



Shelter Layout and Pre-Operational Checklist

The following checklist is intended to assist you in preparing your shelter to meet the health and safety challenges that come with housing displaced persons in a non-residential facility. Please request a representative from the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) at (832) 393-5100 to assist you as you plan and set up shelter operations.

There may be additional requirements/restrictions imposed by facility ownership/management for preparing the facility for use as a shelter. During the COVID-19 pandemic, shelters should be large enough to allow social distancing between residents and the air exchange systems should preferably have a high ventilation capacity similar to that of healthcare facilities ([Air Ventilation and Filtration](#)).

Note to Smaller Shelters:

Non-residential evacuation centers such as churches may have limited capacity for food preparation, bathing, and laundry facilities. Although small population shelters are preferred during the COVID-19 pandemic, in general, such non-residential facilities should only be used for very short-term housing. Food service and laundry should be provided from outside sources rather than attempting to set up onsite or allowing residents to attempt these activities themselves.

GENERAL SAFETY AND SANITATION

- ☐ Available supplies and staff for operation of the entire facility at planned capacity
- ☐ Increased supplies of:
 - o Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff
 - N95 face masks or higher-level respirators if possible (or, if not possible, surgical masks) for medical staff providing care to residents with known or suspected COVID-19
 - surgical masks for non-medical shelter staff who enter the COVID-19 isolation area if N95 masks are unavailable
 - surgical masks for staff/volunteers responding to contamination events
 - eye protection/face shields
 - disposable gloves, gowns/aprons, and shoe covers
 - o Face masks (sufficient supply to provide to all persons who do not have their own masks and to replace any masks of workers that become wet during cleaning/dishwashing, etc.)
 - o Materials for barriers between cots in the COVID-19 isolation area
 - o Over-the-counter medications
 - o Ice, water, and other fluids for hydration
 - o Soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol)
 - o Facial tissue
 - o No-touch trash cans with non-removable lids, if possible, or trash cans with lids
 - o Additional garbage bags
 - o Disinfectant that is one of the [EPA-Registered Disinfectants for COVID-19](#) (with directions for application)

- Alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol for cleaning electronic equipment such as touch screens, keyboards, etc.
 - Wipeable covers for electronics if feasible
 - Cleaning agents and supplies
- ☐ Additional backup staff/volunteers to replace any of the shelter's regular bank of workers who are unavailable due to being at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- ☐ Safe and adequate water supply – 1-2 gallons/person/day drinking water; 3-5 gallons/person/day for total water usage
- ☐ Indoor air temperature (75°F - 80°F)
- ☐ Air ventilation system examined and modified for highest ventilation capacity possible
- ☐ Adequate lighting in public areas
- ☐ Bottle preparation/warming area with sink accessibility

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- ☐ Security/law enforcement available
- ☐ Exits and indoor and outdoor walkways free from obstruction
- ☐ Working fire extinguishers, fire alarms, smoke detectors, and CO₂ detectors
- ☐ Emergency evacuation plan and identified meeting place
- ☐ Public address system or alarm for notification of an emergency evacuation
- ☐ All hazardous materials and equipment secured
- ☐ Propane tanks and generators properly installed and located outside
- ☐ Reporting system for shelter damages, injuries, and incidents of violence

INFECTION CONTROL

General

- ☐ EPA- registered disinfectant for Norovirus, disinfectant concentration, and decontamination procedures for cleaning up vomit, diarrhea, and other bodily fluids (Refer to Decontamination Procedures for Vomit, Diarrhea, and Other Bodily Fluids)
- ☐ Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for chemicals used for cleaning and disinfection maintained at the facility
- ☐ Assembled bodily fluid spill kits
- ☐ Trained staff/volunteers in cleaning, disinfection, and decontamination procedures and wearing PPE. Refer to Mixing and Using Bleach Solutions for ROUTINE Disinfection, Decontamination Procedures for Vomit, Diarrhea, and Other Bodily Fluids, and Donning and Removing PPE.
- ☐ Cleaning schedule that:
 - Accommodates the facility operating at full capacity with constant use of its public areas
 - Includes health/medical/isolation areas and any companion animal and childcare/play areas
 - Includes cleaning of mops, rags, etc.

