

# Sheltering Handbook

## Disaster Services



May 2012

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# Introduction

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**Welcome** Welcome to the American Red Cross *Sheltering Handbook*. In times of disaster, Red Cross workers provide safety, shelter, meals and a caring presence to people in communities around the United States and its territories. By joining the premier shelter organization in the country, you are providing hope and stability to individuals who need it most.

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**Audience** This handbook is for workers and supervisors in a Red Cross shelter and workers at a chapter who are responsible for establishing a strong shelter system.

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**Purpose** This handbook provides guidance for Red Cross shelter operations, including supervision of a shelter. It presents general information about the shelter worker's role in the sheltering process and the relief operation and includes tools and checklists to help you plan, open, operate and close a Red Cross shelter. The handbook also has guidelines for specific functions, such as setting up a dormitory or registering a shelter client. Procedures associated with ensuring the readiness of a local unit to successfully open and maintain a shelter are also included.

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**In this handbook** This handbook has five parts, described in this table.

Part	Description
1	A <a href="#">Sheltering Overview</a> of Red Cross shelters, including our sheltering philosophy, the sheltering cycle, and the organization and administration of shelter operations.
2	Information about <a href="#">Shelter Support Operations</a> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shelter logistics</li><li>• Staffing</li><li>• Reporting and recordkeeping</li><li>• Working with partners and the media</li></ul>
3	An overview of <a href="#">Shelter Services</a> provided to clients, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reception and registration</li><li>• Feeding</li><li>• Dormitory management</li><li>• Providing information</li><li>• Safe and Well Linking</li><li>• Individual Client Services</li><li>• Bulk Distribution</li></ul>
4	Guidance for <a href="#">Special Situations</a> , including information about accommodating individual needs and unusual shelter conditions.
5	An <a href="#">Appendix</a> , including a list of tools and resources for shelter workers.

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**How to use this document**

This handbook is your primary source for shelter guidance. Use it as a reference in the field during shelter operations, as a foundation for shelter training and as a review to prepare for your deployment to a shelter. The following table includes tips for how to make the best use of this handbook.

Feature	Description
Online use	Read and review this handbook online to ensure you have the latest information, to conserve resources and to allow full access to hyperlinked resources. You will find an electronic version of the handbook with other Mass Care guidance on the Red Cross intranet.
Links	Hyperlinks in the handbook will take you to the <a href="#">tools and resources appendix</a> . From there, you can link to the online resources that you will need to complete sheltering tasks. Please <a href="#">contact the Mass Care staff</a> at national headquarters to report problems with links in this handbook.
Shelter manager responsibilities	This handbook provides guidance for all workers in Red Cross shelters and specific guidance for staff supervising the day-to-day shelter activities. You will find sections throughout labeled “Shelter Manager Responsibilities,” highlighting specific tasks for shelter managers.
Requirements	The <i>Requirements</i> label identifies Red Cross-required actions related to Red Cross policies. You must follow these requirements carefully. (See <a href="#">Requirements</a> in the Sheltering Overview.)





# Sheltering Overview

## Chapter 1: An Introduction to Shelter Operations

### Chapter Overview

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**Introduction**

This chapter will help you understand your shelter work and provide a bigger picture of Red Cross principles, services, structures and processes related to shelters.

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**In this chapter**

This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Sheltering Commitments, Philosophy, Guidelines and Requirements</a>
<a href="#">The Sheltering Cycle</a>
<a href="#">Shelter Operations Roles and Responsibilities</a>
<a href="#">Shelter Operation Organization</a>
<a href="#">Chapter-Administered and Nationally Administered Relief Operations</a>
<a href="#">Types of Shelter Operations</a>

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# Sheltering Commitments, Philosophy, Guidelines and Requirements

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**Introduction** Like all Red Cross services, sheltering activities are guided by the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and by the [Mission Statement of the American Red Cross](#) and Disaster Services Mission Statement. This section discusses the foundation of our work in shelters.

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**Our commitment** Our commitment as shelter workers is to take care of the sheltering needs of people affected by disaster. We are committed to providing shelter on an interim basis while our clients arrange for their recovery or until they are able to return home. We demonstrate this commitment in our sheltering philosophy.

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**Sheltering philosophy** Because of our commitments to sheltering, we have developed a philosophy that guides our actions as shelter workers. Individuals we serve in shelters have experienced loss and uncertainty because of disaster. It is critical that shelter workers create and maintain shelters that welcome and help our clients. The following statements reflect our philosophy:

- Shelters must be places of comfort and safety.
- Shelters must be readily accessible to individuals affected.
- All shelter workers must be strong advocates for their clients.
- Clients must remain proactive participants in recovery.
- Shelters must provide a safe and secure environment that accommodates the broadest range of needs in our communities.

Our sheltering philosophy is at the heart of each decision we make and each action we take as shelter workers. Along with the commitments expressed above, it should always guide your work in the shelter.

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**Requirements** You will find sections in the handbook with the label *Requirements*. Requirements identify a procedure or result that is:

- Required by a Red Cross policy;
- Based on our principles;
- Vital to keeping our commitments to our five constituents: clients, donors, partners, Red Cross workers and the public.

Please note all the requirements in the handbook and follow the directions carefully.

Examples of requirements you will find in this handbook include:

- Actions to ensure shelter safety;
- Standards for protecting client privacy and personal information;
- Procedures for ensuring that donations to the Red Cross are well spent;
- Other tasks and results essential to helping us to follow our principles and keep our commitments.

If you have a question or cannot carry out a requirement, you should ask for help from your supervisor or other shelter leadership.

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# The Sheltering Cycle

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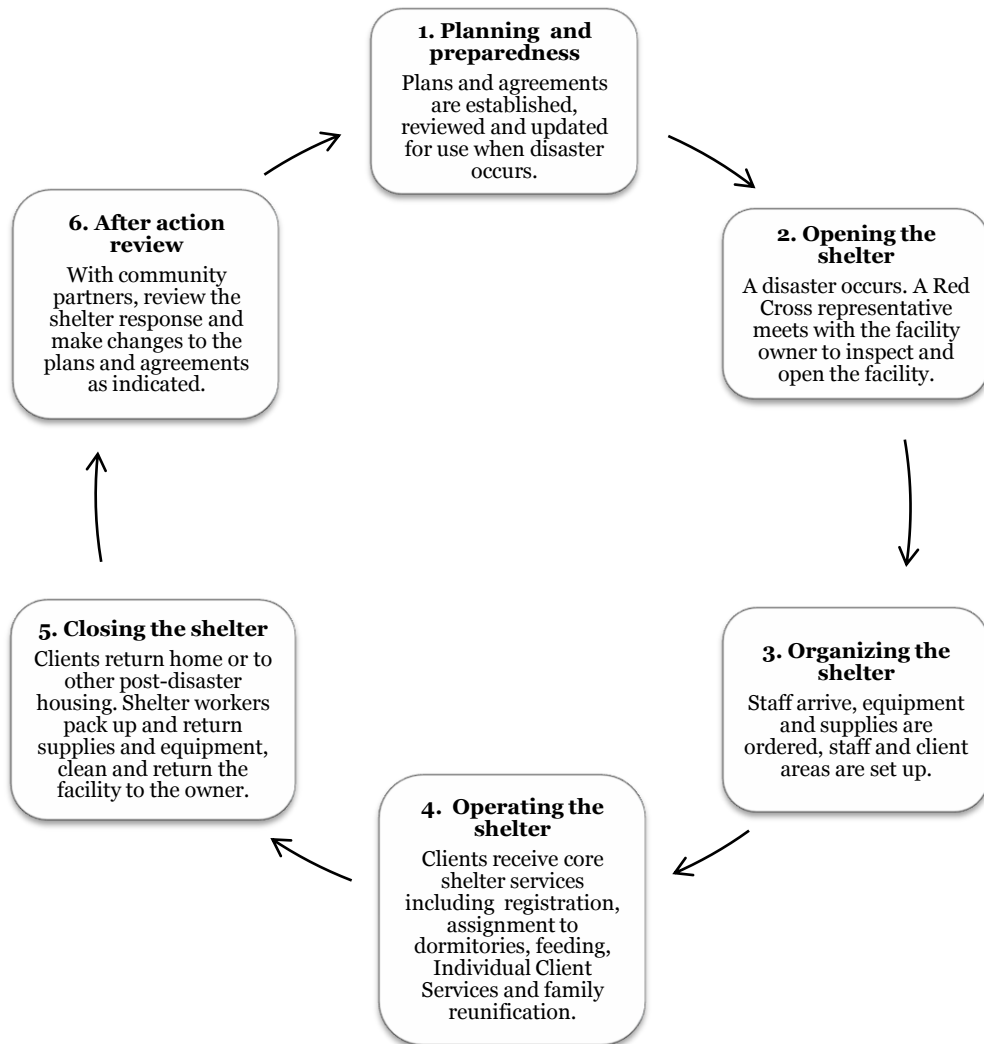
## Introduction

This section describes the cycle of sheltering that begins with pre-disaster planning and ends with a post-disaster review. It gives you an overview of sheltering, with links and references to sections of the handbook with more detailed information about each phase of the cycle.

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## The sheltering cycle

This diagram illustrates the sheltering cycle. You can read more about each stage of the cycle on the following pages.



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## Planning

An effective shelter operation begins long before a disaster strikes. Every Red Cross chapter is responsible for pre-disaster planning within its jurisdiction.

To prepare your chapter for shelter operations, use your chapter disaster response plan as a guide to identify:

- The types of hazards that could pose a threat to your community;
- The demographics of the people who might be affected;
- Specific needs of your community, including languages spoken and any disability-related and/or functional or access needs people are likely to have;
- Where shelters may be needed;
- How many trained workers will be needed and available to run the shelters;
- What supplies will be necessary.

On the basis of this analysis, follow these steps to build your chapter's sheltering capacity.

Step	Action
1	Identify community facilities for use as disaster shelters. See <a href="#">Identify Shelter Facilities Before Disaster</a> .
2	Complete a pre-disaster <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> and <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> for each identified shelter and enter shelter information into the National Shelter System. See <a href="#">Complete a Shelter Facility Survey and Shelter Agreement</a> .
3	Recruit and train sufficient staff to sustain a shelter operation for at least 72 hours. See <a href="#">Mass Care Requirements and Resources</a> for guidelines for shelter staff training and qualifications.
4	Set up vendor accounts to provide food and other supplies that will be necessary at the shelter.
5	Prepare shelter kits containing all of the supplies necessary to open and run a short-term shelter. Build your shelter kits from the <a href="#">Shelter Supply Kit Template</a> .

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## Opening the shelter

Opening the shelter requires selecting an appropriate available location after assessing the disaster and the sheltering needs it has caused.

A Logistics worker or shelter manager should meet with a facility representative to review or execute a [Shelter Agreement](#), inspect the facility and open it for Red Cross use. The shelter manager forwards details about the shelter opening and location to the relief operation leadership to inform the public and our partners.

See [Select a Pre-Identified Shelter](#) and [Complete an Opening Inspection](#) for more information.

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## Organizing the shelter

Organizing the shelter to provide service to clients requires many tasks including acquiring necessary supplies and equipment, recruiting sufficient staff and arranging for shelter security, if needed. See the chapters on [Shelter Staffing](#), [Supplies and Equipment](#) and [Safety and Security](#).

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**Operating the shelter**

During the operations phase, clients receive reception and registration services, dormitory services, feeding, information, family reunification and individual client services. Staff in the shelter assist clients with meeting their immediate disaster-caused emergency needs, provide them with information about recovery resources and help them develop recovery plans.

Other primary responsibilities of shelter staff include reporting important information to relief operation headquarters and keeping accurate records of shelter activities.

See more about these activities in [Reporting, Recordkeeping and Communications](#) and [Shelter Services](#).

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**Closing the shelter**

A decreasing shelter population is a sign that it is time to plan closing the shelter. You and your team will begin the closing process when it is clear that most residents have taken the next step in their recovery process and arranged for a place to go. To help this process, client caseworkers work with shelter residents and with the community to help find suitable housing.

On closing, shelter workers restore the shelter facility to pre-disaster condition by packing supplies, returning borrowed equipment and cleaning the facility.

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**After-action review and planning**

The final step for shelter operations takes us through the sheltering cycle, back to preparedness. By conducting an after-action meeting with shelter staff and partners, chapters can capture the lessons learned through the sheltering process. These lessons can be used to update plans, training and agreements for future events to improve our response to the next disaster.

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# Shelter Operations Roles and Responsibilities

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## Introduction

A shelter operation involves Red Cross staff from many groups and activities in addition to partners from our communities. Workers may be located at the shelter or at the relief operation headquarters. Use the chart below to understand positions in a sheltering operation. In smaller shelters, not all of the positions are necessary, but most of the tasks will still need to be completed.

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## Management staff located at relief operation headquarters

The following chart describes roles and responsibilities for staff assigned to relief operation headquarters. On a small, chapter-led relief operation, these roles may be filled by the emergency services director, disaster chair, disaster action team captain, volunteer leaders in Mass Care or Sheltering, or other individuals designated by the chapter.

Position	Responsibilities
Relief operation director	Responsible for providing operational oversight and direction for the whole relief operation.
Assistant director, Direct Services	Provides administrative support for the Mass Care and Individual Client Services groups.
Mass Care chief	Manages the Sheltering, Feeding, Bulk Distribution and Safe and Well Linking activities.
Sheltering manager	Acts as the sheltering subject matter expert. Provides supervision and administrative support to all shelter managers.

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## Sheltering activity staff located at the shelter

Staff at the shelter includes a management team and workers assigned to specific shelter services. Shelter managers can use the following descriptions to assign key tasks:

Role	Responsibilities
Shelter manager	Provides supervision and administrative support at the shelter; ensures that shelter residents are safe and that their needs are met.
Shift supervisors	Provide supervision and administrative support at the shelter under the guidance of the shelter manager, as part of the shelter management team.
Dormitory workers	Set up sleeping areas, assign residents to sleeping areas and coordinate with Logistics or the shelter manager to procure supplies necessary for a shelter dormitory.
Registration workers	Register shelter occupants on arrival, maintain a system for checking occupants in and out when they leave and manage the recordkeeping system for shelter registrations.
Providing information workers	Provide clients access to disaster and recovery information and information about shelter rules, routines and services.

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**Staff from other Red Cross groups and activities located at the shelter**

In addition to the relief operation headquarters management team and shelter activity workers, shelter operations may include workers from other activities. Some of their roles and responsibilities are described below.

<b>Group/Activity</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Logistics	Ensures the safety, security and sanitation of the shelter. Procures, stores and distributes supplies and equipment and works with the representative of the facility to ensure that the facility is properly used.
Disaster Services Technology	Provides all computer and communication resources for Red Cross workers at the shelter.
In-Kind Donations workers	Field incoming offers of in-kind donations, making appropriate referrals or accepting/declining offers as appropriate. Complete documentation on accepted in-kind donations.
Feeding lead	Supervises food services and works with Logistics or shelter manager to procure feeding supplies.
Safe and Well Linking workers	Assist clients with contacting loved ones outside of the disaster area, and assist with connecting family members separated by the disaster.
Disaster Health Services workers	Address disaster-related health needs and functional and access needs of shelter residents. Collaborate with shelter management to protect health and prevent contagious diseases at the shelter.
Disaster Mental Health workers	Provide Disaster Mental Health services, including crisis intervention, psychological first aid and other services to shelter residents and staff.
Client caseworkers	Assist shelter clients to meet comfort, wellness, communication and information needs. Connect clients with community resources, donations, bulk distribution products and other Red Cross and community assistance.
Disaster Public Affairs workers	Engage the news media to explain Red Cross services to individuals affected by the disaster. Escort reporters, photographers or video crews through the shelter.
External partners	May assist with shelter operations, assist clients in recovery planning and/or help clients transition out of shelter to longer-term housing.

# Shelter Operation Organization

## Introduction

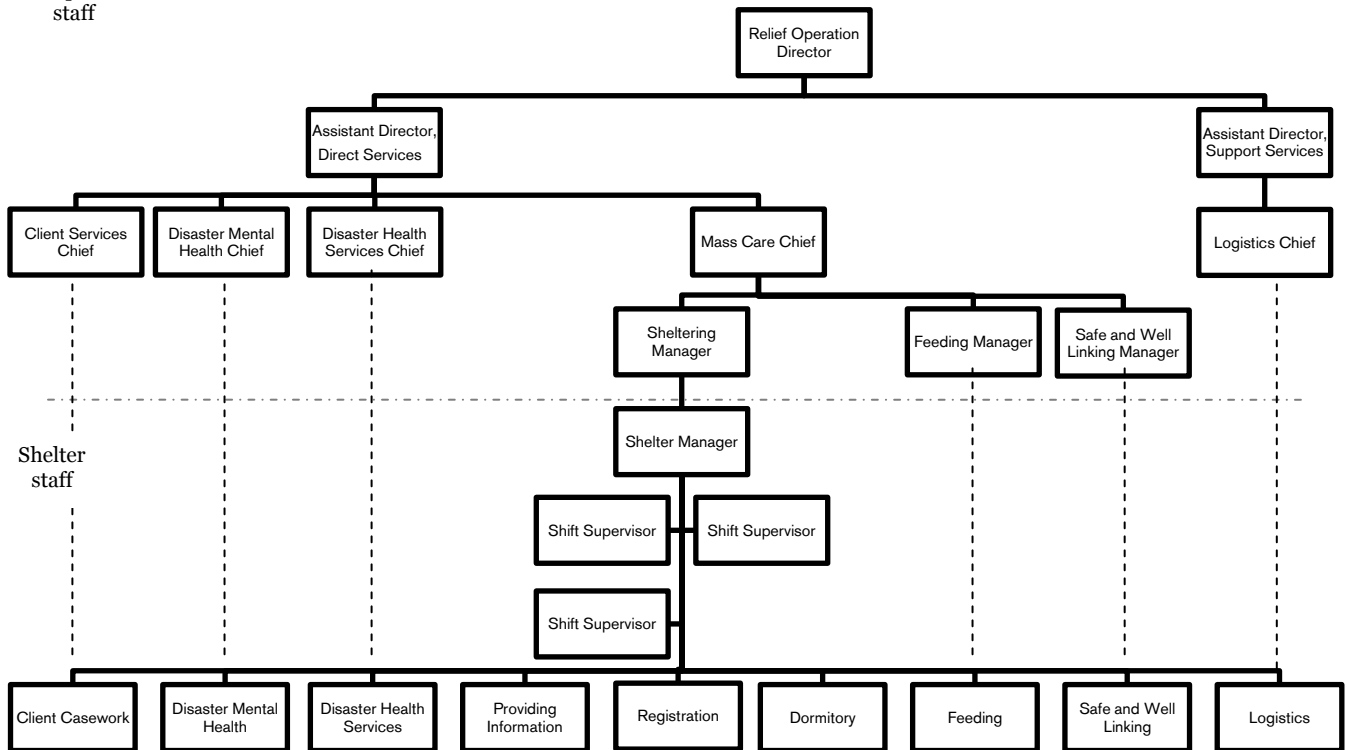
The diagram below illustrates the communication and reporting structure for a shelter operation. Positions above the horizontal dashed line are located at relief operation headquarters. Those below the line are located at the shelter.

Solid lines indicate communication and reporting lines. Dashed lines indicate technical support. As the solid lines indicate, the shelter manager supervises all workers at the shelter regardless of their DSHR group or activity. Workers affiliated with DSHR activities other than Sheltering receive technical support from their activity leadership at relief operation headquarters.

For a large relief operation, all of the positions in the diagram will be filled. For a smaller relief operation, positions in dashed boxes may not be filled, and some responsibilities may be combined and assigned to the same person.

## Sheltering table of organization

Headquarters staff





# Chapter-Administered and Nationally Administered Relief Operations

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## Introduction

All relief operations begin at the chapter level. Depending on the size and scope of the disaster, workers from regional, state or national levels may assist chapters.

