

PLANNING TOOL FOR SEVERE WEATHER/EMERGENCY SHELTERING DURING COVID-19

This planning tool is designed to assist agencies and local jurisdictions to plan for short term severe weather/emergency shelter in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic. This document is intended to provide guidance and is not reflective of other local regulatory or jurisdictional requirements that may be required to operate an emergency shelter.

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 in congregate setting while providing this essential service to our community, agencies and jurisdictions should plan early to prepare sites, staffing models, and secure adequate supplies to maintain operations.

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FACILITY/SITE PREPARATION

SELECT SITES THAT ALLOW FOR ADEQUATE VENTILATION

- Sites that have HVAC systems that allow for medium or high efficiency, especially at the outdoor air intake are preferred. Ideally the system can be fitted with MERV 13 filter or the highest rated filter(s) that the system will allow.
- Windows that open to allow for fresh air.
- Air filtration should be adequate for the expected number of occupants in the space. We recommend a consultation with an industrial hygienist to assess air filtration for your site.

For spaces with limited air flow, as feasible, provide portable air cleaner/filtration that can achieve a clean air delivery rate (CADR) equal to or greater than the areas intended for use as a shelter.

- Multiple units may be used in the same space to achieve the necessary CADR, or consider upper air UV disinfection units.
- When choosing portable purifiers, select models that have been [certified by AHAM](#) (Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers).
 - Place units in areas most occupied.
 - Many units are designed to be placed on the floor, although some are designed for tabletops. Ensure airflow is not blocked, keeping at least a foot between the unit and any walls or other items (do not place unit directly against a wall or in a corner).
 - Keep unit 6-10 feet away from the head of a bed to avoid uncomfortable drafts.
 - Make sure that air coming out from portable units does not blow directly over one person to others to prevent possible COVID spread.

EVALUATE YOUR CAPACITY AND LAYOUT

DETERMINE YOUR OCCUPANCY

- Layout should allow for maximum social distancing in congregate spaces.
- Plan for 110 sq. ft. per cot for sleeping/dorm spaces
 - [American Red Cross](#) recommends 110 sq. ft. per person to allow for social distancing and for those with various needs requiring additional space recommendations. This can be adjusted to allow for people from the same household to shelter together.
 - Occupancy should conform to local building code as applicable.
 - The greater number of people in an indoor environment, the greater the need for ventilation with outdoor air. In areas where ventilation cannot be increased occupancy should be decreased.

CONSIDER ADA ACCESSIBILITY

- Accessible toilets and hygiene facilities
- ADA accessible sleeping spaces
- ADA accessible entrances and exits
- [Americans With Disabilities Act \(ADA\) Emergency Sheltering Checklist](#)

ADEQUATE HYGIENE FACILITIES

- Recommended 1 toilet per 20 people (CDC guidance.)
- Recommended 1 hand-washing sink per 15 people (CDC guidance).
- Hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol based) provided and placed at all entrances.
- If showers/bathing is provided, consider 1 shower per 15 persons. (CDC guidance)
- Diapering stations for families with small children. [Example: Diapering station for families with small children](#)

FACILITY FLOW AND LAYOUT

- Plan for isolation space for guests waiting for transport to an Isolation & Quarantine site. Provide an area separated by a door or barrier if possible.
- Set up a separate registration and screening area at entrance.
 - Provide barriers and privacy at registration and screening, if possible.
 - Ensure there is adequate space near the entrance and screening area to allow for adequate physical distancing.
- Consider delivering meals bedside to avoid people congregating. If this is not possible, the eating area should be separate, and tables and chairs spaced 6 feet apart. Stagger mealtimes to avoid overcrowding or congregating.
- If there is a staff break room, space tables and chairs at least 6 feet apart.
- Have separate entrance and exit for traffic flow, if possible.
- Mark spaces to indicate six-foot distance and traffic flow. Remove extra chairs from registration desk and high flow areas to avoid congregating of staff and guests.
- Cots and mats set up to allow for:
 - 6 feet apart on all sides
 - Arrange alternating for head to toe
 - Family groupings, when possible
- Designate an outdoor smoking area and mark spaces to indicate six-foot distance.
- Post a hand sanitizer or handwashing station at entrance of dorm style sleeping space.
- Post a site plan at the entrance indicating location of handwashing and toilet facilities.
- Post signage to promote hand washing, face coverings, and social distancing.
- The American Red Cross offers a comprehensive guidance and training video for shelter preparation during COVID-19 that can be used as a reference.
 - [PDF training: American Red Cross Covid-19 training for Partners](#)
 - [Video: Sheltering in a COVID Environment \(Congregate Shelters v2\)](#)