Screening for Transmissible Diseases (Gastro-Intestinal and Respiratory)

- ☐ Designated intake area and waiting room for medical screening during registration
- ☐ Physical barrier (glass/plastic window or partition to protect the faces of screeners checking temperatures), if possible
- OR**
If no physical barrier is possible, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the screeners (facemask, eye protection/face shields, disposable gloves)
- ☐ Waiting area with chairs 6 feet apart or barriers between chairs
- ☐ Health communications materials regarding COVID-19 ([CDC printable materials](#)) available for persons of all reading abilities and languages are distributed directly to individuals by screeners (not displayed as common reading material)
- ☐ Procedures in place for:
 - ☐ Providing face masks to all persons without their own during the registration/screening process
 - ☐ Screening all shelter occupants (residents, staff, volunteers) during registration for symptoms of
 - ☐ Gastro-intestinal and respiratory diseases including COVID-19 ([Screening Procedures for COVID-19](#))
 - ☐ food workers and health/medical staff should be screened even if shelter management decides to conduct no other screening
 - ☐ Providing daily update of all illnesses including mental health concerns to the City of Houston Health Department
- ☐ Trained medical or healthcare staff available to conduct the screening
- ☐ Additional trained personnel available to screen to reduce wait times
- ☐ Body temperature included in the screening (contactless thermometers if possible or thermometers cleaned and sanitized between uses)
- ☐ Handwashing station or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), tissues, and wastebaskets
- ☐ Cleaning and disinfection of the screening area including electronic equipment scheduled for every 4-6 hours

HEALTH/MEDICAL/ISOLATION AREAS

Health/Medical Area

- ☐ Separated from public living and sleeping areas
- ☐ Hand sinks supplied with soap, paper towels, and waste receptacles
- ☐ Signs promoting proper handwashing
- ☐ Hand sanitizing station(s)
- ☐ Sharps container
- ☐ Waste receptacles designated for medical waste and separated from general refuse
- ☐ Fully stocked first aid kits, Automatic External Defibrillator (AED), and additional facial tissues

Isolation Areas

- ☐ Meets the above criteria if not adjacent to the general health/medical (clinic) area
- ☐ Located to be closest to the facility's entrances/exits and operations
- ☐ Well-ventilated
- ☐ Isolation area designated as "restricted access" clearly marked
- ☐ Meals delivered to the isolation area
- ☐ Beds spaced 6 feet apart, head to toe
- ☐ Beds or mattresses covered with a barrier if possible (waterproof mat/sheet, absorbent pad, etc.)
- ☐ Private access to and use of hand sinks, toilets, and showers if possible
OR, if not possible,
Designated hand sinks, toilets, and showers within general population areas labeled for isolation use only
- ☐ Separate room for a service animal and its ill handler, if possible
- ☐ Plans in place to transport seriously ill/injured occupants to healthcare facilities

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The following measures are recommended for isolation areas housing persons with known or suspected cases of COVID-19.

- ☐ Isolation areas well-ventilated (extremely important during the COVID-19 pandemic)
- ☐ When possible, individual rooms to isolate ill residents
- ☐ Beds spaced 6 feet apart with temporary hard, non-porous barriers between them
- ☐ Private access to separate restrooms and showers labeled for isolation use only if possible
- ☐ Restrooms cleaned and disinfected after each use by a COVID-19 patient
- ☐ Dedicated area for donning and taking off PPE