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## Chapter-administered and nationally administered relief operations

A **chapter-administered relief operation** is a disaster relief operation in which a chapter is responsible for planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling every aspect of the relief operation.

A **nationally administered relief operation** is a disaster relief operation in which national headquarters appoints a director and leadership team responsible for planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling every aspect of the relief operation. In that case, a disaster relief operation, assisted by the Disaster Operations Center at national headquarters, will administer the operation.

In most cases, shelter operations and organizational structures are similar regardless of size. The main difference is the responsibility for decision making and coordinating responsibilities. If you are a shelter manager, you will obtain guidance from chapter leadership or relief operation headquarters, depending on the size and scope of the operation.

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## Transitioning from chapter-administered to nationally administered relief operations

The first Red Cross response to a disaster occurs locally. If the disaster exceeds the capacity of a local chapter, human resources and material support are mobilized from outside the local community.

Chapter workers may be asked to open and operate a shelter for the first 72 hours or so, to allow time for additional staff and materials to arrive. This step may take longer if the disaster has affected transportation routes.

When the transition from a chapter-administered relief operation to a nationally administered relief operation occurs, leadership will adjust the lines of communication and authority between the shelter and relief operation headquarters to maintain an effective working relationship with all parties.

For the shelter team, this transition can cause mixed emotions. The first few days a shelter is open, people work very long hours. The local shelter team will make many decisions, solve many problems and invest a lot of personal energy into running the shelter. When new workers arrive at the shelter, they are well rested and may make suggestions about ways to improve the shelter. If you are part of the local team, remember that these workers are there to make sure that clients get the highest-quality service possible. They have been sent to allow you time to get some rest or return to your other family and work obligations.

If you are one of the visiting workers, it is important to understand the commitments and work of local volunteers before your arrival. Be respectful and supportive during this transition.

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# Types of Shelter Operations

## Introduction

Different disasters create different sheltering needs and conditions. Knowing the characteristics of different types of shelter operations will help you make good decisions about shelters for each disaster event.

## Characteristics of different types of sheltering operations

These are the characteristics of shelter operations, based on how long the shelter is likely to be open and whether there is a warning before the disaster.

	If there is a warning before the disaster ...	If there is no warning before the disaster ...
...and sheltering needs are short term...	<p>...There is more time to consider site selection.            ...There is more time for obtaining supplies.            ...Red Cross staff can arrive before clients.            ...Clients can be advised to bring essential items.            ...Clients have some time to prepare emotionally.            ...There may be fewer supply requirements.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Hurricane evacuation</p>	<p>...There is less opportunity to consider site selection.            ...There is less time for obtaining supplies.            ...Clients may arrive before Red Cross staff.            ...Clients have little or no time to gather essential items.            ...Clients have no time to prepare emotionally.            ...There may be more supply requirements.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Apartment fire, HAZMAT spill, wildfire</p>
...and sheltering needs are long term...	<p>...There is more time to consider site selection.            ...There is more time for obtaining supplies.            ...Red Cross staff can arrive before clients.            ...Clients can be advised to bring essential items.            ...Clients have some time to prepare emotionally.            ...There is a need for long-term services.            ...There are greater supply needs.            ...There is a need for longer-term staffing.            ...The shelter may become a focal point for other community relief efforts.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Slow-rising flood, hurricane aftermath</p>	<p>...There is less opportunity to consider site selection.            ...There is less time for obtaining supplies.            ...Clients may arrive before Red Cross staff.            ...Clients have little or no time to gather essential items.            ...Clients have no time to prepare emotionally.            ...There is a need for long-term services.            ...There are greater supply needs.            ...There is a need for longer-term staffing.            ...The shelter may become a focal point for other community relief efforts.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Earthquake, tornado, wildfire</p>

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**Shifting from short-term to longer-term sheltering**

When a disaster is extensive, clients are likely to need more time to make alternative housing arrangements. This step creates a longer-term need for sheltering. In long-term shelters, clients have needs that may not arise during a shorter-term sheltering operation. Some examples of sheltering needs that may change as sheltering becomes long-term are:

**Clothing:** Clients may wear the same clothing for a day or two, but after that, a change of clothing becomes more important.

**Comfort items:** Although clients may be able to do without some items, such as personal hygiene products, for a short time, comfort kits should be provided in short-term shelters. In shelters open longer, these items are essential.

**Diet:** People may be able to deviate from their normal diets in the short term, but longer-term shelters should have menus that respect the cultures, customs and dietary needs of shelter residents.

**Other shelter services:** The need for other client services such as play areas for children, quiet areas for stress reduction, recreational activities and transportation also increases as sheltering becomes longer term and people begin to resume their pre-disaster activities.

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# Shelter Support Operations

## Chapter 2: Shelter Facilities

### Chapter Overview

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**Introduction** To open shelters for people displaced by disaster, the Red Cross needs accessible buildings to use on a temporary basis. With a few exceptions, the Red Cross does not own these buildings. Generally, Red Cross shelters are located in schools, churches, community centers and other community locations and are used as shelters with prior agreement with partners. Identifying, acquiring, maintaining and returning shelter facilities are key tasks for successful shelter operations.

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**In this chapter** This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Shelter Facilities Overview</a>
<a href="#">Identify Shelter Facilities Before Disaster</a>
<a href="#">Complete a <i>Shelter Facility Survey and Shelter Agreement</i></a>
<a href="#">Select a Pre-Identified Shelter</a>
<a href="#">Complete an Opening Inspection</a>
<a href="#">Allocate and Set Up Shelter Space</a>
<a href="#">Operate and Maintain the Shelter Facility</a>
<a href="#">Return the Shelter to the Facility Owner</a>

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** Under some circumstances, workers in the Logistics activity will arrange use of facilities for relief operations. When Logistics support is not available, shelter managers are responsible for ensuring that appropriate shelter facilities are located, acquired and managed according to Red Cross sheltering and facilities policies and guidelines.

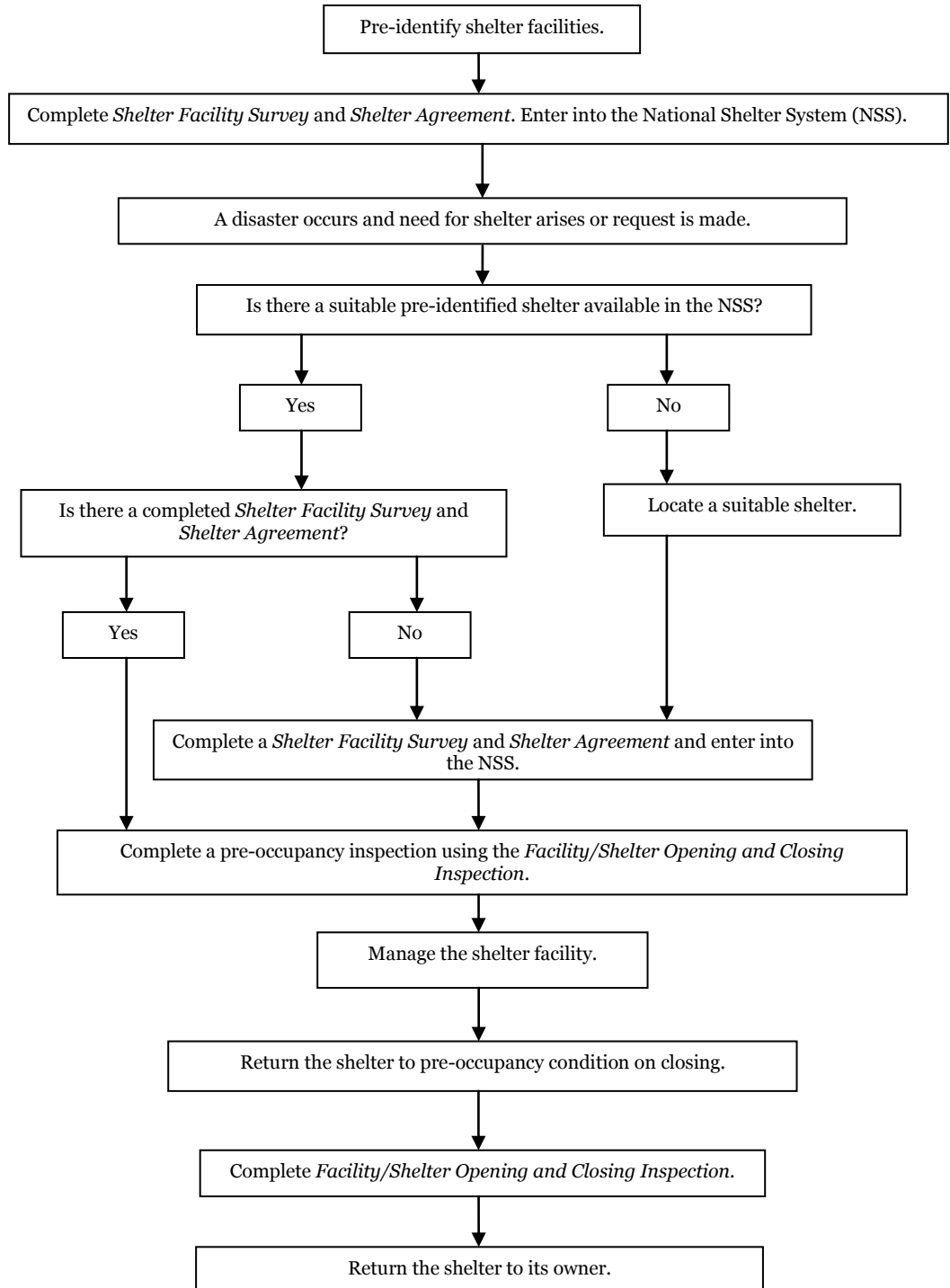
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# Shelter Facilities Overview

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## The shelter facilities process

This diagram illustrates the process for acquiring, managing and returning sheltering facilities. You will find more information about this process in the following sections.



# Identify Shelter Facilities Before Disaster

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## Introduction

This section includes information about locating and designating shelter facilities before a disaster occurs.

---

## Planning for sheltering

As part of the planning and readiness process, chapters pre-identify suitable shelters. This step helps avoid having to make facility choices under pressure or delaying service to clients because of lack of immediately available shelters.

To identify and arrange use of potential shelter facilities:

1. Conduct surveys of potential shelter facilities using a [Shelter Facility Survey](#) form. Consider the desirable size, capacity, safety, functionality and accessibility of possible shelters on the basis of likely disaster events and sheltering needs.
2. Arrange for an authorized representative from your chapter to sign a [Shelter Agreement](#) with a facility representative.
3. File the [Shelter Agreement](#) with the [Shelter Facility Survey](#). This agreement should be updated on a routine basis and provided to the shelter manager upon opening.

Locate several possible facilities so that, when a disaster occurs, you will have a variety of buildings from which to select.

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## Participation of external partners

Include external partners in the facility survey. Government partners and organizations with expertise in areas such as disabilities/accessibility and pet sheltering can be very helpful in assessing the suitability of potential shelter facilities.

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## Sources of information about potential shelters

Use the following resources within your community to help you identify potential shelter locations:

- Local chambers of commerce, which often maintain databases of available buildings;
  - Local bankers, real estate agencies or management companies;
  - Ministerial alliances;
  - Members of the chapter board of directors and/or chapter volunteers;
  - Government officials.
- 

## Potential shelter sites

Many types of buildings make suitable shelter facilities. When trying to locate one, consider the following buildings in your community:

- Schools;
  - Municipal buildings;
  - Available commercial or government space;
  - Union organization facilities;
  - Facilities of religious, civic or community organizations;
  - Unoccupied vacant buildings.
-

---

**Planning considerations for disaster facilities**

As you have conversations with facility representatives and visit potential shelter sites, use the [Shelter Facility Survey](#) and the [Shelter Facility Survey Accessibility Instructions](#) to assess the facilities and determine any action required by the chapter to open the shelter. The survey will guide you through assessments in several areas, including:

- Sufficient number of toilets for projected number of residents;
- Sufficient parking for all projected activities at the facility;
- Properly working heating and ventilation systems;
- Electricity;
- Sufficient floor space and areas for administration, dormitory, storage, food preparation and/or serving, canteen and recreation;
- Accessibility and usability by clients and staff with disabilities.

When selecting shelter sites, remember that temporary measures such as temporary ramps or portable showers can make the facility accessible and suitable.

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**Requirement**

In hurricane-prone areas, shelters for hurricane evacuations must also meet the criteria outlined in [Standards for Selecting Hurricane Evacuation Shelters \(ARC 4496\)](#).

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# Complete a *Shelter Facility Survey* and *Shelter Agreement*

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## Introduction

Once you have identified possible shelter facilities, follow the guidance below to complete a [Shelter Facility Survey](#) and [Shelter Agreement](#).

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## What is a *Shelter Facility Survey*?

A [Shelter Facility Survey](#) is a form that Red Cross staff use to assess the suitability of a facility for sheltering and to record information about the facility. Shelter surveys should be updated every four years. It is recommended that chapters update 25 percent of their shelter surveys each year.

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## What is a *Shelter Agreement*?

A [Shelter Agreement](#) is a contract for the use of the facility by the Red Cross. It must be negotiated and signed before the disaster or at the time the Red Cross occupies the building. It specifies the responsibilities of both the building owner and the Red Cross during the time the Red Cross is using the premises. [Shelter Agreements](#) should be reviewed annually during conversations with facilities to update their points of contact and determine if the facility has undergone significant renovations.

---

## Complete a *Shelter Facility Survey* and a *Shelter Agreement*

When you have located a possible shelter facility, complete a [Shelter Facility Survey](#) and a [Shelter Agreement](#) with the facility owner, following the instructions below.

Step	Action
1	Arrange to meet a facility representative at the potential shelter location.
2	Bring copies of the <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> and <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> .
3	Walk through the shelter with a facility representative and complete a <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> to help you determine whether the facility meets Red Cross standards for a shelter.
4	If the facility meets Red Cross standards and the facility representative is agreeable to its use as a shelter, complete a <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> using the <a href="#">Shelter Agreement Instructions</a> .
5	If a facility owner seeks confirmation of Red Cross insurance coverage, direct the owner to the Web-based <a href="#">Downloadable Memorandum of Insurance</a> .
6	Once you have completed the <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> , enter the information about the shelter into the <a href="#">National Shelter System</a> . For more information, see the <a href="#">National Shelter System</a> page on the Red Cross intranet.

---

## Requirement

Obtain approval from Mass Care leadership at national headquarters before signing an agreement if:

- Terms of reimbursement, insurance or indemnification have been altered; or
- The facility owner wishes to use another form of contract in place of the [Shelter Agreement](#).

Email the agreement to [NHQMascare@redcross.org](mailto:NHQMascare@redcross.org) or call 202-303-5582.

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# Select a Pre-Identified Shelter

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## Introduction

When a disaster occurs and sheltering services are needed, choose a shelter that meets the needs of the situation. This section will help you to assess sheltering needs and choose an appropriate facility.

---

## Assess sheltering needs

Determine sheltering needs on the basis of information from Disaster Assessment, emergency management, your disaster plan and other sources. Consider the following:

- Number of people who are likely to be displaced;
  - Likely duration of sheltering needs;
  - Locations of facilities relative to disaster-caused hazards.
- 

## Find and select a pre-identified shelter

Once you have estimated sheltering needs, follow these steps to select an appropriate shelter facility.

Step	Action
1	Refer to the chapter's disaster response plan and the <a href="#">National Shelter System</a> to locate facilities that have been pre-identified.
2	Review shelter surveys or information in the <a href="#">National Shelter System</a> to identify a shelter with sufficient capacity and availability to meet the needs of the situation.
3	Contact the facility representative listed in the <a href="#">National Shelter System</a> to determine the site's availability.
4	Notify Logistics when a shelter has been identified or, if Logistics is unavailable, arrange to meet a facility representative to complete the Opening Inspection section of the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> sheet.

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## What to do if there is no pre-identified shelter available

When no previously identified shelter is available, arrange to use an appropriate facility. Follow the guidelines for [pre-identifying shelter facilities](#) in this handbook to identify a suitable location.

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# Complete an Opening Inspection

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## Introduction

After you have selected a facility, one of the first tasks before opening the shelter is to conduct an opening inspection. The opening inspection identifies potential safety hazards and documents the condition of the facility. Follow the instructions in this section to complete the inspection.

---

## Requirements

If you are the shelter manager or the designated Logistics staff for a shelter, before opening the shelter, you must:

- Verify that there is a completed [Shelter Facility Survey](#) and [Shelter Agreement](#), and if not, complete these forms;
  - Conduct a facility inspection;
  - Complete the Opening Inspection section of the [Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection](#).
- 

## Before completing the opening inspection

Prepare for the opening inspection by completing the following tasks.

Step	Action
1	Contact the facility representative to arrange to meet at the facility to walk through and conduct the opening inspection.
2	Verify that a <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> and a <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> are on file. If they are not completed, complete them with the facility representative (see <a href="#">Complete a Shelter Facility Survey and Shelter Agreement</a> ).
3	Bring copies of the <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> and the <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> and blank copies of the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> .
4	Review the completed <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> and the <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> with the facility representative.
5	Pay special attention to the accessibility section of the <a href="#">Shelter Facility Survey</a> and discuss any concerns and arrange resolution with the facility representative.
6	Discuss the food services, custodial services, security and reimbursement portions of the <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> with the facility representative to make sure that all parties continue to agree with the specifics.
7	Inform the facility representative of the sheltering cycle and expectations; describe disasters and how we work with facilities (e.g., activation, maintenance issues during occupancy, daily contact with facility representative).

---

**Complete and document the opening inspection**

With the facility representative, conduct a walk-through inspection for safety and liability using the [Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection](#). Follow each of the steps below.

Step	Action
1	Inspect the following and document your observations in the Opening Inspection section of the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The condition of the parking lot;</li> <li>• The condition of landscaping;</li> <li>• Any exterior damage including roof, siding, windows and entrances;</li> <li>• Any interior damage, including flooring, carpeting, ceiling, walls and interior trim;</li> <li>• The condition of appliances and bathroom fixtures;</li> <li>• The condition of the plumbing and electrical systems;</li> <li>• The condition of the heating and cooling systems.</li> </ul>
2	On the Opening Inspection section of the form, briefly describe the building layout and document the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architectural barriers to people with disabilities and functional and/or access needs;</li> <li>• Inadequate ceiling or wall lighting;</li> <li>• Inadequate electrical service;</li> <li>• Inadequate wall or floor electrical receptacles.</li> </ul>
3	Document and address safety and security concerns. Contact Mass Care leadership to determine possible temporary measures to make the shelter accessible and safe for use. Complete and document appropriate actions or necessary repairs for the facility to be safely used as a shelter.
4	Record all furniture and accessories belonging to the facility.
5	Create an initial inventory of facility-owned supplies, using the <a href="#">Shelter Inventory</a> form to record available supplies.
6	Relocate or secure items that are not for shelter use.
7	Present the Opening Inspection section of the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> with itemized inventory attached to the authorized representative of the facility for signing. Provide a signed copy to the facility representative.
8	File the form and inventory in a “Facility” folder. It will be used again when doing the closing inspection.

# Allocate and Set Up Shelter Space

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**Introduction** Follow the guidelines below to set up shelter space in a way that is as safe, comfortable and accessible as possible for residents and staff.

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** The shelter manager is responsible for allocating shelter space. Directing and supervising shelter set-up can be delegated while the shelter manager completes the opening inspection.

---

**Staff areas** Designate and set up the following areas to provide room for shelter staff to work.

Area	Guidelines
Administrative area	Office space for the shelter manager, supervisors, administrative support and, in larger shelters, areas for staffing and Logistics staff should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desks;</li> <li>• Tables and chairs;</li> <li>• Space for computers, telephone equipment, office supplies and secure storage for records;</li> <li>• Communication materials (newsprint, white board, etc.) to allow shelter staff to post important messages.</li> </ul>
Receiving area	Provide an appropriate space for receiving and safely unloading shelter supplies and equipment.
Storage area	This space should be in a secure area, away from shelter traffic, for storing supplies and equipment.
Staff restroom	Separate restroom facilities for staff, if possible.