DEVELOP OPERATIONAL PROTOCOLS

- Processes for registration and screening of guests
- Staffing plan that includes screening and communications
- Just in time training for volunteers and staff that includes infection control practices.
- Cleaning and Disinfection plan
 - Instructions for how to clean and disinfect posted on-site
 - Protocols for cleaning mats/cots between guests
 - Person in charge for ensuring cleaning and disinfection schedule is maintained.
- Designate a person in charge for ensuring supplies are stocked and food deliveries are managed.
- Local emergency contacts
- Behavioral health resources for guests in crisis
- **King County Isolation and Quarantine (I&Q) referral line (206) 477-3977**

REGISTRATION

- Keep a registration list of all guests staying at the shelter including contact information and alternate contact information if available and guests are willing to provide it.
- Keep a logbook of check in and check out times for all staff and visitors.
- Maintain an updated bed map that notes individual bed assignments. Keep a copy of each daily bed map.
- Distribute health communication materials about risks and prevention measures for COVID-19.
- To support universal mask wearing, provide the guest a mask to wear if they are not already wearing one.
 - *Do not place a mask on children under age 2, or on anyone who is having trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or unable to remove the mask without assistance.*
 - *Remind all guests that they are expected to wear a mask while in the facility (unless sleeping or eating) unless they are unable to do so based on the exceptions listed above.*
- Prior to departure, ask guests if they will voluntarily share where they might go after leaving the shelter to ensure they are offered appropriate support if there is potential exposure subsequently identified.
- Shelter workers should use a trauma-informed and person-centered, kind, calm, respectful and welcoming approach when interacting with guests, especially when asking questions, ensuring that they are not overly intrusive.

SCREENING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- Staff and volunteers should stay home if they feel unwell. If they develop symptoms while working, they should notify their supervisor, return home, and follow the agency's protocol for ill workers, including prompt testing for COVID-19 and following isolation guidelines.
- Assign staff or volunteers to be designated screeners at every shift.
 - Control the shelter entrance and exit 24 hours a day to ensure everyone entering the shelter (including staff, volunteers, guests, and workers or delivery personnel) gets screened.
 - Ensure that screeners use appropriate PPE and maintain physical distancing with individuals they are screening
- Maintain positive and welcoming rapport with guests so that they will feel safe and open to notifying staff and volunteers if they feel unwell
- Observe everyone throughout the day in case symptoms arise and encourage guests to notify staff and ask for support if they feel off their baseline.
- Consider using a symptom screening algorithm such as this one:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/Screening-for-Symptoms-in-Homeless-Shelters.pdf>

FOR GUESTS WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- *Ideally all guests in the facility should already be wearing a mask regardless of if they have symptoms, but if they do not have a mask for whatever reason, ensure that they have a mask and are wearing it (unless unable to wear a mask because they are children under age 2, or having trouble breathing, unconscious, incapacitated, or unable to remove the mask without assistance).*
- Move the guest to an isolation space separated from other shelter guests, ideally with a designated bathroom.
- Encourage guest to consider going to I&Q and if willing, start to gather information needed to begin the referral. Contact King County Call Center between 8am and 10pm at 206-477-3977 to start the referral process.
- Encourage the guest to get tested as soon as possible (either immediately on-site if testing is available, or on arrival at I&Q)

FOR COVID-19 POSITIVE GUESTS

IF A GUEST IS FOUND TO BE COVID-19 POSITIVE (REGARDLESS OF SYMPTOMS)

- Give the guest a mask to wear if they are not already wearing one (see above).
- Move the guest to an isolation space separated from other shelter guests, ideally with a designated bathroom.
- Encourage guest to consider going to I&Q (see above).

CONTACT TRACING IN THE CASE OF COVID-19 POSITIVE GUESTS

- If a guest is found to be COVID-19 positive, ask when they began having symptoms (which will help determine their recommended isolation period).
- Ask the individual if they are willing to share any locations (especially homeless service sites) they visited 2 days prior to their symptoms starting (or 2 days prior to their positive test if they have not had symptoms).
- Provide descriptions and when possible names and contact information for individuals with whom they were in close contact (within 6 feet for a combined total of 15 minutes or more with a 24-hour period) starting 2 days prior to their symptoms starting (or 2 days prior to their positive test being collected if asymptomatic). Share the information with the Public Health COVID-19 Disease Investigators who will follow-up based on your call to the King County Call Center (206-477-3977).