SLEEPING AREAS

- ☐ Space of 110 ft² per person in sleeping areas
- ☐ Lights can be dimmed at night, away from excessive noise
- ☐ Separate, designated areas for single men/women, families, persons with access/functional needs, persons with service animals (If possible)
- ☐ Located near restrooms
- ☐ Adequate supply of cots, cribs, clean bedding
- ☐ Cots spaced 2.5-3 ft. apart on all sides, head to toe - 40 ft² (8' x 5') sleeping space per person
- ☐ Groups or families placed in individual rooms or separate areas of the facility, if possible
OR
Cots and cribs spaced at least 6 feet apart between households and positioned head to toe
OR

Temporary, hard, non-porous barriers between cots of different households

- ☐ Signs prohibiting food in sleeping areas
- ☐ Signs promoting reporting symptoms of illness including COVID-19

RESTROOMS

- ☐ Designated restrooms for men, women, persons with access/functional needs, families, residents in isolation
- ☐ Toilets
 - o Adequate number of toilets (1:20 persons or as specified by sex)
 - o Placement of portable toilets allows easy accessibility for servicing holding tanks, if applicable
 - o Supplied with toilet tissue, feminine hygiene products with separate covered waste receptacle
 - o Located adjacent to hand sinks
- ☐ Hand sinks
 - o Adequate number of hand sinks (1:15 persons)
 - o Supplied with hand soap, paper towels/heated hand drying device, waste receptacles
 - o Provided with hot and cold running water
 - o Portable sinks properly installed and drained, if applicable
 - o Placement of portable sinks affords easy accessibility for servicing holding tanks, if applicable
 - o Signs promoting proper handwashing
- ☐ Hands free exits –restroom doors propped open or additional paper towels and waste receptacles placed just outside of doors
- ☐ Hand sanitizing stations placed immediately outside indoor restrooms and next to outdoor toilets
- ☐ Signs promoting reporting symptoms of illnesses and proper handwashing/use of hand sanitizer
- ☐ Diapering stations ([Planning Checklist for Diapering Stations in Shelters](#))
 - o Near hand sinks, if possible
 - o Supplied with diapers, diaper changing pads, waste receptacles, hand sanitizer

SHOWERS/BATHING AREAS

- ☐ Designated areas for men, women, persons with access/functional needs, ill residents in isolation
- ☐ Adequate number of showers/bathing areas (1:15 persons)
- ☐ Supplied with clean towels
- ☐ Showers partitioned for privacy
- ☐ Signs for disposal of wet towels
- ☐ Portable showers properly installed and drained
- ☐ Placement of portable showers affords easy accessibility for servicing holding tanks, if applicable

ACCESS/FUNCTIONAL NEEDS AREA

Refer to [FEMA Guidelines for Functional Needs in Shelters](#) for information on providing access/functional needs services (including hand sinks, toilets, and showers/bathing areas) in general population shelters.

- ☐ Designated sleeping and dining areas; separate areas for persons with service animals, if possible
- ☐ Sleeping area of 60-100 ft² of space (6' x 10'/10' x 10') per person with close access to an adequate number of outlets for durable medical equipment (oxygen equipment, breathing machines, etc.)
- ☐ Adequate space between beds for wheelchairs
- ☐ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant accessible toilets, hand sinks, showers/bathing areas
- ☐ Supplies for toilets, hand sinks, showers
- ☐ Relief area for service animals

Service dogs, regardless of whether they are licensed or certified, should be allowed to stay with their owner within the shelter in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If possible, provide a separate living area for persons with service dogs or for persons allergic to animals/fur.

LAUNDRY (ONSITE LAUNDRY SERVICE)

- ☐ Arrangement for onsite or offsite laundry service
 - o Backup plan for onsite laundry service in case machines leak/malfunction
- ☐ Washing machines drained to the sanitary sewer or a gray water tank. Contact the Houston Permitting Center (HPC) at (832) 394-8810/8820 for pre-approval to connect washing machines to the sanitary sewer or to an approved containment unit and for an onsite inspection at (832) 394-8870 after installation.
- ☐ Separate, labeled storage areas for soiled and clean laundry
- ☐ Space for folding and sorting clean laundry
- ☐ Cleaning schedule for laundry area

FOOD SERVICE

Use of an onsite or offsite permitted commercial kitchen is preferred.