---

**Shelter areas** Use the [Shelter Facility Survey](#) to assess and allocate spaces for providing services to clients and to plan accessible routes within and between these areas.

Area	Guidelines
Reception and registration areas	Locate the reception and registration areas near the main entrance. These areas should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tables and chairs for interviews;</li> <li>• A waiting area with chairs for clients waiting to register.</li> </ul> See <a href="#">Prepare the Reception and Registration Areas</a> .
Feeding areas	These areas should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meal preparation and/or serving areas;</li> <li>• A canteen where snacks and beverages are available 24 hours a day;</li> <li>• Storage for feeding supplies.</li> </ul> See <a href="#">Set Up and Maintain Feeding Areas</a> .

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*Continued on next page*

Shelter areas,  
(Continued)

Area	Guidelines								
<b>Individual Client Services areas</b>	Areas for Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Client Casework should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work areas with tables and chairs for staff to complete administrative tasks;</li> <li>• Client interview areas with tables and chairs;</li> <li>• A separate area with cots near the Disaster Health Services area for people who are ill;</li> <li>• Rooms with doors, if possible, to protect client privacy.</li> </ul>								
<b>Temporary respite care for children</b>	In shelters that are expected to be open for an extended period, provide an area for temporary respite care for children.  See <a href="#">Temporary respite care for families with children</a> .								
<b>Quiet area</b>	Providing access to a quiet room or space will help some people function better in a shelter environment (e.g., elderly individuals, people with psychiatric disabilities, parents with very young children, and children and adults with autism).								
<b>Breastfeeding area</b>	Establish a private area for mothers to breastfeed their children in a low-noise environment.								
<b>Dormitory areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow 40 to 60 square feet of sleeping space per person and 100 square feet for people with support equipment such as wheelchairs, lift equipment or service animals. During evacuations, you may assign as little as 10 square feet per person until the storm is over.</li> <li>• Locate the dormitory in a quiet area that has as much privacy as possible from other areas of the shelter.</li> <li>• Arrange separate sleeping areas for the following:               <table border="0" style="width: 100%; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">– Families with young children</td> <td style="width: 50%;">– Clients with other special circumstances</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Elderly people</td> <td>– Clients who work nights and need to sleep during the day</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Single men</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Single women</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </li> <li>• Allow sufficient access to and movement within the building for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Chose areas that have easily monitored and controlled entrances and exits.</li> </ul> <p>Note: When planning dormitory spaces during an earthquake response, consider structural damage and the possibility that residents may prefer to remain outdoors in open areas adjacent to the facility.</p>	– Families with young children	– Clients with other special circumstances	– Elderly people	– Clients who work nights and need to sleep during the day	– Single men		– Single women	
– Families with young children	– Clients with other special circumstances								
– Elderly people	– Clients who work nights and need to sleep during the day								
– Single men									
– Single women									
<b>A play area for children</b>	Make sure the area: <table border="0" style="width: 100%; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is away from quiet areas;</li> <li>• Is safe for small children;</li> <li>• Includes toys and games;</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has signs reminding parents that they are responsible for supervising their children at all times.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is away from quiet areas;</li> <li>• Is safe for small children;</li> <li>• Includes toys and games;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has signs reminding parents that they are responsible for supervising their children at all times.</li> </ul>						
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<b>A recreation area for teens and adults</b>	Include the following if available: <table border="0" style="width: 100%; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Television</li> <li>• Games</li> <li>• Cards</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Newspapers</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Television</li> <li>• Games</li> <li>• Cards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Newspapers</li> </ul>						
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**Shelter  
identification**

The Red Cross emblem is a well-known symbol of refuge and safety. The shelter facility should be well identified to make it easy to locate for shelter residents. Follow these guidelines for posting Red Cross identification and other signage outside and inside the shelter.

Step	Action
1	Use ID materials from the Disaster Field ID Kit or the Shelter Kit to post signs from the main roads so that clients can locate the shelter. Obtain permission from private property owners to post signs on their property. Follow the instructions in <a href="#">Requisition Red Cross Supplies and Equipment</a> to request Red Cross signs if they are not available in the shelter kit.
2	Post signs outside of the building indicating which entrance to use. Signage on the outside of the building should direct clients to the entrance where registration is set up and to the accessible entrance if separate from the main entrance.
3	Post signs identifying the shelter as a Red Cross facility inside the building—at least one per wall. Use caution so that walls and other surfaces where signs are posted are not damaged. Consult with the facility representative.
4	Make signs directing residents to the registration area, Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health, the canteen, and the restrooms. Include signs for partners who are working with us at the shelter.
5	Create effective communication tools for all residents. Recruit volunteers to translate information and make signs for shelter residents who do not speak English or cannot see small print.
6	Post a bulletin board with an introductory welcome message, as well as the shelter rules and other helpful information. See <a href="#">Providing Information for Clients</a> for more on communicating important shelter information.
7	Check signs periodically to make sure they still look good and are legible. Replace them, as needed—especially after rain and heavy winds.

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**Facility services  
and utilities**

The [Shelter Agreement](#) may hold the Red Cross responsible for cleaning, trash removal and other services and utilities for the building. If so, contact Logistics/Facilities at relief operations headquarters to arrange for these services.

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# Operate and Maintain the Shelter Facility

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## Introduction

While the shelter is open and operating, the shelter manager works with Logistics Facilities staff to make sure that the facility is well maintained while in the custody of the Red Cross.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for overseeing the use, maintenance and safety of the shelter facility during the shelter operation. He or she may delegate some or all of these responsibilities to a Logistics Facilities worker assigned to the shelter who works under the supervision of the shelter manager.

---

## Maintain contact with facility representative

The shelter manager or designated Logistics worker should maintain good communication with the facility representative throughout the shelter operation. Maintain daily communication about the facility, discuss and resolve problems, explain the services we are providing, and identify with which community partners we are working.

---

## Track supplies and equipment that belong to the facility

Shelter staff should inventory and track equipment and supplies belonging to the facility that are available for use at the shelter so that equipment can be returned and the facility owner can be reimbursed for any supplies used during the shelter operation.

See [Complete an Initial Shelter Supply and Equipment Inventory](#) and [Track Shelter Supply and Equipment Inventories](#) for information on tracking facility-owned supplies and equipment.

---

## Conduct facility inspections on each shift

Routine inspections of the shelter facility are necessary to identify and address any conditions that pose a hazard to shelter residents and workers or to the property of the facility owner. Use the [Shelter Shift Inspection](#) form to conduct inspections on each shift and report any problems to the facility representative and the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters. When inspecting the shelter, check for:

- Signs of excessive wear and tear;
- Inappropriate use;
- Operational deficiencies;
- Obstructed emergency exits;
- Hazards, including fire hazards;
- Any other problems.

Use the [Shelter Facility Survey](#) to make sure that accessible routes throughout the shelter have not been obstructed.

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# Return the Shelter to the Facility Owner

---

## Introduction

During the closing phase, as shelter residents are returning home or moving on to alternate housing arrangements, shelter staff prepare the facility to return to the facility owner.

---

## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for returning the shelter to pre-occupancy condition and returning custody to the facility owner or representative. He or she may delegate this responsibility to a designated Logistics worker assigned to the shelter and working under the supervision of the shelter manager.

---

## Return the shelter to pre-occupancy condition

Complete these steps to return the shelter to the facility owner or representative.

Step	Action
1	Remove all items of furniture, office supplies and equipment, and operation supplies belonging to the Red Cross. (See <a href="#">Returning Equipment and Excess Supplies</a> for instructions on how to return Red Cross supplies and equipment.) Be careful to avoid removing items that belong to the facility, and ensure that items that belong to Red Cross units are returned.
2	Remove all trash and debris from the shelter.
3	Confirm arrangements for cleaning the facility with the Sheltering Manager and Logistics at relief operation headquarters. Either clean the facility (building and grounds) or arrange with a local vendor to clean the facility.
4	Consult with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters and the facility owner or representative when more than minor repairs to a facility are necessary.
5	Discontinue electrical, telephone, trash services, janitorial services and security services if initiated by the Red Cross.
6	Work closely with the Sheltering Manager and Logistics at relief operation headquarters to inform all vendors and contractors that the shelter is closing.

---

**Complete the  
Facility/Shelter  
Opening and  
Closing  
Inspection form**

Once the shelter is ready to be returned to the owner, follow these steps to perform a final walkthrough and return the facility to the owner or representative.

Step	Action
1	Walk through the shelter with the facility owner or representative and note the condition of the shelter on the Closing Inspection part of the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> .
2	Use the table below to determine your next step.
	<b>If...</b>
	<b>Then...</b>
...there are no problems or are only minor problems with the facility and the facility owner or representative is satisfied with a release,	Complete and have both parties sign the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> . Go to Step 3.
...the damage to the facility is more extensive or the owner or representative is not satisfied with a release,	A) Complete the Closing Inspection part of the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> with the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apparent damage to the premises and/or loss or theft from the premises during the time that the Red Cross occupied the facility</li> <li>• A proposal about what measures will be taken to repair the damage or replace the lost or stolen articles</li> </ul> B) Fax this copy of the unsigned <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> , any attachments and the <a href="#">Shelter Agreement</a> to Logistics at relief operation headquarters.  C) Once Logistics and the facility owner reach an agreement on the cost and arrangements for repairs, complete and have both parties sign the <a href="#">Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection</a> .
3	Return keys to the facility owner or representative.
4	Add all forms and associated information to the facility file folder and forward to the Sheltering Manager.

# Chapter 3: Shelter Staffing

## Chapter Overview

---

**Introduction** Staffing the shelter is another critical part of shelter support operations. This chapter includes information for shelter managers on how to plan and manage shelter staffing.

---

**In this chapter** This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Plan Shelter Staffing</a>
<a href="#">Acquire Additional Staff</a>
<a href="#">Receive Staff at the Shelter</a>
<a href="#">Manage Shelter Staff</a>
<a href="#">Transfer or Release Shelter Staff</a>

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** The shelter manager is responsible for planning, requesting and managing shelter staff. In large shelters, he or she may receive assistance from Staff Services workers assigned to the shelter.

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# Plan Shelter Staffing

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## Introduction

A staffing plan helps the shelter manager anticipate the numbers of Red Cross workers that will be necessary to make sure that clients receive quality service at the shelter.

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## Create a staffing plan

Follow the steps below to create a staffing plan.

Step	Action
1	Gather information about the disaster.
2	Consult shelter staffing guidelines.
3	Determine recommended numbers of staff for each staff position.
4	Identify sources of staff.
5	Create a table of organization.

---

## Information you will need

Collect and assess the following information to help you determine shelter staffing needs. On smaller, chapter-led relief operations, you can get this information directly from Disaster Assessment and/or the Government Relations activity. On large relief operations, request this information from relief operation headquarters.

- The scope of the disaster and relief operation
  - The likely number of shelter residents
  - The expected needs of shelter residents
  - The demographic characteristics of likely shelter residents
  - The safety of the shelter facility
  - The layout of the shelter facility
  - Likely length of shelter operations
- 

## Numbers of staff

Use the [Shelter Staffing Template](#) to determine the numbers of staff needed to staff a shelter operation. Keep in mind that:

- In very small shelters, you may combine some positions;
  - In larger shelters, it may be necessary to staff most positions overnight;
  - Staffing levels depend on several factors, including the demographics of the shelter residents and shelter layout;
  - You do not need to have your full team to open the shelter.
- 

## Staffing guidelines

Follow these guidelines when developing your staffing plan:

- Develop an initial plan for staffing the shelter for the first 72 hours.
  - After making your initial plan, anticipate future staffing needs and submit staffing requests three to five days before the need.
  - Assign no more than five to seven staff to each supervisor, depending on the complexity of the task.
  - Plan 24-hour coverage for essential shelter tasks, including registration, Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health, feeding and dormitory management.
  - Schedule one day off for each staff member for every seven days worked.
- 

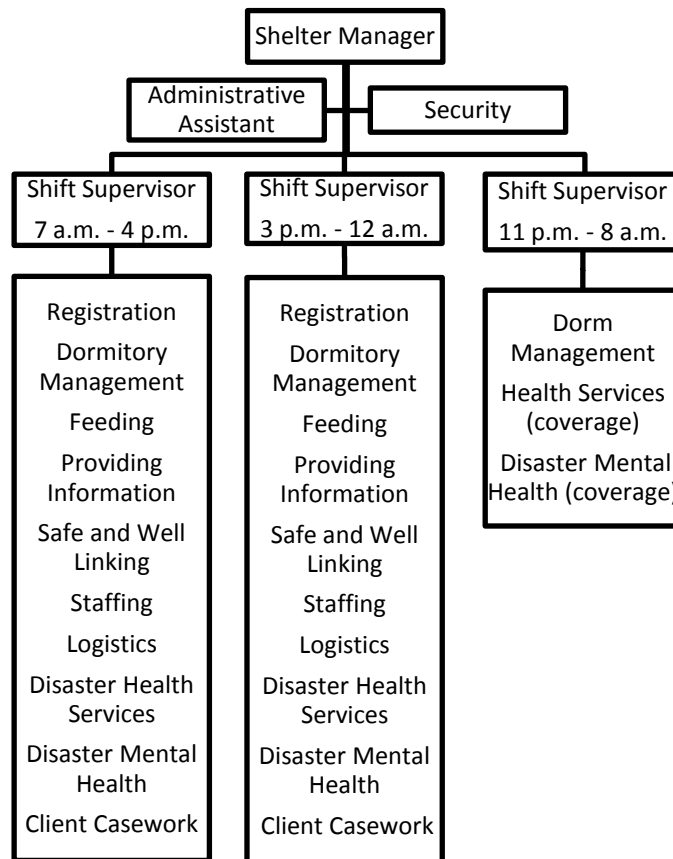
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**Staffing guidelines**  
(Continued)

- Plan shift lengths on the basis of available staff. Nine-hour shifts work well, but use 12-hour shifts if numbers of available staff are insufficient.
- Depending on shelter size, assign some staff to cover more than one area of responsibility. However, even very small shelters must have a minimum of one shift supervisor, two shelter staff, a Disaster Health Services worker and a Disaster Mental Health worker.
- Shift staff from one assignment to another as appropriate. For example, initially you may need many registration workers to process incoming clients. Later, fewer registration workers will be needed, but more dormitory workers may be necessary. In that case, shift workers from one task to another.

**Create a table of organization**

Create a table of organization based on the information you have collected and the guidelines above. Be sure that your table of organization covers the responsibilities outlined in the table below. Note that not all positions are listed for all shifts. Especially in smaller shelters, some positions may not need to be staffed overnight. Ensure that this is shared with all shelter workers and posted in the shelter staff office.



**Next steps**

If you need to request additional staff to fill all of the positions in your table of organization, see the next section, [Acquire Additional Staff](#), for how to make staff requests.

# Acquire Additional Staff

---

## Introduction

Depending on the length of the shelter operation and the number of staff initially deployed to the shelter, the shelter manager may need to acquire additional workers to staff the shelter. This section will guide you through requesting and recruiting additional shelter staff.

---

## Complete a Staff Request form

Follow these steps to request additional and/or replacement staff.

Step	Action
1	Use the staff planning process to estimate staffing needs for the next three to five days.
2	On the basis of estimated staffing needs, complete a <a href="#">Staff Request</a> form.
3	Make sure the shelter manager signs the staff request.
4	Forward the request to the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters for approval and processing through Staff Services.

---

## Work with new volunteers

Staff Services personnel at the relief operation headquarters will make every effort to fill staff requests as submitted. However, factors such as the type and timing of the disaster, immediate weather conditions and the extent that volunteers are personally affected by the event all have an impact on the numbers of experienced volunteers that will be available. For that reason, shelter workers need to be prepared to work with new volunteers who have not been trained by the Red Cross.

All new volunteers should have completed a background check before volunteering in a shelter. If a volunteer is new, has successfully completed his or her background check and is assigned to the shelter, keep the following mind:

- Make sure the new volunteer has appropriate shelter training. If possible, arrange for the volunteer to take a Red Cross sheltering course. If a shelter training course is not available, plan for experienced shelter workers to provide on-the-job training.
- Provide new volunteers with ongoing supervision and mentoring from experienced shelter workers.
- Make sure that all new Red Cross volunteers working at the shelter have proper Red Cross identification.

For volunteers who have not completed a background check, see the next section on working with spontaneous volunteers.

---

## Work with spontaneous volunteers

Because all Red Cross volunteers should successfully obtain a positive result to a background check, refer spontaneous volunteers arriving at the shelter to the chapter or to a Staff Services representative for volunteer in-processing. If for any reason that is not possible, follow Red Cross guidance for in-processing spontaneous volunteers, including arranging for spontaneous volunteers to submit an application for a background check before volunteering. Spontaneous volunteers must complete the application for a background check as soon as possible but no later than seven days into a disaster relief operation assignment.

Spontaneous volunteers may be assigned to work at the shelter prior to their

background check being completed successfully, except in the following areas:

- Alone in direct contact with children
  - In dormitories alone overnight
  - With financial instruments (cash, checks, CACs, etc.)
- 

**Work with shelter resident helpers**

Another possible source of workers at the shelter is residents who are willing to help with sheltering tasks. Recruiting shelter residents as helpers allows them to contribute to their own recovery and creates a more positive and cooperative environment at the shelter.

Follow these guidelines to include shelter residents as part of the shelter team:

- Encourage shelter residents to help by emphasizing that the shelter is a temporary home with regular necessary tasks, and that their help will make the shelter a more comfortable experience for everyone.
- Refer shelter residents who identify themselves as health or mental health professionals to Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health.
- Provide a temporary nametag.
- Provide training and supervision to ensure that shelter residents are able to accomplish their tasks successfully.
- Check in with shelter residents to make sure they are happy with their assignments and provide feedback regarding their work.
- Offer to vary assignments to prevent residents from becoming overwhelmed or discouraged with their tasks.
- Post daily chore charts, or create resident teams with specific tasks for each team.
- Routinely recognize and thank all shelter resident helpers for their willingness to help and the good job they are doing.

Since shelter residents will not have completed a background check, shelter residents may not work:

- Alone in direct contact with children;
- In dormitories alone overnight;
- With financial instruments (cash, checks, CACs, etc.).

Shelter staff should refer shelter residents who are interested in becoming Red Cross volunteers to Staff Services for volunteer in-processing.

---

**Request assistance from other groups and activities**

As the conditions at the shelter and the needs of shelter residents become apparent, the shelter manager may request assistance from other groups and activities to meet the disaster-caused needs of clients. Client Caseworkers, Community Partnerships workers, Life Safety and Asset Protection workers, Disaster Services Technology workers and many others play a role in supporting shelter services. As a shelter worker, familiarize yourself with all of the groups and activities in the DSHR system so you can call on them appropriately to provide the best service to our clients.

---

**Requirements**

Shelter workers must follow Red Cross policy when working with spontaneous volunteers and with individuals who have not completed a background check.

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## Receive Staff at the Shelter

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### Introduction

This section highlights tasks for greeting, orienting and assigning staff arriving to work at the shelter.

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### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager should make sure that staff members are properly registered and signed in to the relief operation, have Red Cross identification and have all of the training and information they need for a successful assignment at the shelter.

---

### In-process shelter staff

In-processing is the registration and information-gathering process that the Staff Services group uses with all employees and volunteers arriving on a disaster relief operation. It includes registering disaster relief workers, providing them with an orientation and, if applicable, assisting them with lodging.

