

US MARKETS OPEN In the news

▲ Dow Jones	▲ Nasdaq	▲ S&P 500	▼ TSLA	▲ FB	▲ BABA
-0.19%	-0.17%	-0.17%	+2.02%	-1.52%	-0.48%

[HOME](#) > [OPINION](#)

I stayed at a free 10-day quarantine hotel in NYC when I got COVID-19. Programs like these need to be more widespread if we want to get a hold on the virus.

Catherine Morrison Sep 26, 2021, 9:04 AM



[← HOMEPAGE](#)

A scene from the first floor of the USC Hotel on April 27, 2020 where USC medical staff are allowed to self-

OPINION

Dani and his mother Gloria hadn't planned to stay in New York City for long. Traveling from Paraguay, they arrived in New York on June 28. They came to get a vaccination for Dani, 20, an electrical engineering student who is not yet eligible for the COVID vaccine in their home country.

The day before they were scheduled to board their flight home, Dani and Gloria found themselves staying in a hotel with scheduled meals, nurses visits, and outdoor breaks. They had tested positive for COVID-19, and the city recommended a stay at a COVID-19 isolation hotel. I met them because I had checked in, too.

NYC Health and Hospitals initially implemented the Isolation Hotel Program in April 2020. While the program provides a safe, affordable space for local residents and travelers to quarantine, very few have ever heard of it. So much so that I thought it was an online scam when I was desperately researching places I could stay to avoid infecting my roommate. New York's COVID-19 hotels are a powerful weapon in the arsenal against the pandemic, especially as variants continue to rise.

According to a spokesperson for NYC Health and Hospitals, the initial goal of the program was to provide safer spaces for patients suspected or confirmed to be exposed to COVID-19, who had been discharged from inpatient and emergency room settings, and who did not have places to isolate or quarantine. Now, the program is open to any New York residents — individuals who tested positive and their roommates — or out-of-state travelers who have tested positive or have been exposed to the virus.

[< HOMEPAGE](#)

[MARKETS](#)

5 altcoins to buy in this bull run: A crypto investor says overlooking the 4th industrial revolution and blockchain could turn the millionaires of today into the middle class of tomorrow — and shares his entry and exit strategies for each altcoin

New York operated five hotels at the peak of the pandemic, but hotels were decommissioned as infection rates decreased. Since March 2020, over 24,000 New York residents have checked in, but the hotels have never been at capacity.

The Laguardia Plaza Hotel on the afternoon of July 8, captured during a scheduled outdoor break Catherine Morrison

While New York's isolation program is not the only one in the country, it is one of the

[< HOMEPAGE](#)

quarantining spaces. More rural areas, however, have yet to implement such

programs.

"We know of no other city that created a hotel program as early or extensively as our own," a spokesperson for NYC Health and Hospitals said.

Now that variants have sparked a new wave, officials anticipate the number of patients to increase again, but shouldn't we be doing more to ensure people in need know about this option?

Staying in the isolation hotel

I checked into the hotel on the same day as Dani and Gloria. I had woken up that morning with a runny nose and a slight cough. To plan for the worst, I made my way to the CityMD walk-in clinic to get a rapid test. As I left the clinic, I got a call from the doctor.

"I'm sorry, but your result was actually positive," she said.

The person I was most worried about infecting was my roommate. After texting her that I was positive, I locked myself in my room until she could go get tested — thankfully she tested negative. Knowing that I wouldn't want to put her at risk by staying in our small apartment, I started looking into options for alternative housing. She was the one who sent me a text about the isolation hotel program. Immediately, I got on the phone and, within three hours, a car was downstairs, ready to drive me off to the hotel — at no charge because they didn't want me to take public transit.

Eligible under the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the city offers the program to guests entirely free, including a 10-night stay with three daily meals, a weekly laundry service, and four outdoor breaks a day.

[< HOMEPAGE](#)

8 cryptocurrencies to watch — and 2 criteria for identifying potential winners — according to a 24-year-old investor who has made hundreds of thousands of dollars in crypto

During the outdoor breaks, I spoke with the other guests to hear about how they got to the hotel. Everyone I met decided to enroll in fear of getting someone else infected.

Dani and Gloria were staying at Dani's aunt's apartment in Astoria, Queens when they got the news. Unsure of what to do, they got a call from the city the next morning informing them of the program and were brought via government-ordered ride share service to the LaGuardia Plaza Hotel.