- Refer to **Food Service Information for Shelter Operators** for considerations when planning food service.
- Whenever possible, screen and utilize staff/volunteers with knowledge and experience in food safety for kitchen and serving line duties. At a minimum, provide training in food safety for all kitchen/serving staff and volunteers. Refer to **Food Safety for Food Handlers** and **Basics for Food Workers/Servers**.
- If food is prepared outside in tents or other temporary outdoor structures, refer to **Outdoor Food Preparation at Shelters**.

Food Preparation and Cleaning Procedures

- ☐ Certified food manager onsite during all hours of operation
- ☐ Trained staff/volunteers for food preparation/service/cleaning activities
- ☐ Food workers supplied clean face masks and replacements for wet masks
- ☐ Roster of food workers with names, shifts worked, contact information, and test results kept for at least 14 days
- ☐ Food and ice from a permitted or licensed source
- ☐ Safe hot/cold running water from an approved source for food preparation, handwashing, and cleaning
- ☐ Food delivery/donation
 - o One designated food delivery/donation drop-off zone near kitchen area
 - o Accessible by truck
 - o Proper procedures in place for accepting donated food (Receiving Food Supplies and Food Donations*)
 - o Ability to be secured
 - o Protected from outside elements
- ☐ Food storage areas
 - o Sufficient storage space for food, equipment, and utensils *including* temperature controlled storage of $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$ for cold storage and $\geq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$ for hot holding deliveries
- ☐ Food preparation (if food preparation is conducted on premises)
 - o Sufficient preparation space to allow for 6 feet between workers if possible
 - o Sufficient lighting (at least 50-foot candles) for handling food equipment and cleaning
 - o Adequate ventilation to remove cooking fumes, smoke, and grease
 - o Thermometer ($0 - 220^{\circ}\text{F}$) for checking food and hot/cold storage unit temperatures
 - o Hand sink(s) located in food preparation area; supplied with hand soap, paper towels, waste receptacles
 - o Hair restraints, gloves provided
 - o Signs promoting proper handwashing and food handling
- ☐ Dishwashing (if conducted on premises)
 - o Hand sink(s) located in dish washing area; supplied with hand soap, paper towels, waste receptacles
 - o Signs promoting proper handwashing
 - o Manual dishwashing
 - 2- or 3-compartment sink, hot/cold water under pressure to all compartments with chlorine sanitizing rinse (50-100 ppm) and chlorine test kit **OR** with Quaternary Ammonium (QA) sanitizing rinse (200 ppm) and QA test kit
 - Sign depicting proper washing, rinsing, and sanitizing procedure including water temperature and contact time for manual dishwashing at 2- or 3-compartment sink
 - **USE ONLY SINGLE-SERVICE ARTICLES** (disposable plates, utensils, etc.)
 - o Mechanical dishwashing
 - Chlorine sanitizing rinse (50-100 ppm) and chlorine test kit **OR**
 - Heat sanitizing final rinse/ 180°F manifold/ 165°F dish level and thermometer/heat-