In most cases, workers will have completed in-processing at relief operation headquarters before arriving at the shelter. If this is not the case, contact the chapter or the Staff Planning and Support Activity at relief operation headquarters for instructions on how in-processing is to take place for shelter workers.

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### Orient staff

Ordinarily, workers receive an orientation at relief operation headquarters before arriving at the shelter. Orientation provides workers with information they will need to understand the context for their work, including the disaster, the area and the overall relief operation.

Shelter managers should confirm that all arriving workers have been oriented. If for any reason workers have missed orientation, the shelter manager should contact workers from the Training activity to address this issue.

Orientation topics should include:

- An overview of the disaster, including information about the affected population and special considerations that will help staff members assist clients;
  - The relief operation's status, mission and goals;
  - Information about other activities on the operation;
  - Support available for workers including Staff Wellness and Disaster Mental Health services, assistance with lodging, etc.;
  - Reminders to be flexible and patient and to practice good self-care to minimize the stress of the relief operation.
- 

### Provide staff with identification

All shelter workers, except spontaneous volunteers and shelter residents, should have Red Cross identification so that shelter residents and visitors to the shelter can identify staff members if they have questions or need assistance. Temporary nametags can be used for spontaneous volunteers and shelter residents recruited as helpers.

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**Make staff assignments**

Once shelter workers have been oriented and have proper identification, assign them to positions on the shelter team. Making staff assignments requires two steps:

Step	Action
1	Assess staff members' skills and interests. Interview shelter workers and consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DSHR system position</li><li>• Disaster training</li><li>• Disaster experience</li><li>• Employment experience</li><li>• Staff member interests</li><li>• Leadership and communication skills and experience</li><li>• Staff member promotion and development plans</li></ul>
2	Assign staff to roles that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet the needs of the shelter operation;</li><li>• Meet workers' needs for job satisfaction and career development within the Red Cross.</li></ul>

Remember that anyone helping at the shelter who has not yet completed a background check may only work in limited areas. For more information, see [Acquire Additional Staff](#) above.

For tips on assessing and assigning workers, see the [Disaster Frontline Supervisor Handbook](#).

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**Conduct job inductions**

Once you have decided on staff assignments, the next step is to conduct a job induction. The purpose of a job induction is to introduce shelter staff to their assignments, work setting, tasks and shelter facility.

Use the [Job Induction Checklist](#) as a guideline to help you create a job induction agenda. Remember to repeat the job induction for all new staff arriving at the shelter. You can either conduct job inductions for groups or for individuals as they arrive at the shelter.

For more information about job induction, see the [Disaster Frontline Supervisor Handbook](#).

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**Arrange training for shelter staff**

Operational training is coordinated by the Training activity. When the Training activity is not available, shelter staff may have to arrange for necessary training. If you identify a need for training for shelter staff, request assistance from Staff Services.

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**Conduct job inductions**

Job induction topics for shelter staff should include the following:

**Introductions, including:**

- your contact information, and
- introductions to other staff.

**Work site specifics, including:**

- the table of organization and reporting structures
- groups and activities at the shelter
- locations of bathrooms, break areas, smoking areas, emergency exits, etc.,
- on-call Staff Wellness and Disaster Mental Health numbers.

**A review of the service delivery plan, including:**

- how you, your individual staff and work unit fit in with the overall Mass Care action plan and the larger relief operation plan.

**Expectations, including:**

- information about the work performance evaluation process
- work schedules
- communication and reporting protocols.

**A review of work assignments, including:**

- any concerns workers may have about their assignments
  - tools and resources required to accomplish the assignment
  - operation-specific guidance or changes related to the assignment.
-

# Manage Shelter Staff

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## Introduction

During ongoing shelter operations, the shelter manager schedules shifts, maintains staffing records, holds staff meetings and responds to staff issues and concerns. You will find guidance for these and other staff management tasks in this section.

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## Prepare staffing schedules

Follow the steps below to create a work schedule for shelter staff.

Step	Action
1	Using the table of organization in your staffing plan and the list of staff assigned to the shelter, create a schedule of shifts and days off.
2	Submit a copy of the schedule to the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters and maintain one at the shelter.
3	Review schedules at staff meetings and post copies of the schedules where staff can easily find them.

### Guidelines:

- Use the [Table of Organization](#) in this section to identify which positions should be staffed during which shifts. Some positions are assigned 24 hours a day, whereas others are staffed only for day and evening shifts.
- Collaborate with other activities, such as Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health, to schedule teams to provide necessary services at the shelter.
- Schedule staff at least three days in advance. If the shelter closes, workers may be notified of cancelled assignments.
- Assign a supervisor to stand in for the shelter manager on his or her day off or for any absence from the shelter for any length of time.
- Use a system for charting days off that can be easily changed. Post-it notes work well for this purpose.
- Choose a schedule that suits the working conditions of the shelter and the number of staff available. Two examples of effective schedules are:
  - Two shifts of 12 1/2 hours (requires fewer workers):
    - 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
    - 7 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.
  - Three shifts of nine hours
    - 7:00 am to 4:00 pm
    - 3 p.m. to 12 a.m.
    - 11 p.m. to 8 a.m.

---

## Keep staff records

Keep track of staff assigned to the shelter for safety reasons and to ensure that relief operation staff receive recognition for their service. Make sure that shelter staff sign in when they report for each shift and sign out when they leave at the end of the shift.

---

## Conduct staff meetings

Staff meetings are essential to good shelter operations. They are an opportunity to share information about the relief operation, to build the shelter team and to improve service to clients. All shift supervisors can use staff meetings to keep their teams well informed.

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*Continued on next page*

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**Conduct staff meetings**  
(Continued)

Tips for conducting good staff meetings:

- Make up a brief agenda of what you want to cover so that you can keep the meeting focused. Use a consistent format for all staff meetings.
- Keep the meeting as positive as possible.
- Allow staff with key responsibilities a few moments to give status reports.
- Plan time for questions and to validate information or dispel rumors.
- Be careful to protect the privacy and personal information of shelter residents and staff, and only discuss topics that are appropriate for a general meeting.
- To save time, request that written reports, updates, press releases and other materials be submitted in advance so they can be copied and distributed at the meeting.
- Use the meeting for activities that require the whole group's involvement. Address issues involving only a few staff members at other times.
- Remind staff to practice good self-care to minimize the stress of working at the shelter.
- Include shelter resident helpers and partner volunteers to encourage team building.

**When to hold staff meetings:**

- Schedule staff meetings at regular intervals throughout the operation. For example, schedule meetings once per shift. Even if meetings are brief, they still provide a chance to communicate, relieve stress and resolve problems.
- In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, hold staff meetings whenever important information needs to be communicated to the workers.

**What to include in your staff meetings:**

Use this checklist to plan your staff meeting agenda:

- Introductions of new workers joining the shelter team
- Updates on disaster response and shelter operations
- Recovery information to be communicated to shelter residents
- Discussions about the needs of clients and workers
- Discussions about material resource needs
- Reminders of procedures, such as updating the [Shelter Log](#) or signing in and out at the beginning and end of shifts
- Information on developing transition plans and closing the shelter
- Suggestions for worker self-care and tips for minimizing stress and avoiding burnout
- Recognition of workers who may not be returning to the shelter

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**Conduct shift transition briefings**

A shift transition briefing is an opportunity for staff who are ending their shifts to brief incoming staff about what has taken place at the shelter during the previous shift. Schedule about 30 minutes of overlap time as the shift changes, and plan shift transition briefings to facilitate this process.

---

**Respond to staff issues, problems and concerns**

Shelter managers and other supervisors in the shelter setting should be aware of and should inform their staff about Red Cross policies and guidelines related to issue resolution and progressive discipline. You will find detailed guidance on managing staff and responding to staff issues, problems and concerns in the [Disaster Frontline Supervisor Handbook](#).

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# Transfer or Release Shelter Staff

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**Introduction** When the shelter closes, all staff must be transferred to other parts of the relief operation or released and properly out-processed. Follow the guidance in this section to complete the staff transfer/release process.

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**The transfer or release process** The transfer or release process involves several steps performed by the shelter manager and/or supervisors at the shelter.

Before releasing staff, the shelter manager consults the Sheltering Manager about whether staff may be transferred or should be released.

The shelter manager and shift supervisors:

- Complete the [Disaster Relief Operation Work Performance Evaluations](#) for all staff they have supervised;
  - Assist staff with out-processing;
  - Personally thank each shelter team member.
- 

**Complete work performance evaluations** Performance evaluation begins when a worker is assigned to the shelter. Evaluations are an important part of Red Cross staff development. They help clarify which workers are ready for more challenging assignments and which workers may need more guidance. The performance evaluation process includes four steps:

1. Setting expectations at the job induction;
2. Regular check-ins during the assignment for two-way feedback;
3. Completion of the [Disaster Relief Operation Work Performance Evaluations](#) form;
4. A performance evaluation discussion between the supervisor and worker to review the evaluation and debrief about the assignment.

## **Who completes the evaluation?**

The shelter manager should complete performance evaluations for shelter personnel. In addition, shelter staff members who are supervising other staff should complete performance evaluations for the staff they are supervising. This includes individuals in activities outside of Mass Care, such as Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health. When completing evaluations for workers outside of Mass Care, work with their managers at relief operation headquarters for technical input.

## **Who should receive an evaluation?**

All workers at the end of an assignment who have worked for seven days or more must receive a performance evaluation, regardless of whether they are being released from the relief operation or being transferred to another assignment. Workers may request an evaluation if they have worked three days or more.

You will find instructions for completing the [Disaster Relief Operation Work Performance Evaluations](#) on the form and on the [Disaster Forms](#) page on the Red Cross intranet. Additional guidelines for completing the evaluation process are in the [Disaster Frontline Supervisor Handbook](#).

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**Forward  
staffing records  
to appropriate  
locations**

Once staff have been transferred or released, forward all originals of the following to Staff Services at relief operation headquarters:

- [\*Disaster Relief Operation Work Performance Evaluation\*](#)
- [\*DRO Staff Action Report\*](#)
- [\*DRO Member Registration\*](#)

All other staffing documents should be destroyed upon shelter closing.

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# Chapter 4: Supplies and Equipment

## Chapter Overview

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**Introduction** One of the most important tasks for ensuring a smooth shelter operation is acquiring and managing supplies and equipment. As a shelter worker, you will work closely with Logistics and Disaster Services Technology to equip the shelter to meet client and staff needs and to ensure that supplies and equipment are used appropriately and tracked carefully.

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**In this chapter** This chapter includes the following sections:

Topic
<a href="#">Section 1: Acquiring Supplies and Equipment</a>
<a href="#">Section 2: Managing Supply and Equipment Inventories</a>

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**Shelter manager responsibilities**

The shelter manager is responsible for ensuring that supplies and equipment are managed carefully and used appropriately at the shelter.

On larger relief operations, a Logistics worker may be assigned to the shelter to act as a liaison between the shelter and the Logistics group and to assist the shelter manager in handling supply and equipment needs.

On smaller operations or where no Logistics staff is assigned to the shelter, the shelter manager is responsible for all supply and equipment management tasks and for supervising all shelter workers assisting with those tasks. The following table explains in more detail responsibility for procurement and inventory tasks at the shelter.

If you are a...	...you are responsible for:
Shelter manager or Logistics staff assigned to a shelter...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correctly estimating supply and equipment needs;</li><li>• Procuring necessary supplies and equipment;</li><li>• Tracking shelter inventories;</li><li>• Returning supplies and equipment when the shelter closes.</li></ul>
Red Cross worker assigned to shelter...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following procurement and inventory procedures to ensure that shelter supplies and equipment are being appropriately used and tracked.</li></ul>

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# Section 1: Acquiring Supplies and Equipment

## Overview

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### Introduction

This section describes processes and requirements for determining what supplies and equipment will be needed for getting the necessary items to the shelter.

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### The procurement process

The procurement process includes the following parts:

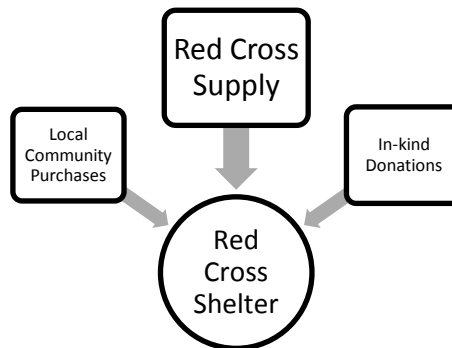
Stage	Description
1	Taking the initial shelter inventory
2	Assessing supply needs
3	Procuring shelter supplies

---

### Sources of shelter supplies and equipment

Acquiring shelter supplies and equipment is a key task for shelter managers. The three main sources of shelter supplies and equipment are:

- Red Cross supplies (including items from chapters and national headquarters);
- Local community purchases;
- In-kind donations.



Procurement activity acquires supplies from these various sources.

---



# Complete an Initial Shelter Supply and Equipment Inventory

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## Introduction

Taking inventory of supplies and equipment already at the shelter will help determine what additional materials will be needed. This process will also help ensure an accurate record of items used at the shelter.

---

## The initial inventory process

Use the [Shelter Inventory](#) form to record the supplies and equipment already available at the shelter. The initial inventory should include:

- Facility-owned supplies available for use at the shelter;
  - Contents in the shelter supply kit;
  - Any supplies already delivered to the shelter from the chapter or relief operation.
- 

## How to complete the Shelter Inventory form

To complete your initial inventory, fill out the [Shelter Inventory](#) form for supplies and equipment already on hand and available for use at the shelter:

Step	Action
1	Access the <a href="#">Shelter Inventory</a> form online or in your shelter supply kit.
2	Complete the information requested on the form including item name, whose property it is, the sheltering phase (opening, operating, or closing) and the quantity.
3	Create an inventory file and place all <a href="#">Shelter Inventory</a> forms in the file.
4	At closing, complete a new form and record the disposition of these items, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Returned to chapter, Logistics, vendor or other location;</li><li>• Donated to partner agency;</li><li>• Disposed of.</li></ul>

---

## Requirements

On opening the shelter, shelter staff must complete and record an initial shelter inventory using the [Shelter Inventory](#) form.

---

## Next steps

After completing your initial inventory, you are ready to estimate your supply needs (see [Estimate Shelter Supply and Equipment Needs](#)).

---

# Estimate Shelter Supply and Equipment Needs

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## Introduction

To determine types and quantities of items to order for the shelter, review information about the disaster event and estimate the shelter services that will be provided and their duration.

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## How to assess supply and equipment needs

You can use the following procedure to help you assess supply and equipment needs. Repeat this procedure every few days to anticipate future needs.

Step	Action
1	Gather information from the Disaster Assessment activity or the Government Liaison activity about the type and scope of the disaster event and the population affected.
2	Estimate the number of residents, staff and transient visitors (emergency workers, etc.) expected at the shelter.
3	Estimate the expected duration of shelter activities.
4	Identify special equipment needed, such as durable medical equipment or consumable medical supplies.
5	Review inventory of already-available supplies and equipment.
6	List required items that are not currently available at the shelter.

---

## Use the *Shelter Supply Kit Template*

Use the [Shelter Supply Kit Template](#) to compile a list of items you may need at the shelter. This list is designed to inform decisions about the necessary supplies to order.

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## Next steps

Once you and your supervisor have estimated the items that will be needed, you are ready to order supplies. See [Requisition Red Cross Supplies and Equipment](#).

---

# Requisition Red Cross Supplies and Equipment

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## Introduction

Once you have completed your assessment of shelter supply needs, complete a [Disaster Requisition \(Form 6409\)](#) to request Red Cross supplies and equipment.

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## How to complete a Disaster Requisition form

Follow the steps below to complete a requisition for supplies and equipment.

Step	Action
1	Access the <a href="#">Disaster Requisition (Form 6409)</a> online or use a paper copy from your shelter supply kit.
2	Fill out all of the requested information in Sections I, II and III. Be sure to include the complete shipping address, unit of measure, total quantity, brief description and “need by” date. You will find detailed instructions for filling out the <a href="#">Disaster Requisition (Form 6409)</a> on the second page of the form.
3	Once you have completed the form, keep a copy for your records and forward a copy to your supervisor for approval.
4	Place your copy in an “Open Orders” file.
5	The approved form should be forwarded to Logistics at relief operations headquarters. Requisitions for technology and communications equipment should be forwarded to Disaster Services Technology at relief operation headquarters.

---

## Requirements

You must complete the following requirements when requisitioning Red Cross supplies:

1. All requests for shelter supplies and equipment must be made by an authorized requester and must include a completed [Disaster Requisition \(Form 6409\)](#).
  2. All Disaster Requisitions must include the signature of an authorized approver who certifies that the request is in concurrence with the service delivery plan for the relief operation.
  3. The requester and approver must maintain segregation of duties.
- 

## Next steps

See [Receive Red Cross Supplies and Equipment at the Shelter](#) for instructions on what to do when you receive the requisitioned supplies from Logistics or the chapter.

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## Procure Supplies and Equipment from the Community

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### Introduction

In most cases, supply and equipment needs for relief operations will be made through the Logistics Supply activity at relief operations headquarters or through the chapter for chapter-managed relief operations. In unusual situations, when it is necessary for shelters to purchase supplies from the community, shelter managers must follow the requirements below.

---

### Requirements

If it becomes necessary to order supplies directly from the community, the shelter manager must coordinate with Logistics Supply at relief operations headquarters. Logistics Supply or the chapter will establish ordering procedures based on Red Cross financial authorities and controls. Follow the established ordering procedures at all times.

During the initial stages of a nationally accounted relief operation, you may be authorized to purchase necessary shelter supplies using a Mass Care Procurement Card (MCPC). In that case, carefully follow the instructions on the [Mass Care Procurement Card Authority](#) and the [Mass Care Procurement Card User Information Brochure and Register](#).

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# Respond to Offers of In-Kind Donations

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## Introduction

When appropriate, the Red Cross receives in-kind donations of materials and services to support disaster relief operations. Offers of in-kind donations should be responded to carefully to make sure that donor contributions are put to the best use and are acknowledged properly. Follow the guidelines and requirements below to respond to offers of in-kind donations.

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## How to respond to offers of in-kind donations

If businesses or community members contact the shelter to offer goods to assist the relief effort, consult with the Sheltering Manager to accept, deny or refer the offer to the In-Kind Donations activity at relief operations headquarters.

Red Cross relief operations are unable to safely and effectively use certain kinds of items collected in a community, such as home-cooked food, canned goods or clothing.

**Donated Food:** Occasionally, individuals or groups from the community will want to donate food already prepared. Donated food must be prepared according to public health standards. If food was not prepared in a kitchen approved by the local health department, food donations will not be accepted. Thank donors graciously and tactfully, and explain that we cannot accept their generous offer.

**Donated Clothing:** Because cleaning, sorting and packaging used clothing and shoes uses valuable resources of money and time needed for other aspects of our relief operation, these donations are generally not accepted. If donations are offered at the shelter, refer the donors to organizations that operate collection programs.

---

## How to manage unsolicited in-kind donations

Spikes in the arrival of in-kind donations often occur in the immediate aftermath of a very large event with high media visibility. The public, wanting to help, sends or delivers unsolicited items to any Red Cross location. When faced with a surge of unsolicited in-kind donations:

- Notify the manager of the In-Kind Donations activity.
  - Publicize on the exterior of the shelter that the shelter is not a drop-off location for unsolicited donations. Include nearby drop off locations where other agencies are accepting donations. (Obtain this information from the manager of the In-Kind Donations activity.)
  - Move any donations received onsite out of work areas, including hallways, offices, entranceways and loading docks. Discuss the items with the Sheltering Manager at relief operations headquarters to decide on an appropriate disposition.
- 

## Requirements

When responding to offers of in-kind donations, you must:

- Complete a [\*Resource Record \(Form 6455\)\*](#) to record any donations accepted at the shelter or any significant donation that could not be turned away (for instance, a donation exceeding \$250 in value that arrived overnight).
  - Submit the completed *Resource Record* to the In-Kind Donations activity at relief operation headquarters to make sure that all in-kind donations are properly accounted for and acknowledged.
-

## Section 2: Managing Supply and Equipment Inventories

### Overview

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#### Introduction

Once equipment and supplies begin arriving at the shelter, it takes careful recordkeeping to make sure they are accurately accounted for and appropriately used. This section provides you with tools, resources and requirements for managing shelter inventories.

