simply isn't enough space to safely practice physical distancing. And so, to protect the health and safety of all our women and their children, as well as our front-line staff, we continue to operate from the hotel.

It is our hope to bring back women with children and pregnant women back into the shelter by mid-June. Single women will continue to live in the hotel, supported by staff, to allow for physical distancing in the shelter.

It's a complete shift in how we do business right now. COVID-19 is impacting our bottom line.

We're still here and we'll still be here at the end of this. When women who are at home and need us, we're still going to be here for them when they call.

To read more about how Nellie's has been dealing with the impact from the COVID-19 virus please read [What it's like living at Nellie's during Covid-19](#) or [How you can support the women and children living at Nellie's during COVID-19](#)



**For more information on supporting Nellie's please contact Ingrid Graham,
Director of Development at Ingrid@nellies.org or at 416-830-7424.**