sensitive tape

- ☐ Arrangements for proper disposal of grease, if applicable

Serving Lines/Dining Areas

- ☐ Disposable cups, plates, and utensils (single-service articles) for use in place of multi-use tableware, if possible (even if a dishwasher is available)
- ☐ All single-service or multi-use plates, cups, and other items dispensed by food workers/volunteers
- ☐ Increased table/chair spacing and staggered mealtimes to maintain a distance of 6 feet between different households
- ☐ Serving/dining areas cleaned and disinfected between meal times
- ☐ Serving lines/dining areas located near food preparation area and away from sleeping areas (except for access/functional needs area)
- ☐ Barriers to protect food/drinks/single-service articles/servers in serving lines from coughs, sneezes, etc.
- ☐ All food to be served by trained staff/volunteers; no self-service
- ☐ Hand sink(s) with soap, paper towels, and waste receptacles accessible to servers
- ☐ Face masks, hair restraints, and gloves provided for servers
- ☐ Hand sanitizing stations/hand sinks and body temperature screening stations at entrance to serving/dining areas monitored and operated by staff/volunteers
- ☐ Signs promoting proper handwashing or use of hand sanitizer and reporting of COVID-19 symptoms

WASTE MANAGEMENT

- ☐ Adequate number of waste receptacles (1 30-g waste receptacle/10 persons)
- ☐ Appropriate identification, separation, and disposal of medical/infectious waste from general refuse
- ☐ Appropriate storage and separation of solid waste from food storage and common areas
- ☐ Adequate storage space for additional dumpsters and gray water tanks with easy accessibility to service trucks
- ☐ Portable indoor and outdoor facilities that generate wastewater and sewage placed on a hard surface (not dirt or gravel) and properly located, installed, and drained
- ☐ Wastewater collection for outdoor food preparation and cleaning activities properly located, installed, and drained
- ☐ Agreement with transporter(s) permitted by the City of Houston to remove wastewater/grease and toilet waste.

CHILDCARE (CHILDCARE/PLAY AREAS IN SHELTERS)

Consider closing childcare and play areas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ☐ Designated area located near a hand sink and a diaper changing area
- ☐ Policy in place regarding types of acceptable toys
- ☐ Procedures for cleaning and disinfecting toys and frequently touched surfaces within the area at least

every 4 hours

- ☐ Signs promoting proper handwashing/use of hand sanitizers
- ☐ Handwashing/sanitizing station placed near entry/exit to childcare/play area

PET AREAS

- ☐ Provisions for animal care – animal care provided by shelter staff/volunteers, outside organization, and/or animal owners
- ☐ Designated animal area away from public living areas
- ☐ Policy in place regarding type of animal accepted into the shelter; policy excludes reptiles (except turtles), amphibians, fish, insects/arachnids, and farm animals (including horses and animals kept for racing purposes)
- ☐ Special housing needs are considered in determining the type of animal to be accepted
- ☐ Pet registration, exercise, and housing areas large enough to allow distancing of 6 feet for people and animals of different households
- ☐ Pet registration includes screening animals for symptoms of COVID-19 or exposure to a person with known or suspected COVID-19
- ☐ Designated pet isolation area for pets with signs of illness or that had contact with a person with known or suspected COVID-19 ([Signs of COVID-19 Illness in Pets](#))
- ☐ Access to pet area limited to animal owners and caretakers (one caretaker per animal)
- ☐ PPE provided for caretakers outside of animal's household ([PPE for Animal Caretakers During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#))
- ☐ Hand sink with hot and cold running water supplied with soap, paper towels, and waste receptacle and/or hand sanitizing station located nearby
- ☐ Easily cleanable, non-porous floors or plastic/vinyl covering
- ☐ Good ventilation and air flow
- ☐ Pet food storage separated from human food
- ☐ Designated pet relief area supplied with animal waste bags and waste receptacle
- ☐ Signs promoting handwashing/use of hand sanitizers, pets on leashes, use of animal waste bags

OUTSIDE PREMISES/OTHER

- ☐ Outside premises free of debris (fallen tree limbs, etc.) to prevent rodent harborage
- ☐ Portable toilets with hand sinks/hand sanitizers if long lines anticipated outside
- ☐ Waste receptacles
- ☐ Designated outside smoking areas. If using a public school site, state law stipulates no smoking on school grounds. Tobacco waste receptacles. "No smoking" signs posted where appropriate
- ☐ Designated area for non-food donations

5/3/21