"We were scared and we were looking for hotels to go to because we didn't want to infect [Dani's aunt]," Dani said. "And then they called us. We were so relieved."

[< HOMEPAGE](#)

Dani and Gloria on June 30, 2021, two days after arriving in New York City. Catherine Morrison

As I met more hotel guests, I questioned why more New Yorkers didn't use this program. Most infected residents probably assume there aren't reasonable alternatives and decide to isolate at home. But as household transmission is responsible for a vast majority of infections, and 77% of those infected with COVID

admit they cannot effectively isolate at home, why wouldn't more New Yorkers try to find a safe space to quarantine?

While it could be fear of leaving their homes, or being surrounded by other sick guests, or not having the knowledge of the program, it's evident that, in order for these programs to be most successful, the city needs to find ways to make it more accessible and the case for isolating effectively more compelling.

No one knows about this program

My classmate who also got infected when I did, Nidhi Upadhyaya, only learned about the program after the city contacted her two days after getting tested, once she had already found alternative accommodation.

"I was absolutely terrified about infecting my roommate," Upadhyaya said.

From social media advertisements to billboards to pamphlets handed out at testing centers around the city, there's so much more the city could do to make individuals aware of the program.

[← HOMEPAGE](#)

[PERSONAL FINANCE](#)

I let my husband handle our finances for years, but his sudden death at 37 forced me to

I let my husband handle our finances for years, but his sudden death at 57 forced me to heal my past money wounds fast and take control — all while in acute grief

"The program almost seems intentionally hidden," Jon Orbach, my other classmate who tested positive, said. "There could be advertisements on the subway or online. The only way of knowing about this program would have been word of mouth, so any advertisements would have increased public awareness."

A spokesperson from NYC Health and Hospitals explained that the city has released multiple campaigns promoting the hotel program, including on [social media](#) — though they have mainly been aimed at individuals with COVID-19 or those who have been exposed.

[< HOMEPAGE](#)

My room at the LaGuardia Plaza Hotel. Catherine Morrison

Missing from the hotel were New York's homeless — some of the most vulnerable during the pandemic. Between July 2019 and June 2020, [613 homeless New Yorkers died](#), a 52% increase from the previous year, indicating the tragic effects of the pandemic. With many of the city's homeless living in shelters, where keeping a safe distance is [nearly impossible](#), COVID was the leading cause of this increase in deaths.

However, New York is not alone in facing this problem. With over [580,000 people](#) in the United States experiencing homelessness and [COVID breakouts](#) occurring in shelters around the country, it's essential that this community have access to services like hotel isolation programs.

A spokesperson from NYC Health and Hospitals told me that people are most commonly referred to the program from a medical setting. Unfortunately, the homeless often don't have access to medical services that would allow for them to access referrals or learn about the isolation program. The spokesperson did say that the Department of Homeless Services also maintains a hotel isolation program.

While breakthrough cases were once seen as rare, they are now happening [all over the country](#). As cases continue to increase, it's clear that isolation programs will be even more important. Those living in community living situations, with elderly or sick people in their homes, and those with medical issues themselves benefit tremendously from having a safe place to quarantine.

It's important that cities that already have services in place work to better market their programs to reach residents and visitors. As well, it's crucial that they integrate the homeless community into their program to ensure they're able to access the

[← HOMEPAGE](#)

For those cities and states that don't yet have hotel isolation programs at all, it's time to work with cities like New York who have established hotel isolation programs to

make quarantining spaces available across the country.

 FOR YOU

TECH

Amazon just changed its remote-work policy in a big way. A leaked internal document reveals details about how the new system will work.



Was this article valuable for you?



NOW WATCH: Head of NYC Prepper's Network explains how to prepare for a self-quarantine

[< HOMEPAGE](#)

More: [Opinion](#) [COVID-19](#) [Pandemic](#) [Quarantine](#) ▼



* Copyright © 2021 Insider Inc. All rights reserved. Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our

[Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy](#) and [Cookies Policy](#).

[Contact Us](#) | [Sitemap](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Commerce Policy](#) | [CA Privacy Rights](#) | [Coupons](#) | [Made in NYC](#)

| [Jobs](#)

Stock quotes by [finanzen.net](#) | [Reprints & Permissions](#)

International Editions:

[INTL](#) | [AS](#) | [AT](#) | [AUS](#) | [DE](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#) | [IN](#) | [JP](#) | [MX](#) | [NL](#) | [PL](#) | [ZA](#)