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#### The supply management process

The process for managing shelter supplies and equipment includes the following stages.

Stage	Description
1	Receiving supplies and equipment at the shelter
2	Tracking shelter inventories

You will find instructions for each of these stages in the following sections.

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# Receive Red Cross Supplies and Equipment at the Shelter

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## Introduction

When Red Cross supplies and equipment arrive at the shelter, orders are verified before items are released for use. Be sure to use the procedure below to confirm that all of the items requested and delivered are accounted for.

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## How to receive Red Cross supplies and equipment at the shelter

Follow this procedure when you receive Red Cross supplies and equipment.

Step	Action
1	Identify and set up an appropriate receiving area. Be sure that it has plenty of room for safely unloading deliveries.
2	<p>When orders arrive, they will be accompanied by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A copy of the <a href="#">Disaster Requisition (Form 6409)</a>;</li> <li>• A <a href="#">Disaster Receipt (6409B)</a>;</li> <li>• If the order is delivered by carrier, a <a href="#">Bill of Lading (6409C)</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Check and count the items delivered against those listed on the delivery documents. Reconcile what you ordered against what was delivered and what is listed on the delivery documents. Note discrepancies on all copies.</p>
3	Sign the <a href="#">Disaster Receipt (6409 B)</a> (and if delivered by carrier, <a href="#">Bill of Lading (6409C)</a> ).
4	Keep copies of the <a href="#">Disaster Requisition (Form 6409)</a> , <a href="#">Disaster Receipt (6409 B)</a> and <a href="#">Bill of Lading (6409C)</a> and attach them to your copy of the <a href="#">Disaster Requisition (Form 6409)</a> .
5	<p>File your copies of the delivery documents in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A “Completed” file if the order is complete;</li> <li>• A “Back Orders” file if an item is back-ordered;</li> <li>• A “Needs Resolution” file if there is a discrepancy between what was ordered, what was delivered and what is recorded on the delivery documents.</li> </ul>
6	Forward the signed <a href="#">Disaster Receipt (6409B)</a> and <a href="#">Bill of Lading (6409C)</a> to Logistics or Disaster Services Technology (for technology equipment) at relief operation headquarters.
7	Follow up with Logistics (or Disaster Services Technology for technology orders) to resolve discrepancies between what was ordered, what was delivered and what is listed on the delivery documents.

---

## Requirements

Shelter workers receiving supplies and equipment at the shelter must:

- Check deliveries and reconcile the [Disaster Requisition \(Form 6409\)](#), [Disaster Receipt \(6409 B\)](#) and [Bill of Lading \(6409C\)](#).
  - Sign the [Disaster Receipt \(6409 B\)](#) and [Bill of Lading \(6409C\)](#) and forward to the Logistics Supply activity.
  - Work with Logistics or Disaster Services Technology to resolve any discrepancies.
- 

## Next Steps

Record and track supplies and equipment received and used at the shelter. See [Track Shelter Supply and Equipment Inventories](#).

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# Track Shelter Supply and Equipment Inventories

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**Introduction** Keeping accurate records of all supplies and equipment received and used at the shelter helps us to plan relief operations and to make sure materials are used efficiently and appropriately. The procedure below will help you to keep track of items used at the shelter.

---

**Procedure** To track shelter supply inventories, follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1	Identify and set up an area for storing supplies and equipment until they are needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose an area that can be secured and monitored.</li><li>• If you need assistance securing the storage area, the shelter manager may contact the Life Safety and Asset Protection activity at the relief operation headquarters.</li></ul>
2	Enter all supplies and equipment received at the shelter into shelter inventory as they are received. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check supply counts.</li><li>• Record received supplies on the <a href="#">Shelter Inventory</a> form.</li></ul>
3	Verify counts of inventory as supplies are removed from inventory for use at the shelter.
4	Conduct inventory counts regularly, at least weekly, depending on the size and flow of the shelter, to verify that inventories reconcile with amounts received and amounts used at the shelter.

---

**Requirements** To ensure that all shelter supplies and equipment are properly accounted for, shelter staff must:

- Ensure that all supplies and equipment are properly secured;
- Inventory all stored items on a weekly basis.

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# Returning Equipment and Excess Supplies

---

## Introduction

As the shelter population decreases, shelter staff should begin plans to consolidate and return items that are no longer needed. The following section provides guidelines and requirements for completing supply and equipment returns.

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## How to return excess supplies and equipment

Follow the steps below to return excess supplies and equipment.

Step	Action
1	Clean and prepare equipment and excess supplies for return or other disposition.
2	Coordinate with Logistics or Disaster Services Technology to arrange return methods or other disposition for equipment and excess supplies. If appropriate, consider donations to partner agencies.
3	Complete a <a href="#">Shelter Inventory</a> form for all equipment and excess supplies, describing in the “issued to” column the destination of the item.
4	Complete a <a href="#">Disaster Requisition (Form 6409)</a> for all items being returned.
5	If items are being shipped by carrier, complete a <a href="#">Bill of Lading (6409C)</a> .
6	Release items to Logistics, Disaster Services Technology or to a carrier for delivery.
7	Forward all forms and associated documents to the Logistics activity at relief operation headquarters.

---

## Requirements

When returning inventory, shelter staff must:

1. Record the final disposition of all shelter equipment and supplies on the [Shelter Inventory](#) form for those items;
  2. Complete a [Disaster Requisition \(Form 6409\)](#) for all items being returned;
  3. If items are to be shipped by carrier, complete a [Bill of Lading \(6409C\)](#).
-



# Chapter 5: Reporting, Recordkeeping and Communications

## Chapter Overview

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**Introduction** Communicating accurate information is essential for effective relief operations. By keeping accurate records, reporting regularly to relief operation management and maintaining consistent communications, shelter staff ensure that the needs of shelter clients can be met and that the Red Cross has essential information for planning and improving relief operations in the future.

---

**In this chapter** This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Reporting and Recordkeeping</a>
<a href="#">Emergency Communications</a>

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** The shelter manager is responsible for reporting information to relief operation headquarters, maintaining shelter records and reports and ensuring that shelter workers keep accurate records related to their tasks. He or she is also responsible for making arrangements for backup communications systems in the event that normal means of communication are interrupted by the disaster.

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# Reporting and Recordkeeping

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## Introduction

Keeping accurate records and regular reporting to relief operation management helps us to manage relief operation resources, plan for the needs of the operation and collect information to improve preparation for future operations. Good recordkeeping and reporting also helps Public Affairs and Fundraising to tell our story.

---

## Initiate and maintain communication and reporting with the sheltering activity at relief operation headquarters

On arrival at the shelter, contact the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters to confirm contact information and communication and reporting plans. Work with the Sheltering Manager to set up a regular reporting schedule. Subsequent reports from the shelter to relief operation headquarters should follow the agreed upon reporting procedures, including designated times for reporting and information to be included in the reports.

The following instances indicate when you should report to the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters.

- When the shelter is open and ready to accept clients
- When there are immediate needs for the shelter, particularly related to safety and security or immediate client needs
- At the time designated by your supervisor for reporting daily shelter statistics for the [Disaster Operations Control \(Form 5266\)](#) and census reports for the National Shelter System
- If a significant change in population takes place
- When in doubt about whether information should be reported

What should be reported?

- Information from a completed [Daily Shelter Report](#), including the number of shelter residents, number of meals and snacks served, number of staff, supply needs, unusual situations and information from the safety, security and housekeeping inspection
  - Information for the [Disaster Operations Control \(Form 5266\)](#), including number of new shelter registrations, number of overnight stays and number of meals and snacks served
  - Reports of unusual events (injuries, theft, law enforcement interventions, etc.) (these reports should be made immediately to the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters)
  - Staffing, supply and equipment needs (follow the guidelines in the [Shelter Staffing](#) and [Supplies and Equipment](#) chapters of this handbook for preparing requests for additional staff, supplies and equipment)
  - Any special or unusual circumstances regarding the shelter facility or the needs of residents of the shelter
-

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**Set up and maintain two shelter logs**

Shelter logs allow shelter staff to create an ongoing report of shelter operations by recording the daily activities and incidents of the shelter. Follow these guidelines to set up and maintain a *Shelter Log*.

- Make log entries on copies of the [Shelter Log](#) form kept in a binder in the shelter manager's office or a designated supervisor's area. Use the log to document daily shelter operations including:
  - Problems, solutions and commitments;
  - Information related to client needs;
  - Feeding and shelter population statistics;
  - Other information concerning shelter activities or incidents.
- Inform all staff about the log and encourage them to contribute to it.
- Remind staff coming in for their shifts to check the log so they will be aware of what happened during previous shifts.

A second log, for shelter managers, records confidential activities to maintain staff and client privacy, and keeps information to inform future activities, including staff action, evaluations and working with local law enforcement. Follow these guidelines to set up and maintain a shelter manager log:

- Create a separate log labeled “for the shelter manager’s use only.”
- Use the log to document confidential activities including:
  - Staff performance issues and information (positive and negative);
  - Activities involving clients needing to register with local law enforcement;
  - Requests for information from law enforcement.

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**Prepare a narrative report**

On closing the shelter and before out-processing, the shelter manager and any activity supervisors at the shelter should submit narrative reports to their supervisor. The narrative should include a summary of services provided, problems encountered, with resolutions, and recommendations for future operations. The [Shelter Log](#) is a useful resource for gathering material for the narrative report.

---

**Arrange proper disposition of shelter records**

Upon closing the shelter, consult with the Sheltering Manager to confirm arrangements for the disposition of records and for assistance with any questions about how shelter records should be handled. Forward the [Shelter Log](#) to the Sheltering Manager, and follow the instructions throughout this handbook for proper disposition of other specific shelter documents.

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# Emergency Communications

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## **Introduction**

In cases where the disaster has interfered with normal telephone and Internet communications, shelters need backup systems to ensure the ability to communicate during emergencies and to maintain the flow of information to and from the shelter and relief operation headquarters. Local HAM radio operators are an excellent source of assistance for maintaining communications when normal systems are down.

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## **Set up emergency communication and Internet access**

The shelter manager should work with the Disaster Services Technology activity to set up communications and Internet access between the shelter and the relief operation headquarters.

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# Chapter 6: Safety and Security

## Chapter Overview

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**Introduction** The safety and security of shelter residents and staff must remain a top priority for all shelter workers. This chapter includes guidelines for addressing safety and security concerns in shelters and for avoiding security problems by promoting a positive shelter environment.

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**In this chapter** This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Maintain Safety and Security</a>
<a href="#">Prepare for and Respond to Emergencies</a>
<a href="#">Maintain a Positive Shelter Environment</a>
<a href="#">Respond to Problems at the Shelter</a>

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** The shelter manager is responsible for overseeing the safety and security of the shelter and for promoting a positive shelter environment. He or she may delegate safety and security responsibilities to Life Safety and Asset Protection workers or other security personnel under his or her supervision. It is the shelter manager's responsibility to ensure that safety and security are a primary focus of all shelter staff.

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# Maintain Safety and Security

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## Introduction

Shelter managers must be proactive to maintain a safe and secure shelter. Important safety and security activities include arranging for security personnel, if needed; conducting safety and security inspections; monitoring access to shelter areas; and informing shelter staff and residents about safety concerns and issues at the shelter.

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## Arrange security personnel

Follow these guidelines to arrange safety and security personnel for the shelter:

- If available, the Life Safety and Asset Protection activity can provide safety and security services for the shelter. Request these services through the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters.
  - When Life Safety and Asset Protection workers are not available, work with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters to make effective safety and security arrangements. Possible security arrangements include:
    - Contract security or law enforcement;
    - Red Cross workers (primarily responsible for conducting dormitory rounds, checking to see that doors are locked, etc.);
    - Law enforcement officials (for example, police drive-bys and assistance when available);
    - National Guard personnel, if assigned and available.
- 

## Conduct safety and security inspections

Work with Life Safety and Asset Protection workers, if available, to make an initial safety and security inspection upon opening the shelter. Use the [Shelter Shift Inspection](#) form to conduct safety and security inspections on each shift after that. Upon closing the shelter, consult with the Sheltering Manager for proper disposition of [Shelter Shift Inspection](#) forms.

During shift inspections, two or more workers should conduct perimeter walks and interior walks that cover all areas of the facility. During shifts at night, inspect parking areas used by shelter residents and staff.

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## Monitor and control access to shelter areas

To maintain a secure shelter environment, monitor and control access to entrances and exits to shelter areas.

- Secure unused doors that are not emergency exits. However, under no circumstances should emergency exits be blocked or locked in a way that would prevent exiting. Consult with the fire marshal to determine which exits may be safely locked. Remind residents and workers that they must not use restricted entrances to enter or exit the building during non-emergency situations.
  - Patrol dormitory areas and surrounding areas to make sure dormitories are secure.
  - Especially if parking space is limited, monitor and control traffic flow in the parking area. Direct workers and residents regarding the parking of personal vehicles at the shelter. Communicate that the Red Cross cannot be held liable for damages to vehicles at the shelter. If necessary, designate parking areas for clients and workers.
  - Control access to shelter storage areas. Choose a location for storing equipment and supplies that can be secured and monitored.
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**Plan and conduct safety and security briefings for staff and shelter clients**

Keeping shelter staff and residents informed about safety and security concerns helps to maintain a safer shelter environment. Safety and security briefings, held as separate meetings or as part of staff meetings and/or shelter resident meetings, are a good way to keep everyone informed about safety and security concerns. Make sure that all safety information is shared verbally, in writing and by other means that accommodate shelter residents with visual or hearing impairments. Include the following information in your safety and security briefings during resident and staff meetings:

- The locations of fire extinguishers
  - Evacuation routes
  - Plans and procedures for emergencies
  - Guidance about keeping personnel items and valuables safe (inform shelter residents that the Red Cross is not responsible for lost or stolen items)
  - Rules for the behavior and supervision of children (remind parents that they are responsible for supervising their children and that the Red Cross is not responsible for unsupervised children)
  - Rules related to parking and traffic flow in the parking lot
  - Rules pertaining to off-limits areas in the shelter facility
  - Other shelter rules
-

# Prepare for and Respond to Emergencies

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## Introduction

Occasionally, the circumstances of a disaster may force us to evacuate a shelter or to protect shelter residents' safety during an emergency. The guidelines below will help you to prepare for those situations and respond in the case of an emergency.

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## Prepare for emergencies

Upon opening the shelter, the shelter manager, working with Life Safety and Asset Protection workers, if available, should review plans for evacuation of the shelter or for moving the shelter population to a safe area in the event of an emergency.

Develop a plan for facility safety and security, taking the following steps.

Step	Action
1	Evaluate the facility's evacuation plans already in place, if available.
2	Work with Life Safety and Asset Protection, emergency management or the local authority that has jurisdiction to evaluate and determine the facility's potential risks.
3	<p>Work with Life Safety and Asset Protection to establish a shelter-in-place plan and an evacuation plan, including a fire evacuation plan. Include the following in the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locations of the safe spaces within the facility for sheltering during a storm. Consult with the facility representative to confirm designated safe areas within the building. Many times the safe space is interior hallways, multipurpose rooms and classrooms. Safe spaces usually are windowless or have shuttered windows.</li> <li>• A gathering point for residents and staff outside the building and away from where emergency vehicles will respond in case of an emergency</li> <li>• Alternative shelter locations in case of evacuation</li> <li>• A plan for transportation that will accommodate people with mobility impairments in case you must relocate shelter residents</li> </ul>
4	Review plans with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters.
5	Be aware of and monitor communications from the government entity responsible for issuing mandatory evacuation orders for shelter location.
6	Pre-identify those individuals who may need assistance in the event of an evacuation. Share information about those needing special assistance with staff at shift changes.
7	Post emergency plans for shelter residents and workers. Post information in appropriate languages for the shelter population.
8	Brief shelter residents and workers about emergency plans at staff and shelter meetings.
9	Relay emergency information to all residents, including those with hearing or vision impairments and residents who do not speak English.

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**Respond to a  
hurricane or  
tornado  
warning**

In the case of a hurricane or tornado warning, follow these precautions to protect the safety of shelter residents and staff:

- Pay close attention to weather announcements to determine when the winds will reach the dangerous point. If possible, arrange to have a HAM radio operator at the shelter during this time to help maintain the flow of communication about the emergency.
  - Allow ample time to move residents and staff into the designated safe space within the facility.
  - Make sure that doors and windows remain closed. Building codes are created with the presumption that doors and windows are closed; failure to follow these procedures can cause a building to fail, even if it is built to storm shelter standards.
  - Keep residents and staff in the safe spaces inside the building at all times during the storm.
  - Request law enforcement assistance to help with crowd control if needed.
  - Remind shelter staff to remain calm.
  - Exercise judgment to do whatever is necessary to keep shelter residents and staff safe. For example, if necessary, you may overcrowd the safe space while the winds remain dangerous.
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# Maintain a Positive Shelter Environment

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**Introduction** The shelter environment can be very stressful, especially because the disaster situation has already caused stress and trauma for shelter residents. Under these stressful conditions, shelter staff can prevent problems at the shelter by proactively working to maintain a positive environment for residents and staff.

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**The three Rs of sheltering** From our long history in sheltering, the Red Cross has learned effective ways to establish a safe and more pleasant environment in the shelter. These methods can reduce the possibility of certain problems arising. You can remember these as the “Three Rs” of sheltering: respect for clients, rules and routines. The “Three Rs” are one of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to providing our clients with a safe and positive shelter experience.

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**Respect** Creating and maintaining a positive shelter environment begins with respect. As part of our sheltering philosophy, respect for our clients means that we:

- Treat each shelter resident as an individual who is ultimately responsible for his or her own recovery process;
- Safeguard the privacy and personal information of shelter residents;
- Appreciate and respect the diverse backgrounds of our clients;
- Provide services in a way that reasonably accommodates the needs of all clients, including those with functional and/or access needs;
- Treat all shelter residents with respect and kindness.

---

**Shelter resident information** A shelter must have guidelines to protect the safety and well-being of everyone. Make sure you give shelter residents a copy of the [Shelter Resident Information](#) handout. Post “Rules for a Red Cross Shelter” from the Shelter Information Poster Kit where they are clearly visible. Post in the languages of residents and communicate in ways that accommodate people with visual, auditory or intellectual impairments.

Standard shelter rules *prohibit*:

- Pets, but not service animals;
- Tobacco use;
- Possession of weapons;
- Possession or use of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Shelter rules *limit*:

- Access to certain areas of the shelter;
  - Noise levels during quiet hours;
  - Food to feeding areas.
- 

**Routines** Routines help to structure the daily life of the shelter and provide stability during stressful times. Be sure to maintain consistency when scheduling the following:

- Mealtimes
  - Lights-out time
  - TV time
  - Recreational activities
  - Shower schedules
  - Children activities
  - Information updates
  - Shelter meetings
-

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**Shelter advisory committees**

Clients benefit from being a part of the operation of the shelter. Shelter managers may establish a shelter advisory committee to solve problems, identify residents' needs, and provide input to the shelter management team. Advisory committees can make a positive difference in the shelter environment for everyone.

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# Respond to Problems at the Shelter

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## Introduction

Problems may arise at the shelter when individuals do not understand the shelter rules or simply want to challenge them. Sometimes problems arise because shelter residents are experiencing high levels of stress or because of chronic problems residents had before arriving at the shelter.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

Shelter managers are responsible for facilitating or authorizing steps to resolve problems at the shelter. Managers provide leadership and guidance to shelter staff and coordinate with leadership at relief operation headquarters or the Disaster Operations Center at national headquarters to address issues that arise at the shelter.