COVID-19 TESTING IN RESPONSE TO POTENTIAL COVID-19 EXPOSURE

- If there is a potential exposure, contact Public Health to discuss options for testing.
- If a testing event occurs at your facility, provide a line list of all staff and visitors in the facility who will be on site at the testing event (as applicable).
- When possible, continue facility operations until test results are returned (~48 hours) and encourage all visitors to stay until they receive their results.
- If the severe weather event is over and the facility closes prior to receiving results, gather individual contact information (including alternate contact information such as case manager's contact information and known next location, if the guest is willing to provide the information).

COVID-19 MITIGATION MEASURES (MASK WEARING, HAND HYGIENE, AND SOCIAL DISTANCING)

HAND HYGIENE

- Hand sanitizer provided (at least 60% alcohol based).
- Hand sinks are stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Everyone is required to wash hands or use hand sanitizer upon entry.
- Temporary hand washing stations utilized when the emergency facility cannot provide convenient access to handwashing. [Appendix H: Sanitation and Hygiene Guide](#)
- Consider providing personal hygiene kits (individual hand sanitizer, body wipes, dental care products, socks).

MASKS

- All staff and guests should wear a mask when not eating, drinking, or sleeping, unless they have a disability or medical reason that makes them unable to do so (as listed above). Children under the age of 2 should not wear a mask.
- Inform guests at intake that mask wearing is a requirement for staying at the shelter (with the exceptions noted above).
- Provide procedure mask or cloth mask for all persons in the facility.
 - Consider that staff and volunteers need to change masks when soiled or wet when working long shifts.
- Face coverings that are masks with vents, bandanas, and gaiters are not recommended and alternative masks should be required when in the facility.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Avoid sharing personal items, games, electronics, etc.
- Set up your food and dining areas to maximize social distancing.
 - If meals cannot be delivered to cots to avoid congregating, then consider staggering mealtimes and set up eating area to allow for 6 feet distancing for guests and staff.
 - Disinfect surfaces between mealtimes.
 - Provide low contact meal service such as pre-packaged ready-to-eat foods.
 - Provide single service ware (plates, cups, utensils).
 - Designate someone to pour coffee/tea. Avoid self-service, if possible.
- Consider barriers between guests and staff, if possible.
- Provide barriers between sinks in bathrooms, if possible.
- Stagger tooth brushing times and increase cleaning in bathrooms during peak hygiene times.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY

ROUTINE CLEANING AND DISINFECTION OF FREQUENTLY TOUCHED SURFACES

Ensure that your shelter has:

- Disinfection and cleaning schedule and trained volunteers and staff on cleaning and disinfection protocols
 - [CDC Guidelines for Cleaning and Disinfection](#)
 - [How to Clean Up Vomit, Diarrhea & Blood/ Cleaning to Kill Hepatitis A](#)
 - Increase cleaning in bathrooms during peak hygiene times
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE provided) such as gloves, masks, eye protection, and protective clothing if needed.
- Use of a disinfectant product registered by EPA to be effective for COVID-19.
 - [List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

PREPARE FOR SANITARY STORAGE OF GUEST BELONGINGS

- Provide containers or plastic bags to store guest belongings during their stay at the shelter. Space may be limited in the sleeping/dorm area of the shelter.
- Have a plan for mitigating bedbugs, lice, and scabies.
- Check that hot box treatment for belongings is operational and available, if feasible.

SAFE STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF SHARPS

- Provide disposal options for storage and disposal of sharps.
- Sharps safety information starting on P. 25 of the [Sanitation and Hygiene Guide for Homeless Service Providers](#).