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## General guidelines for solving problems and conflicts at the shelter

In general, do everything possible to maintain a positive working relationship with coworkers and clients by projecting a constructive attitude, providing a compassionate presence and offering frequent meetings and other opportunities for good communication. Although, despite everyone's best efforts, problems may arise. In the event of a refusal to abide by shelter rules or appropriate requests by shelter staff, or in the face of a possible problem or conflict between residents and/or staff, follow the guidelines below and contact your supervisor for assistance.

To resolve conflict or problems:

- Always strive to remain calm and objective;
- Avoid taking sides;
- Use diplomacy and avoid threatening statements;
- Offer assistance only when individuals appear unable to resolve difficulties on their own, or upon request;
- Ensure that all involved parties want assistance;
- Request help from Disaster Mental Health staff as necessary.

Follow this process for problem solving:

1. Identify the problem.
  2. Explore possible causes.
  3. Generate options.
  4. Select possible solutions.
  5. Develop follow-through plans.
-

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**Respond to verbal harassment, verbal altercations, verbal abuse, etc.**

Monitor potential conflicts. In the event of verbal harassment, verbal altercations, verbal abuse or other verbal disturbances, follow these steps.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Verbally warn the involved individuals that verbal harassment, altercations and/or abuse are not permitted at the shelter (notify onsite security, if present).
2	Inform the involved individuals that if the disturbance continues or occurs again, the next step will be to have law enforcement address the situation and that may result in the removal of the involved individuals from the facility and the property.
3	Document actions in the <i>Shelter Log</i> for other workers to reference.
4	If it is not possible to stop the altercation safely or if the disturbance does not stop after the verbal warning, call 9-1-1 or the local phone number for immediate law enforcement intervention.

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**Respond to physical altercations, fighting or violence, etc.**

Safety is the first priority when dealing with physical altercations at the shelter. In the event of any physical altercation, contact, fighting or violence:

- Call the onsite security, if available, or 9-1-1 immediately;
  - If possible, issue verbal warnings to safely stop the incident immediately;
  - Do not attempt any physical contact;
  - Report to relief operation headquarters immediately any incident where physical contact is made and/or the life, safety or security of the shelter worker or resident is at risk.
- 

**Respond to suspicious activity at the shelter**

If you become aware of suspicious activity either inside or outside the shelter facility, report it to local law enforcement, as well as to relief operation headquarters. Do not attempt to investigate suspicious activity on your own.

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# Chapter 7: Working with Partners and the Media

## Working with Partners

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### Introduction

When a disaster affects a community, the Red Cross and its partners share the responsibility of meeting our mutual constituents' needs. By working together to help our clients, we can more effectively serve them and the community as a whole. As a shelter worker, you can help Red Cross clients receive the services and assistance they need in the disaster recovery process by understanding how to facilitate our clients' access to external partners.

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### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager works closely with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters and Community Partnerships and Government Operations staff to facilitate partner access to the shelter. The shelter manager also acts as the liaison to any partner staff present at the shelter. The shelter manager should ensure that all shelter workers understand Red Cross guidelines for partners in shelters and work to facilitate client access to the resources that partners offer.

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### Examples of shelter-related partner activities

Partnerships help us to provide service for shelter clients in the following ways:

- **Facilities:** Schools, governments, religious organizations and other groups allow us to use their facilities as shelters.
  - **Personnel:** Partner organizations provide personnel to staff shelters. For example, members of a church may volunteer to work at a shelter located in their church building; county or state social services or public health employees might be released to work in a shelter; or Medical Reserve Corps may volunteer to assist with health-related issues in a shelter.
  - **Material resources:** Other organizations or government agencies may agree to provide us with food or supplies to support a shelter operation.
  - **Information:** Chapters, relief operations, emergency management officials and other organizations share information so that services are coordinated and delivered in an effective manner.
  - **Client assistance:** Partners assist shelter clients by helping them to:
    - Assist residents with their activities of daily living;
    - Register for FEMA assistance;
    - Access local and/or state recovery services;
    - Identify unmet needs and concerns;
    - Connect with community-based recovery services and resources.
- 

### Memorandum of understanding (MOU)

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a formal agreement between the Red Cross and a partner organization to work together to deliver disaster-related services. We have MOUs at the national, state and local levels. As you engage in shelter operations, you may work with partner staff under the terms of an existing MOU to help provide service to shelter residents. If so, partner staff and shelter staff should follow the agreements outlined in the MOU. To identify and activate shelter-related MOUs, contact Community Partnerships workers at the chapter, the emergency services director of the chapter or relief operation headquarters for assistance.

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**The Red Cross  
Code of  
Conduct**

Inform community partners operating at the shelter that their activities must fall within the guidelines of the [\*Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief\*](#).

The Code of Conduct includes the following principles:

***Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.***

- The Humanitarian imperative comes first.
- Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
- Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
- We shall endeavor not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.
- We shall respect culture and custom.
- We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
- Ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
- Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
- We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
- In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

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**Prohibited  
practices**

Inform partners at the shelter that certain activities are expressly prohibited in Red Cross shelters. These include, but are not limited to:

- Proselytizing;
  - Providing services for a fee;
  - Referring clients to non-medical fee-based services;
  - Recruiting or soliciting in any manner;
  - Other activities that would violate the Code of Conduct.
-

**General working guidelines for partners**

Partner staff should also follow these general guidelines while working at the shelter:

- Partners must provide all necessary equipment, including laptops, cell phones, forms and other items that may be needed to perform their duties.
- Partner staff must notify the shelter manager or shift supervisor when leaving for the day.
- Partner casework staff should confine their activities to agreed-upon work locations within the shelter.
- Partner staff are welcome to take advantage of meal, snack and drink services provided at the shelter location to which they have been assigned.

**Client confidentiality**

When working with partners, follow Red Cross policy for protecting client privacy and personal information. If a partner agency asks to see client registration forms, the shelter manager should verify the request and the representative’s agency identification and follow the guidance in [Protecting Shelter Resident Privacy and Personal Information](#) in this document.

**Facilitating partner access to shelters**

The following table offers guidelines for facilitating partner access to shelters.

If...	Then...
...The shelter manager determines that having representatives from a partner organization at the shelter will best facilitate clients’ needs...	...The shelter manager works through relief operation headquarters to extend invitations to partner agencies whose presence has been identified as being beneficial to the shelter residents.
...An external organization or agency contacts the relief operation headquarters, national headquarters or other Red Cross staff to request access to the shelter...	... All requests will be shared with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters. The Sheltering Manager will determine if requests will be honored and will work with the shelter manager to facilitate access. The Sheltering Manager will work with the Community Partnerships lead at relief operation headquarters to discuss all partner requests.
... A representative from an external partner organization arrives at a shelter unannounced...	...The shelter manager should attempt to contact the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters for guidance. If the Sheltering Manager or Mass Care Chief at relief operation headquarters cannot be reached, the shelter manager should determine access based on whether the services offered are appropriate for the shelter at the current time. Shelter staff should be conscious of client needs and make every effort to include the community as a part of the response.
Once a request is approved, the Red Cross provides information to the external partner, including shelter location(s) and name, contact information for each shelter manager and the guidelines for access to shelters. The external partner organization supplies the names and contact information of staff that will deploy to the Red Cross shelter(s) and their estimated time(s) of arrival.	

**When partners arrive at the shelter**

Follow these steps when a representative from an approved external partner organization arrives at a Red Cross shelter.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Introduce yourself and explain your position (shelter manager or shift supervisor) to the partner representative(s).
2	Verify each representative's valid agency identification.
3	Have an authorized representative sign the <a href="#">Code of Conduct</a> form and forward completed form to Community Partnerships at relief operation headquarters, if not already completed.
4	Discuss the general working guidelines and orient partner staff to the shelter layout, rules and procedures.
5	Work with the partner to determine how services can be provided in a way that best meets the needs of all shelter residents.
6	Inform Public Affairs about the role of the partner in the shelter so publicity can be coordinated, if appropriate.
7	Designate a location in the shelter for partners to work. Partners may provide assistance through outreach to shelter residents or by setting up a partner area within the shelter. When determining what type of access the external partner will be granted, carefully consider client privacy.
8	Announce the presence of the partner organization to shelter residents and inform them about the partner's location in the shelter and the assistance that they are providing.
9	Include partner agencies in staff briefings.
10	Keep a list of partner information such as the services provided and the names of the partner volunteers to be forwarded for recognition to the Community Partnerships activity.

# Working with the Media

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## Introduction

It is always important that chapters develop a good relationship with the media, but when disaster strikes, working with the media is especially important. The media can help by telling people where the Red Cross is located, what services are available, where volunteers are needed and how the public can make financial contributions. At the same time, our first priority is to our clients and the protection of their privacy. The guidelines in this section will help you to encourage positive media relations without sacrificing client privacy.

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## What to do when media arrive at the shelter

Media are allowed access to shelters, and all media outreach should be coordinated by Public Affairs at relief operation headquarters. Whenever media representatives arrive at the shelter, contact your supervisor who will coordinate with Public Affairs.

If media representatives have arranged with Public Affairs to visit the shelter, the shelter manager or Public Affairs staff assigned to the shelter should follow these guidelines.

Step	Action
1	When news media representatives arrive, greet them outside or at the shelter entrance and explain our media policy (see <a href="#">Guidelines for Cooperating with Media Coverage</a> on the Red Cross intranet) and enlist their support in our efforts to protect client privacy.
2	Use a <a href="#">Shelter Media Sign-In</a> sheet to register media representatives. Get reporters' name, station or newspaper, phone number, requests for information and deadline.
4	If the media requests access to shelter resident areas, enter the shelter and announce the entrance of the news media.
5	Give clients who do not wish to be interviewed or photographed a private area in which to remain until the news media leaves the facility.
6	Assist any clients who need help to move to the private area.
7	Work with shelter residents to identify individuals interested in speaking to the media regarding their personal disaster experiences and their positive Red Cross experiences. If possible, shelter staff and/or Public Affairs staff should identify such people before the media arrive at the facility to expedite the process.
8	Any shelter resident being interviewed or photographed must complete an <a href="#">Information Release</a> form. Store completed forms with confidential files in a secure location and forward to Disaster Public Affairs at shelter closing.

---

## How to talk with the media

Do not actively seek out the media for interviews. However, anyone from the Red Cross may be perceived as a Red Cross spokesperson, so media representatives may seek information from you if you are wearing Red Cross identification. For that reason, you should familiarize yourself with Red Cross policies and guidelines for working with the media.

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*Continued on next page*

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**How to talk with the media**  
(Continued)

The following tips will help:

- If a media representative approaches you and has not been announced to the shelter manager or public affairs representative, collect the following information and give it to the shelter manager or Public Affairs representative:
  - The reporter’s name
  - The media organization he or she represents
  - His or her contact information
  - His or her request for information
  - The reporter’s deadline
- Respond to questions in a positive fashion, commenting only on the activities related to the shelter and available services. If you are asked a question that goes beyond the scope of your knowledge, refer the question to your supervisor.
- Speak only to the facts that you know. Refer questions about the overall operation to Public Affairs at relief operation headquarters or the chapter.
- Be clear. Use nontechnical language that is easy to understand. If you use a term that may be unfamiliar to the reporter (e.g., “ERV”), explain it.
- Think carefully before you answer. Remember that any statement may be used out of context.
- When asked about a specific disaster victim, explain the Red Cross policy about protecting client privacy and personal information.

For more information, see [Tips for Telling the Red Cross Story](#) on the Red Cross intranet.

---

**How to respond to media requests to take photos or video in the shelter**

Media crews may ask to take pictures inside the shelter. Because our first obligation is to the privacy of shelter residents, we must be very careful in responding to such requests. However, it is usually possible to assist with the story. Explain Red Cross media policy to the crew and offer possible alternatives, such as the following:

- Ask one or two clients if they might be willing to talk to the media. If so, select an area for the interview that will not impose on the privacy of other clients.
  - If the shelter only has a few residents, select a small area of the shelter and announce to all shelter residents that the media is going to be conducting a short interview in that area. Ask anyone who does not want to be filmed or photographed to step away for just a few moments. Provide assistance to anyone who needs help to leave the area.
  - Set up the media area in the facility away from the sleeping area.
- 

**How to assist Public Affairs with human interest stories**

Occasionally, Public Affairs may ask the shelter manager to identify individuals and families as subjects of potential human-interest stories. Shelter workers can be helpful in identifying people who might be willing to tell their stories. In general, Public Affairs will be seeking individuals and families who:

- Are willing to talk about their experience;
  - Will not be embarrassed or harmed by the publicity;
  - Are expressive about the assistance that they have received from the Red Cross;
  - Have an uplifting story, such as a family helping others despite their own losses.
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**Additional guidance**

You will find more information about Red Cross media guidelines in [Guidelines for Cooperating with Media Coverage](#) and in the [Disaster Public Affairs Activity Manual](#) on the Red Cross intranet.

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# Shelter Services

## Chapter 8: Reception and Registration

### Chapter Overview

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**Introduction** Registration is the process of collecting information from clients arriving at the shelter and referring them for assistance with their disaster-caused needs. This chapter provides guidance on receiving clients as they enter the shelter and assisting them through the registration process, as well as information for handling some commonly occurring registration issues.

---

**In this chapter** This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Section 1: Receiving and Registering Clients</a>
<a href="#">Section 2: Protecting Shelter Resident Privacy and Personal Information</a>
<a href="#">Section 3: Unaccompanied Minors</a>
<a href="#">Section 4: Registered Sex Offenders</a>

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** The shelter manager is responsible for supervising all shelter workers involved in the registration process. This includes overseeing the registration process and, when appropriate, assisting with resolving issues related to registration.

---

**Registration roles and responsibilities** Along with the shelter manager, the following staff members have important responsibilities in the registration process.

If you are a...	...You are responsible for...
...Reception worker...	...Greeting clients, explaining the registration process, screening for emergency needs and providing clients with a comfortable place to wait for an available registration associate.
...Registrar or registration associate...	...Interviewing clients to collect information that helps the Red Cross meet client needs, maintaining a system for residents to check in and out of the shelter as they enter and leave, and maintaining a secure system for keeping registration records.
...Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health worker...	...Assisting clients with their immediate health and mental health needs and assessing whether clients can safely be accommodated at the shelter.
... Client Casework, Safe and Well Linking or Community Partnerships worker...	...Receiving and responding to referrals from registration workers to assist shelter clients with meeting their disaster-caused needs.

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# Section 1: Receiving and Registering Clients

## Section Overview

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**Introduction** Registration requires the efforts of reception, registration, Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health workers. This section will give you an overview of how these workers cooperate to assist clients as they move through the registration process.

---

**What is shelter registration?** Shelter registration is a process in which shelter staff:

- Welcome residents to the shelter;
- Collect basic information about clients and their disaster-caused needs;
- Inform residents about what services are available at the shelter.

Registration enables shelter staff to better serve clients by collecting important information about their needs, such as individual functional or access needs or cultural or dietary requirements. Registration also helps shelter workers keep track of numbers of shelter residents and collect other information about the disaster that help the Red Cross effectively plan the relief operation.

---

**Three phases of registration** The shelter registration process has three phases:

1. Reception: If you are a reception worker, you will greet clients, explain the registration process to them and direct them to the registration area, or offer a comfortable place to wait until workers are available to meet with them.
2. Registration: If you are a registration worker, you will meet with clients to fill out a [Shelter Registration Form](#) and the [Initial Intake and Assessment Tool](#).
3. Referral: Registration workers may also refer clients with specific needs to Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health, other shelter team members and Red Cross groups and activities for assistance.

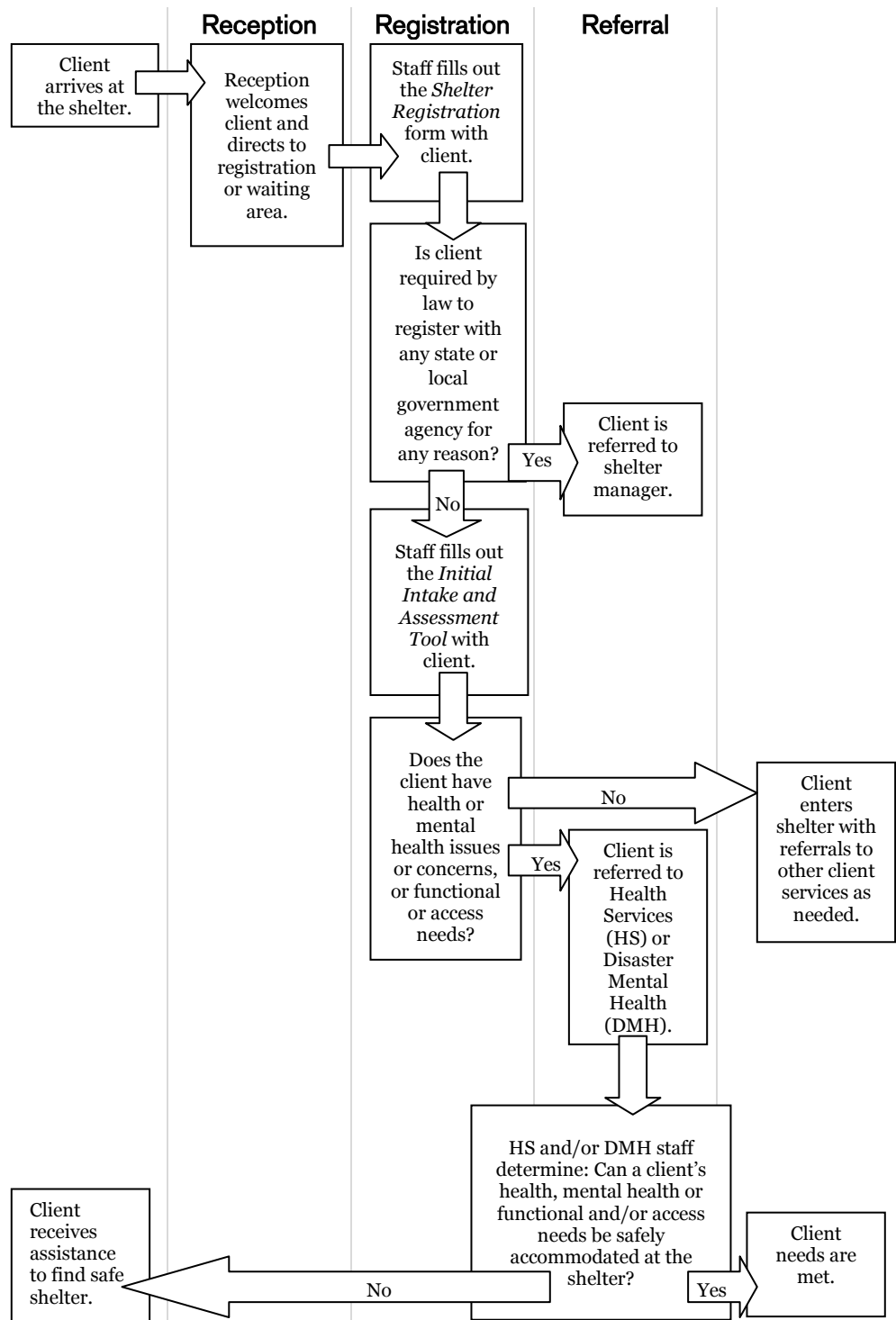
The diagram on the next page illustrates the registration process.

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**The registration process**

The diagram below shows how clients move through the registration process.



# Prepare the Reception and Registration Areas

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## Introduction

Having a well-organized registration area and a good system for organizing registration records makes it easier to register clients quickly and efficiently, to keep track of information that is important for shelter planning and to maintain Red Cross standards for confidentiality.

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## Set up a reception area

Place a reception area near the entrance to welcome individuals entering the shelter, answer their questions and direct them toward the registration tables and registrars. Include the following at the reception area:

- Signs directing people to the registration area
  - A notice that says that we are unable to accept financial donations at the shelter (The Red Cross will not accept donations at the shelter, since this may create the appearance of payment for services. Instead, encourage donors to mail or deliver financial donations to the chapter.)
  - A sign directing shelter residents to check out upon leaving the shelter and check in upon returning
  - A sign at the exit(s) reminding individuals leaving the shelter permanently to go to the registration desk for out-processing
- 

## Set up a registration area

Follow these steps to set up a registration area:

- Locate the registration area near the reception area.
  - Use only one entrance to the building, if possible, to support effective registration efforts and provide a secure environment. Position signs and/or shelter staff at other entrances to direct clients to appropriate areas.
  - Allow enough space for a waiting area.
  - Allow enough space so that clients can form a line without waiting outside.
  - Set up tables and chairs. Use a sufficient number of tables to provide efficiency and privacy.
  - Post signs clearly marking the registration desk or tables.
  - Prepare signs in appropriate languages, and have language and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters readily available, if needed.
  - Prepare signs in large print for people with visual impairments.
-

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**Prepare  
registration  
materials**

Prepare the registration area by organizing the following registration materials and supplies:

- [Shelter Registration Forms](#): Keep these in your shelter kit or download them in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) from the Red Cross intranet. If forms are not available, use index cards or lined paper.
  - [Initial Intake and Assessment Tool](#): These should also be located in your shelter kit or downloaded from the Red Cross intranet.
  - Safe and Well Linking documents:
    - [Emergency Welfare Inquiry Form](#)
    - [Safe and Well Registration Form](#) (available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese)
    - [Safe and Well wallet cards](#) (English and Spanish)
    - [Safe and Well brochure](#)
    - [Overview of Safe and Well Website](#)
  - [Unaccompanied Minors Report Form](#)
  - [Shelter Media Sign-In](#) sheet
  - Staff Sign-In/Out sheet
  - [Shelter Resident Information](#) handout
  - Multilingual Shelter Communication Tool
  - Pens
  - Pencils
  - Notebooks
  - File boxes, three-ring binders or other boxes or containers to organize an alphabetical filing system for completed registration forms.
-

# Complete the *Shelter Registration Form*

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## Introduction

Shelter registration collects basic information from clients as they enter the shelter. It provides the relief operation with a record of who is residing at the shelter and the numbers of shelters residents.

---

## How to complete registration forms

Follow the steps in the table below to complete registration forms.

Step	Action
1	Complete the <a href="#">Shelter Registration Form</a> with the client. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use index cards or lined paper if the <i>Shelter Registration Form</i> is not available.</li><li>• Use one form, one card or one sheet of paper for each family. A family usually consists of all people living in a household.</li></ul>
2	If any shelter resident advises that he or she is required by law to register with any state or local government agency, discreetly refer that person to the shelter manager.
3	Provide a <a href="#">Shelter Resident Information</a> handout to each family as they register. Refer residents to the shelter rules posted on the welcome poster.
4	Indicate in the margin of the registration form those shelter residents who would like to help with specific shelter jobs or have skills that can be used in the shelter.
5	Place one copy of the registration form, alphabetically, in a file box or binder.
6	As residents leave the shelter temporarily, flag <a href="#">Shelter Registration Forms</a> in some way to indicate that they are out, or place the forms in a separate binder or folder. When these residents return, return the registration form to its original condition or location.
7	When residents leave the shelter permanently, complete the information below the dotted line on the registration copy of the form and forward the form to the shelter manager.

---

## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for:

- Assisting with any issues or problems that arise during the registration process;
  - Protecting client privacy and personal information by ensuring the security of *Shelter Registration Forms*;
  - Addressing and referring clients who disclose that they are required to register with a state or local government agency.
- 

## Requirement

Registration forms must be secure at all times, and shelter workers may only disclose information included on the [Shelter Registration Form](#) under limited conditions. For more information, see [Protecting Shelter Resident Privacy and Personal Information](#) in this handbook.

---

## Next steps

Follow the instructions in [Complete the Initial Intake and Assessment Tool](#) to complete the client registration process.

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# Complete the *Initial Intake and Assessment Tool*

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## Introduction

The [\*Initial Intake and Assessment Tool\*](#) is completed at registration for each family unit that enters the shelter. This form allows Red Cross staff to evaluate whether individuals may be safely accommodated in general population shelters and helps to determine how functional and access needs may be met within the shelter or by referral.

To facilitate this process, ask Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health to sit at the registration desks.

---

## Complete the *Initial Intake and Assessment Tool*

Follow these steps to complete the *Initial Intake and Assessment Tool*.

Step	Action
1	Complete the top portion and the first nine questions (the Initial Intake section) of the <a href="#"><i>Initial Intake and Assessment Tool</i></a> .
2	Follow the instructions in the “Action to be taken” column for each question.
3	Use the first nine questions to assess client and family needs. If needed, refer the family to Disaster Mental Health or Disaster Health Services to complete the remainder of the form.  <b>Note:</b> Keep <i>Shelter Registration Forms</i> in the registration area. They should not be given to Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health with the <a href="#"><i>Initial Intake and Assessment Tool</i></a> .
4	Refer the following individuals to Disaster Health Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ill or injured individuals</li><li>• People with functional or access needs</li><li>• People on special medications or diets</li><li>• Individuals who claim to have medical training</li></ul>
5	Refer the following clients to Disaster Mental Health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People with missing or deceased family members</li></ul>

Once Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health has consulted with the individual on their needs, a determination will be made as to the safest and most appropriate setting for the individual to be able to receive Mass Care services.

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## Requirement

To protect clients’ privacy and their personal medical and mental health information, completed [\*Initial Intake and Assessment Tools\*](#) must be transferred to Disaster Health Services workers who will maintain them securely with other Disaster Health Services documents.

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# Close the Registration Area

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## Introduction

When plans for closing the shelter are underway, the shelter manager may begin planning for closing the registration area as well.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager, working with the registration lead, is responsible for consulting with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters to determine when the shelter will close.

The shelter manager should give clients a 48-hour notice, whenever possible, before closing the shelter.

---

## Return registration area to pre-occupancy condition

Before turning the registration area over to the facility owner:

- Remove all signs and save for reuse whenever possible;
  - Clean and inspect the registration area and return all equipment to its original location;
  - Work with the Logistics facility workers to correct damages caused by Red Cross occupancy;
  - Restock shelter supply kit as needed.
- 

## Prepare narrative report and complete registration records

The registration lead will prepare a narrative report on the activities of the registration operation, including accomplishments, problems, solutions and recommendations for future operations.

---

## Secure registration records

Registration staff must secure all registration records and forward them to the chapter or relief operation headquarters. See the [Reporting, Recordkeeping and Communications](#) section for details, and seek help from your supervisor if you have any questions about the proper disposition of registration records.

---

## Requirement

Shelter staff must secure registration records and arrange for their proper disposition when the registration area closes.

The affected chapters must store [Shelter Registration Forms](#) for three years.

---

## Section 2: Protecting Shelter Resident Privacy and Personal Information

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**Introduction** The Red Cross is committed to protecting the privacy and personal information of our clients. To meet that commitment, shelter staff must work to safeguard client privacy whenever collecting, using, maintaining, storing and permitting access to client information. This section will guide you on how to protect client privacy and personal information within the shelter environment.

---

**Shelter manager responsibilities** The shelter manager is responsible for making sure that shelter staff and procedures protect the privacy and personal information of shelter residents. The shelter manager should supervise shelter workers to ensure that they follow Red Cross privacy policies and uphold our commitment to safeguard client privacy and personal information.

In addition, the shelter manager is responsible for consulting with the Sheltering Manager and other appropriate leadership on all requests for disclosure of client information. The Sheltering Manager will forward these requests to relief operation leadership for resolution.

---

**Collection of shelter resident information** In general, Red Cross staff should only collect the information that is necessary to assist our clients and to maintain a safe and secure environment for delivering services. At the shelter, this means you should collect only the information necessary to complete ordinary records, such as the [Shelter Registration Form](#) and the [Initial Intake and Assessment Tool](#).

Refrain from collecting information that is not necessary for completing shelter forms or assisting clients. Examples of information that you should not collect are:

- **Citizenship information:** Because citizenship is not a prerequisite for Red Cross assistance, do not question clients about their citizenship status or ask them for birth certificates, immigration papers, passports or similar documents or information related to nationality or immigration status.
  - **Social Security numbers:** Social Security numbers should not be collected or used to identify an individual in the provision of disaster relief services.
- 

**Access to shelter resident information** Access to client information should be limited to:

- Only those shelter workers who need the information to perform their duties.
- Shelter clients who request access to their own information, when access is reasonable and consistent with the best interests of the Red Cross. However, do not give clients access to information obtained from another source when that source expects the information to remain confidential.

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**Use of shelter resident information** Shelter staff may only use client information as needed to provide service to clients and conduct disaster relief activities.

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**Maintenance and storage of shelter resident information**

Keep all shelter resident records secure and stored in a secure area at the shelter. Upon closing the shelter, secure client records and forward to the chapter or relief operation headquarters according to instructions provided by the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters.

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**Disclosure of shelter resident information**

Shelter staff may disclose personal information about shelter residents only under exceptional circumstances and then only to the extent necessary.

Examples of exceptional circumstances that may warrant the disclosure of client information include the following:

- When the client has consented to the disclosure
- In the case of suspected abuse or neglect (information may be provided to an agency authorized by law to receive reports of abuse or neglect)
- To assist law enforcement with lifesaving search-and-rescue efforts
- At the discretion of the Red Cross or at the request of law enforcement, if the disclosure is necessary to prevent imminent harm to the health or safety of the client, another person or the community
- When the Red Cross has received a valid subpoena, court order or warrant for the client information
- When a public health authority requests information for the purpose of controlling disease, injury or disability
- To assist local law enforcement officials investigating a crime that occurred within the shelter or on Red Cross premises

**Caution:** Always follow the procedure below for disclosing client information without client permission.

---

**Disclosure of client information with client consent**

A client's well-being and progress in recovery is often facilitated by sharing the client's information with other entities involved in disaster relief and recovery. If a shelter client signs and initials the confidentiality statement on the [Shelter Registration Form](#) or consents to a similar disclosure in another format, the Red Cross may disclose the client's information, as directed by the client. In such cases, the client's wishes, as indicated on the consent form, determine the scope and nature of the information that can be shared and with whom it can be shared.

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**Disclosure of client information when permitted by exceptional circumstances**

Follow these guidelines when exceptional circumstances permit disclosure of client information. The only exception is if the situation is urgent. In that case, use your best judgment to decide whether disclosure is appropriate, disclose only the necessary information and contact the relief operation headquarters as soon as possible.

Step	Action
1	Require that requests for shelter client information be made in writing and that they include an explanation for the need for such information. The only exception is in the event of an imminent health or safety threat to another client, another person or the community.
2	Forward the request through the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters to relief operation leadership.
3	If you are directed to disclose client information by relief operation leadership, only release information that is necessary. In most cases, the information shared can be limited to the client's name, home address and status in the shelter.
4	<p>Create a written record of the disclosure, using the <a href="#">Shelter Disclosure Tracking Log</a> found on the forms page on the Red Cross intranet.</p> <p>When filling out the <a href="#">Shelter Disclosure Tracking Log</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Date of disclosure</li> <li>– Name of the individual and entity that received the information and their address</li> <li>– A brief description of the information disclosed</li> <li>– A brief statement of the purpose of the disclosure, and/or</li> <li>– A copy of the written request for disclosure, and/or</li> <li>– A copy of the written authorization provided by the individual who received the disclosure</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Record multiple disclosures to the same party for a single purpose in a summary entry.</li> <li>• Store the <a href="#">Shelter Disclosure Tracking Log</a> with the Shelter Manager Log in a secure location, and forward it to the Sheltering Manager for distribution to the chapter upon closing the shelter.</li> <li>• It is not necessary to document disclosures of a client's information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To the client.</li> <li>– Pursuant to the client's authorization.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Handling receipt of a subpoena or court order**

Shelter managers should follow these steps if they receive subpoenas or court orders seeking information about shelter residents.

Step	Action
1	Accept the subpoena or court order.
2	Indicate that the appropriate Red Cross officials will be notified and will respond in a timely manner. (Be sure to check the subpoena's time requirement.)
3	Immediately notify the Sheltering Manager. He or she will contact the relief operation director and the Disaster Operations Center.
4	Keep information about subpoenas or court orders confidential. Do not discuss them with shelter staff, residents or the media.

## Section 3: Unaccompanied Minors

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### Introduction

An unaccompanied minor is any individual younger than 18 years of age who is not accompanied by a parent or guardian. Although care of unaccompanied minors is usually the responsibility of government agencies and other social service organizations, the high visibility of the Red Cross during times of disaster may sometimes result in unaccompanied minors arriving at Red Cross shelters. This section includes guidelines for our interactions with unaccompanied minors, law enforcement personnel and medical authorities to protect the well-being of unaccompanied minors at Red Cross shelters.

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### Roles and responsibilities related to unaccompanied minors

The shelter manager and shelter staff, along with workers from Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health, share responsibility, and need to work cooperatively and closely to ensure the safety and well-being of unaccompanied minors at the shelter.

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### Ensure the safety of unaccompanied minors

When an unaccompanied minor arrives in a Red Cross shelter, welcome the minor and immediately contact the shelter manager.

The shelter manager or his or her designee will take the following steps to ensure the safety and privacy of the minor:

- Make immediate and ongoing efforts to reach the minor's parent or guardian.
  - Contact local law enforcement, if unable to reach a legal guardian.
  - Arrange for supervision of the minor by:
    - When possible, assigning responsibility for the minor to a licensed worker from Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health;
    - When a licensed worker is not available, assigning responsibility for the minor to a Red Cross worker who has passed a background check (individuals without completed background checks may not be responsible for supervising unaccompanied minors in shelters);
    - When possible, assigning at least two workers at a time to supervise an unaccompanied minor;
    - Activating any preexisting agreements with agencies responsible for the care of minors (local child welfare services, etc.) to transfer custody or care of the minor.
  - Protect the privacy and personal information of unaccompanied minors by prohibiting photographs or interviews of unaccompanied minors unless by:
    - Representatives of local or state law enforcement;
    - Child welfare agencies within the jurisdiction;
    - Partner agencies that have a signed MOU with the Red Cross regarding services and care for minors.
- 

### Meet immediate or urgent medical needs of unaccompanied minors

When an unaccompanied minor arrives at a shelter with health needs that require immediate and urgent medical care or assessment, Red Cross staff must refer the minor to the appropriate available medical facilities. Disaster Health Services and/or Disaster Mental Health workers should carefully follow their guidance regarding urgent referrals to a higher level of care to assist in tracking the minor.

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*Continued on next page*

**Meet immediate or urgent medical needs of unaccompanied minors**  
(Continued)

If a medical referral of a minor occurs, Red Cross staff must consult with appropriate law enforcement authorities immediately:

- To initiate the process for reuniting the minor with a parent or guardian;
- To transfer responsibility to local or state authorities for coordinating care for medical needs.

If a minor’s medical status requires a transfer to a medical facility before the arrival of law enforcement, responsibility for the minor transfers to the emergency medical service (ambulance team) during transport and to the medical facility staff upon arrival.

Red Cross staff must notify appropriate law enforcement authorities of any change in the minor’s condition and of any transfers of responsibility. Use the [Unaccompanied Minor Report Form](#) described in the “[Document unaccompanied minor information](#)” section below to record this activity.

---

**Transfer custody to parent or guardian**

When a guardian or parent arrives at the shelter to transfer the minor to another location, the shelter manager or responsible Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health staff must:

1. Ask the guardian or parent for government-issued identification (such as a driver’s license);
2. Use the [Unaccompanied Minor Report Form](#) to record the following information before the minor leaves the shelter:
  - a. The guardian or parent’s name, address, phone number or other contact information;
  - b. Personal information (birth date, etc.) from the government identification.

---

**Transfer custody to law enforcement or other government agency**

When law enforcement or other government officials (child protective services, for example) arrive to take custody of the minor, the shelter manager or responsible Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health staff must use the [Unaccompanied Minor Report Form](#) to:

- Record identification information from the official taking custody of the minor;
- Document the transfer details of the minor from the shelter to local law enforcement.

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**Document  
unaccompanied  
minor  
information**

The shelter manager or responsible Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health staff should use the [Unaccompanied Minor Report Form](#) to record information for each case of an unaccompanied minor. If the form is unavailable, the following information should be recorded in another format:

1. Minor's name and address, if possible to ascertain;
2. Any information to identify the parents or guardians;
3. Information about the location where minor was found or was separated from the parent or guardian;
4. Contact information for participating state or local law enforcement authorities, including a record of contacts with law enforcement authorities and details for dealing with the situation;
5. Detailed information on transfer of minor into the custody of law enforcement authorities when that transfer takes place

File the completed [Unaccompanied Minor Report Form](#) with Disaster Health Services until the minor is no longer under Red Cross care. Keep the forms on file until the shelter closes and then forward to the Sheltering Manager for appropriate disposition.

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## Section 4: Registered Sex Offenders

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### Introduction

Because the Red Cross is committed to protecting client privacy and personal information, shelter resident information is disclosed only under extraordinary circumstances. These circumstances include situations where the safety of shelter residents is endangered or when the Red Cross is compelled by law to provide information to law enforcement. In the case of registered sex offenders, several interests must be balanced—the Red Cross nondiscriminatory humanitarian mission, the need to safeguard the public in shelters and the unique legal status of sex offenders. This section outlines the responsibilities of Red Cross shelter managers handling issues related to registered sex offenders and Red Cross shelters.

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### Shelter manager responsibilities

Shelter managers, working closely with the Sheltering Manager at the relief operation headquarters and cooperating with law enforcement officials, are responsible for implementing Red Cross guidance regarding sex offenders.

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### Requirements

Red Cross staff must follow the procedures set forth in this handbook to ensure the safety of shelter residents. In some jurisdictions, local laws impose additional requirements regarding registered sex offenders in shelters. You should become familiar with any such requirements that apply in your area. Special procedures applicable in Louisiana are set forth below.

Shelter workers must also follow Red Cross policy for protecting client privacy and personal information in response to any requests by law enforcement to release shelter resident information.

A shelter worker who witnesses an illegal act must immediately contact 9-1-1 and inform their supervisor.

---

### Respond to the presence of a registered sex offender arriving at the shelter

The [\*Shelter Registration Form\*](#) includes the question: “Are you required by law to register with any state or local government agency for any reason?” The form states that if a registrant checks “yes,” he or she should ask to speak to the shelter manager immediately. Shelter registration staff should review each form and immediately refer any individual who checks “yes” to the shelter manager.

Upon notification that an incoming shelter resident has indicated that he or she is required to register with a state or local government agency, the shelter manager should take the following steps.