OTHER OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

COMPANION ANIMALS/PETS CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

- Register pets as they enter the facility. *Note: Dogs, cats, and ferrets should be rabies vaccinated and checked upon entry. However, low barrier entry to a facility may be needed during a severe weather event. See below for information about how to report animal bites.*
- [Service Animals](#) must be accommodated. A service animal is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.
- Adjust floor plan to designate a specific area for guests with pets to separate them from guests with pet allergies.
- Discourage pet co-mingling.
- Provide separate waste receptacle and bags for disposing pet waste, if possible.
- Dogs, cats, and ferrets should be rabies vaccinated.
- Pets should be kept on leash or in cages in common shelter spaces.
- Have contact information for your local animal control agency on site to address aggressive animals.
- Know how to report animal bites.
 - Contact Public Health – Seattle & King County if you have a question about animal bites or rabies. If someone has been bitten by an animal and suspected to have been exposed to rabies, call 206-296-4774.
 - <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/health-care-providers/rabies-assessment.aspx>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR CLIENTS IN CRISIS

Crisis Connections: <https://www.crisisconnections.org/get-help>, Crisis Line: 866-427-4747 (866-4-CRISIS) (24 hours a day)

Washington Recovery Help Line: www.warecoveryhelpline.org, 866-789-1511 (24 hours a day)

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>, 800-985-5990 (24 hours a day)

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (24 hours a day)

KEY CONTACTS

Public Health - Seattle & King County COVID-19 Call Center: 206-477-3977

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

CDC Shelter Assessment Tool:

https://emergency.cdc.gov/shelterassessment/pdf/Shelter_Assessment_COVID_508.pdf

FEMA Disaster Sheltering Fact Sheet: <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/fact-sheets>

FEMA Disaster Shelter Occupancy and Social Distancing:

https://www.usfa.fema.gov/coronavirus/planning_response/occupancy_social_distancing.html

American Red Cross COVID-19 Training for Partners: <https://nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-07-03-COVID-19-Shelter-Training-for-Partners.pdf>

American Red Cross COVID-19 Shelter Field Guide: http://www.nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Shelter-Field-Guide-508_f3.pdf

CDC Diapering in Emergency Settings: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/pdf/diapering-in-emergency-settings-checklist508c.pdf>

ADA considerations for emergency sheltering: <https://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap7shelterchk.htm>

Service animals and emergency sheltering: https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.html

HUD Covid-19 Winter Planning Resources: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/6193/covid19-homeless-system-response-winter-planning-resources/?utm_source=HUD+Exchange+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=050614b678-SNAPS-COVID-19-Digest-11-17-2020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f32b935a5f-050614b678-19574233

APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST OF SUPPLIES FOR SEVERE WEATHER SHELTERING

Preparing in advance to equip severe weather shelters is critical. Prepare to stock as many of the following supplies as possible ahead of time to avoid supply shortages in the event of an emergency.

- Hand Soap
- Alcohol based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol content)
- Paper Towels
- Toilet Paper
- Tissues
- Garbage Bags
- Disposable procedure masks
- Disinfectant registered with EPA as effective for COVID-19 www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19
- Bleach
- PPE for staff and volunteers doing cleaning (gloves, masks, safety glasses)
- First Aid Kit
- AED device (if possible and if trained individuals at the site)
- Narcan (if available and if trained individuals to administer)
- Grabber tool for needles and wastes
- Sharps Container
- Hygiene kits (body wipes, toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo, comb, razor, sanitizer, hand warmers, socks, etc.)
- Single service utensils and cups, if applicable

APPENDIX B: PRE-OPERATIONAL CHECKLIST

Review this list prior to opening your severe weather/emergency shelter. Print a copy to have it available during operation.

Make sure key contacts and phone numbers are accessible and designate a person in charge.

Customize this list as appropriate for your site.

- Public Health - Seattle & King County COVID-19 Call Center: 206-477-3977
- Nearest local hospital: _____
- Building contact: _____
- Program contact: _____
- Local animal control contact: _____
- Other: _____

Facility checklist

- Sleeping spaces are designated, at least 6 feet apart, and numbered
 - Beds, cots, blankets
 - Storage for guest belongings designated
- Registration and isolation areas are set up
 - Visual social distancing guides marked on the floor for registrants in line
 - Table with registration and screening supplies
 - Screening and intake supplies are available
- Signage posted
 - Floor map and site map with entrances and exit and smoking area and animal relief area designated
 - COVID-19 symptoms and information posted at strategic places in the shelter
 - Hand hygiene signs
 - Hours of operation and house rules and guest behavior expectations
- First aid kit available and in a designated location. *Note: include location on floor map*
- Hand sanitizer stations are set up at each entrance and in key locations
- Bathrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels
- Cleaning and disinfection supplies are stocked, and cleaning schedule posted
- Comfort station is stocked (snacks, hygiene kits, etc.)
- Garbage and waste receptacles are available and accessible
- Sharps container available