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*Continued on next page*

**Respond to the presence of a registered sex offender arriving at the shelter**  
(Continued)

Step	Action								
1	Have a conversation with the incoming shelter resident about why he or she is required to register. Handle the conversation and all interactions with the individual confidentially. Make every effort to preserve the dignity of the individual and to safeguard the shelter population. In keeping with Red Cross policy, personal information, including someone's status as a registered sex offender, should not be disclosed to anyone who does not have a business reason to know.								
2	<p>The reasons individuals must register with government agencies vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Follow the guidelines below, depending on why the individual is required to register.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 514 1456 888"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="483 514 971 550">If...</th> <th data-bbox="971 514 1456 550">Then...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 550 971 688">...The individual indicates that he or she must register with a government agency for health reasons...</td> <td data-bbox="971 550 1456 688">...Refer the person to Disaster Health Services staff in the shelter.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 688 971 821">...The individual states that he or she is required to register with any state or local agency as a sex offender...</td> <td data-bbox="971 688 1456 821">...Continue with the steps below, beginning with Step 3.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 821 971 888">...The individual states any other reason for registration...</td> <td data-bbox="971 821 1456 888">...Address the situation on a case-by-case basis.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	If...	Then...	...The individual indicates that he or she must register with a government agency for health reasons...	...Refer the person to Disaster Health Services staff in the shelter.	...The individual states that he or she is required to register with any state or local agency as a sex offender...	...Continue with the steps below, beginning with Step 3.	...The individual states any other reason for registration...	...Address the situation on a case-by-case basis.
If...	Then...								
...The individual indicates that he or she must register with a government agency for health reasons...	...Refer the person to Disaster Health Services staff in the shelter.								
...The individual states that he or she is required to register with any state or local agency as a sex offender...	...Continue with the steps below, beginning with Step 3.								
...The individual states any other reason for registration...	...Address the situation on a case-by-case basis.								
3	Record the individual's full name and current address in a confidential location accessible only to the shelter manager.								
4	Advise the client that Red Cross policy requires notification of local law enforcement in such situations.								
5	If the individual chooses to remain at the shelter, immediately inform shelter security personnel (if present), local law enforcement and the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters. Request that law enforcement personnel come to the shelter as quickly as possible to provide guidance in safely sheltering the individual or to help arrange alternative accommodations in another location.								
6	Ask the individual to confine his or her activities to a specific area at the shelter that is separate from the remaining shelter population until law enforcement arrives at the shelter.								
7	If the decision of law enforcement is to permit the registered sex offender to remain in the shelter, arrange for the individual to stay in an area separate from the other shelter residents, and request guidance from law enforcement on how to ensure safety at the shelter.								
8	Comply with the decisions of law enforcement regarding whether the registered sex offender should remain in or leave the shelter and any other specific measures to be taken.								
9	Document all incidents related to registered sex offenders and all interactions with law enforcement in the confidential Shelter Manager Log.								

**Comply with Louisiana state law relating to registered sex offenders in shelters**

Louisiana state law requires that shelters operating in anticipation of or response to a state of emergency must check the state sex offender registry against shelter resident names. To comply with Louisiana state law, shelter staff in Louisiana should take the following steps *in addition to the steps in the previous section*.

Step	Action
1	If the shelter has a computer and Internet access, check the name of each shelter registrant against the <a href="#">Louisiana State Police Sex Offender and Child Predator Internet Registry</a> (stated as “Registry” below).
2	If the shelter does not have a computer and/or Internet access, check the name of each shelter registrant against a hard copy of the Registry. The Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) in each affected parish should deliver a hard copy of the Registry to each shelter in the parish. If the parish OEP does not deliver the Registry within eight hours of the shelter’s opening, advise the local Emergency Operations Center.
3	If a shelter resident’s name and other identifying information match a name in the Registry, advise the individual that Red Cross policy and Louisiana state law require notification of local law enforcement in such situations. Be cautious: many individuals share the same names. Do not assume that a shelter resident is a registered sex offender simply because his or her name appears in the Registry. If a name and identifying information match, follow the procedures set forth below.
4	If the individual chooses to remain in the shelter, contact shelter security personnel (if present) and local law enforcement (specifically the sheriff of the parish and the chief of police of the municipality) and seek their assistance in addressing the issue.
5	If state or local government has established a shelter for registered sex offenders, encourage the individual to go to that shelter if possible.
6	If the shelter remains open once the declared state of emergency ends, work with local officials to ensure the prompt transfer of the registered sex offender to an alternate shelter location.

**Respond to a request from law enforcement for access to Red Cross documents to determine whether registered sex offenders are present in the shelter**

When law enforcement officials request information about the presence of a registered sex offender in the shelter, the shelter manager should respond as follows:

If...	Then...
...Law enforcement officials request access to Red Cross documents (such as shelter registration forms) to help determine if registered sex offenders are present within the shelter...	...Explain to law enforcement why Red Cross documents are not likely to help in identifying registered sex offenders. For example, shelter populations are constantly changing and Red Cross records do not contain sufficient identifying information (such as social security numbers and birthdates) to confirm an individual’s identity.
...Law enforcement persist in requesting access to Red Cross documents...	...Ask whether they can provide a list of registered sex offenders to be matched against the Red Cross shelter registration records. If a list is provided, the shelter manager should check the list against Red Cross shelter registration information.
...Law enforcement cannot provide a list...	...Offer to make Red Cross shelter registration records available for review (but not copying) at the shelter.
...Law enforcement officials insist on receiving copies of Red Cross lists or records...	...The shelter manager should contact the Sheltering Manager who should seek assistance from Mass Care at National Headquarters.
...Law enforcement determines a registered sex offender is present in the shelter...	...Follow steps 5 through 9 under <a href="#">“Respond to the presence of a registered sex offender arriving at the shelter”</a> in this section.
...The shelter receives a subpoena or court order...	...Follow the instructions for <a href="#">“Handling receipt of a subpoena or court order”</a> in <a href="#">Protecting Shelter Resident Privacy and Personal Information</a> in this handbook.



# Chapter 9: Feeding

## Overview

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### Introduction

As part of shelter operations, we provide meals, snacks and beverages to shelter residents. In some cases, disaster relief workers such as emergency workers and cleanup crews and partner agencies who are working with us to provide assistance to disaster-affected clients may also receive meals at the shelter. We use the resources of the relief operation and work closely with partners to find the best available means of providing safe and sanitary food service to our shelter clients. To prepare you for your role in supporting the shelter feeding operation, this chapter provides guidance for planning, setting up, operating and closing shelter food services.

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### In this chapter

This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">The Feeding Process</a>
<a href="#">Develop a Feeding Plan</a>
<a href="#">Procure and Manage Feeding Supplies and Equipment</a>
<a href="#">Staff the Feeding Operation</a>
<a href="#">Set Up and Maintain Feeding Areas</a>
<a href="#">Collect and Report Feeding Statistics</a>
<a href="#">Close the Feeding Operation</a>

---

### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for working in close cooperation with the Mass Care team at relief operation headquarters and the feeding lead at the shelter to plan, organize and provide food service at the shelter.

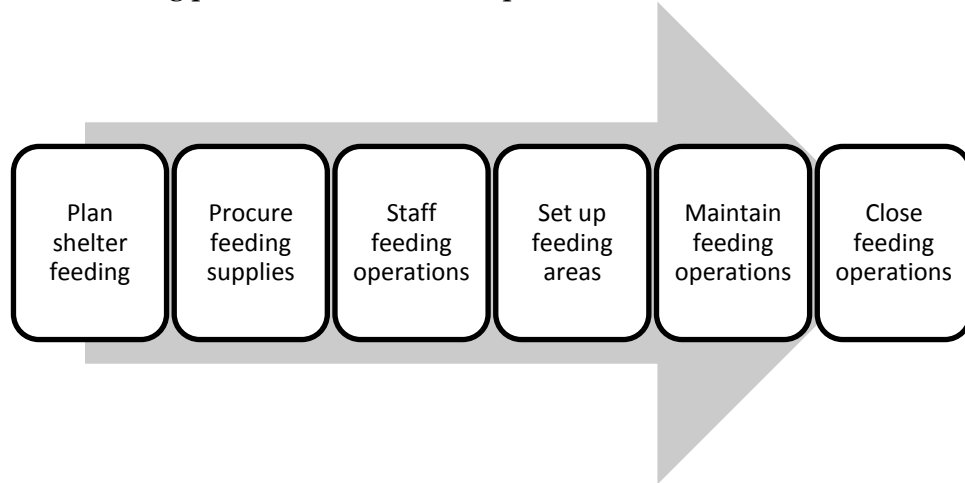
Under the shelter manager's supervision, the feeding lead advises the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters of anticipated feeding needs, ensuring safe food handling and storage procedures, supervising food service staff and keeping accurate records related to the feeding activity.

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# The Feeding Process

## The feeding process

The shelter feeding process includes the six phases illustrated and described below.



Stage	Description
1	<p><b>Plan shelter feeding</b></p> <p>The shelter manager and the feeding lead will collaborate to identify options for providing food service at the shelter. The shelter manager and feeding lead work with the Feeding activity at relief operation headquarters to identify options for providing food service at the shelter.</p> <p>The feeding plan is based on available options and information about the disaster, the shelter population and the likely duration of the shelter operation.</p>
2	<p><b>Procure feeding supplies</b></p> <p>Under the supervision of the shelter manager, the feeding lead works with Logistics using standard procurement practices to acquire the supplies necessary for shelter feeding.</p>
3	<p><b>Staff feeding operations</b></p> <p>The feeding lead works with the shelter manager to request sufficient staff for the feeding operation.</p>
4	<p><b>Set up feeding areas</b></p> <p>With the help of shelter staff, the feeding lead prepares feeding areas for use.</p>
5	<p><b>Maintain feeding operations</b></p> <p>The feeding lead oversees meal preparation or procurement, monitors safe food handling practices and prepares statistics for the <a href="#"><i>Daily Shelter Report</i></a>.</p>
6	<p><b>Close feeding operations</b></p> <p>Upon closing the shelter, the feeding lead ensures feeding areas are clean and works with Logistics staff to return equipment and excess supplies.</p>

# Develop a Feeding Plan

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## Introduction

Based on the needs of the shelter and factors such as the likely duration of sheltering, the numbers of shelter residents and the cultural and dietary needs of the shelter population, the shelter manager and feeding lead coordinate with the Sheltering Manager at relief operation headquarters to determine the best process for providing food for shelter residents and staff.

---

## How to develop a feeding plan

Follow these steps to develop a feeding plan for the shelter.

Step	Action
1	Estimate the number of meals needed for clients and staff.
2	Plan to begin serving snacks immediately.
3	Establish a time for the first meal, usually the next meal needed.
4	Determine the best option for shelter feeding, depending on the size and anticipated duration of the response. Options could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food service provided by the shelter facility owner and staffed by employees of the facility (check the <i>Shelter Agreement</i> to see if this has already been arranged with the facility owner);</li> <li>• Fast food or restaurant-prepared meals;</li> <li>• Contracted caterers;</li> <li>• Staff from churches or other organizations;</li> <li>• Partner-managed kitchens;</li> <li>• Red Cross–managed kitchens either at the shelter or elsewhere.</li> </ul>
5	Estimate staffing needs for feeding based on whether food is to be prepared onsite or delivered. Identify any facility personnel who will help with food preparation, serving and cleanup. Shelter residents can be recruited for many food service tasks. For more details, see <a href="#">Staff the Feeding Operation</a> below.
6	Plan the initial menu. Review it with the shelter manager and, when possible, with shelter resident representatives to ensure sensitivity to cultural needs. Ensure the needs of babies and young children and individuals with functional and/or access needs are met (e.g., gluten-free, low-sodium and diabetic diets).
7	Estimate supply needs and acquire supplies for meals, snacks, beverages and water. For more details, see <a href="#">Procure and Manage Feeding Supplies and Equipment</a> below.
8	If the shelter is also going to serve as a fixed feeding site for community clients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidelines for feeding procedures and schedules.</li> <li>• Develop plans for the community clients to be served either outside or in another room. This step can alleviate security issues of having nonresidents in the shelter.</li> </ul>
9	Determine mealtimes and share with workers who are responsible for providing information to clients.

---

# Procure and Manage Feeding Supplies and Equipment

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## Introduction

The procurement process for feeding supplies is the same as for other shelter equipment and supplies. The feeding lead works with the shelter manager, Logistics workers and Mass Care leadership at relief operation headquarters to confirm procurement procedures and financial authorities for all feeding equipment and supplies.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for supervising the feeding lead and ensuring that procurement of feeding supplies and equipment follows Red Cross policies and procedures.

---

## Procedure for procuring food service supplies

The feeding lead should follow these steps to procure feeding supplies and equipment.

Step	Action
1	Take inventory of food supplies on hand at the facility before preparing any meals, and designate a specific secure storage area for those items available for use by the shelter food service.
2	In your initial meeting with the facility representative or with Logistics, identify supply sources for food and water.
3	Work with the shelter manager and Logistics workers to identify procurement procedures, local resources and financial authorities for shelter feeding operations.
4	Contract food suppliers may not be able to meet the special dietary needs of all shelter residents. Work with the residents, feeding lead and/or partners to resolve those needs.
5	Prepare and submit supply requisitions to Logistics for three days worth of food and supplies to sustain shelter feeding.
6	Follow procurement procedures for receiving supplies, entering supplies into inventory and tracking inventories as supplies are used. See <a href="#">Managing Supply and Equipment Inventories</a> for more information on how to manage feeding supplies.

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# Staff the Feeding Operation

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## Introduction

Considerations for staffing the feeding operation are the same as described in Chapter 3 for staffing the shelter. Staffing needs for the feeding operation will also depend on the numbers of meals that need to be served and the source of meals to be served.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager supervises the preparation of a staffing plan for shelter feeding with the feeding lead and submits it to the Sheltering Manager.

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## Plan staffing for feeding operations

Follow the guidance in [Plan Shelter Staffing](#) to determine staffing needs. In addition, consider the source of meals and whether they will need to be prepared at the shelter or elsewhere and only served at the shelter. This will affect the numbers of staff that will be needed.

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## Manage feeding staff

Follow the guidance in [Shelter Staffing](#) for [Receive Staff at the Shelter](#), [Manage Shelter Staff](#), and [Transfer or Release Shelter Staff](#) at the end of the feeding operation.

---

# Set Up and Maintain Feeding Areas

## Introduction

Regardless of your feeding plan, you will need to set up appropriate areas for receiving, storing, preparing and serving snacks and meals.

## Set up food services areas

Follow the guidelines in this table to set up the remaining food service areas. Make sure that all feeding areas are kept clean and sanitary and that safe food handling procedures are used at all time. Place hand sanitizer in all feeding areas.

Area	Guidelines
Snack and beverage canteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up tables for snacks in the designated canteen area.</li> <li>• When setting up snacks:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use individually wrapped products or have shelter staff serve snacks to track numbers;</li> <li>– Ensure that snacks are restocked as necessary and available at all times.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• When setting up beverages:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Make coffee and set up cups and condiments (sugar, creamer, stirrers);</li> <li>– Make punch or lemonade in drink containers like Cambros, made to store perishable food. For health reasons, do not use drink coolers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Count and record snacks, water and other drinks consumed to include in the <a href="#">Daily Shelter Report</a>.</li> <li>• Monitor use of canteen supplies to plan reordering. Estimate needs two to three days out.</li> </ul>
Receiving area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the receiving area has enough room to maneuver delivery vehicles and is close to a road.</li> </ul>
Storage area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate a specific area for food supply items that are available for use at the shelter.</li> <li>• Make sure that the area can be secured.</li> <li>• If possible, locate the storage area between the receiving area and the food preparation area.</li> <li>• Equip the area with tables, shelves and off-the-floor racks for storage of dry food and staples. Provide refrigeration if needed.</li> </ul>
Food preparation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If all food is canned or ready to cook, the preparation area can be small. For fresh food, you will need work tables, cutting boards, sinks, utensils, cookware and garbage containers.</li> </ul>
Serving area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the serving area is near the preparation area.</li> <li>• Set up hand washing signs and place hand sanitizer at the beginning of the food service line.</li> <li>• Organize the serving area for cafeteria-style service or line feeding.</li> <li>• Equip the serving area with several counters or tables for speedier service.</li> <li>• Make sure serving areas are accessible to people with functional or access needs and remain accessible to people who require access to food or refrigeration of medication during non-mealtimes.</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*

**Set up food services areas**  
(Continued)

Area	Guidelines
Dining area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set up the dining area near the serving area.</li><li>• Place hand sanitizer on tables.</li><li>• Set up enough tables and chairs to accommodate the maximum number of people expected to be served.</li><li>• If tables and chairs are scarce, plan for two or more seatings.</li><li>• Make sure table heights accommodate people in wheelchairs or using other assistive devices.</li></ul>
Garbage disposal area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Locate the garbage disposal area away from food preparation, serving and dining areas.</li><li>• Provide containers for disposal of trash, liquids and garbage and an appropriate area for cleaning trash receptacles.</li><li>• Arrange for recycling with community partners as appropriate and possible.</li><li>• Verify that garbage removal services have been arranged.</li></ul>

**Inform residents about feeding area information**

To complete your preparations for food service, post information about mealtimes in the feeding areas and other shelter areas.

**Feeding area sanitation**

To protect the health of clients and workers eating at the shelter, the shelter manager will:

- Work with the feeding lead and Disaster Health Services staff to monitor all food service areas to make sure they are clean and sanitary;
- Instruct the feeding lead to coordinate with Disaster Health Services to arrange for a health inspector to visit and advise on local codes and health laws.

# Collect and Report Feeding Statistics

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## Introduction

Feeding statistics are an important part of the [Daily Shelter Report](#) that the shelter manager prepares for reporting to relief operation headquarters. These statistics help with operational planning and budgeting.

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## Collect statistics on numbers of meals and snacks served

The feeding lead should report feeding statistics so they can be communicated to headquarters with the [Daily Shelter Report](#).

The feeding report should include:

- The number of meals, broken down by breakfast, lunch and dinner;
- The number of snacks served, broken down by snacks, water and other drinks;
- Any special concerns.

To count meals and snacks:

- A meal usually equals an entrée, vegetable, fruit, starch and beverage;
- Snacks are counted individually;
- Drinks are counted individually but are reported as snacks.

**Tip:** One way of counting meals is to pre-count the number of plates, cups, etc., and then recount after the meal to determine the number of meals served.

**Tip:** To identify food waste, count the difference between meals prepared and meals served. If the difference is greater than 10 percent, it is considered wasteful. See [Mass Care Standards and Indicators](#) on the Red Cross intranet.

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# Close the Feeding Operation

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## Introduction

When plans for closing the shelter are underway, begin planning for closing the food service as well.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager, working with the feeding lead, is responsible for consulting with the Sheltering Manager to determine when the last meal will be served and the canteen area will be closed (usually to correspond with the closing of the shelter).

The shelter manager supervises the feeding lead in coordinating closing actions for the feeding operation.

Once a decision has been made to close feeding operations, the Sheltering Manager is responsible for communicating plans to important groups, including Logistics and Public Affairs, while the shelter manager informs shelter residents and workers when food service will be ending.

---

## Arrange disposition of feeding equipment and unused supplies

To arrange for proper disposition of food service equipment and excess supplies:

- Work with the feeding lead and Logistics to determine what to do with excess food items and supplies;
  - Check inventory lists and restock food supplies that may have been used from the facility;
  - Assist Logistics with returning unopened items to vendors, if possible.
- 

## Return feeding areas to pre-occupancy condition

Before turning food service areas over to the facility owner:

- Inspect the feeding area and kitchen to ensure that the areas were properly cleaned and that all equipment was returned to its original location;
  - Work with the feeding lead and Logistics to correct any damages that might have occurred to the equipment or facilities through Red Cross use.
- 

## Complete feeding records

Ask the feeding lead to write a narrative report on the activities of the shelter feeding operation. It should note accomplishments and problems, how they were solved and recommendations for future operations.

Submit all invoices and other documents to the shelter manager.

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# Chapter 10: Dormitory Management

## Setting Up and Monitoring the Dormitory

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### Introduction

A shelter dormitory is an area used exclusively for sleeping. If possible, it is located in a quiet area and has as much privacy as possible from other areas of the shelter. Dormitory management includes coordinating dormitory supplies, setting up and assigning sleeping areas, and monitoring the safety, sanitation and security of the dormitory.

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### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager, who may assign a dormitory lead, is responsible for making sure that the dormitory is set up, monitored and maintained.

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### Set up the dormitory

Follow these steps to prepare the dormitory for shelter occupancy.

Step	Action
1	Work with Logistics at the shelter or the Sheltering Manager to requisition cots, blankets, comfort kits and any material needs for functional/access needs support (e.g., non-wool blankets, universal cots, transfer boards, etc.). <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use Red Cross supplies when available.</li><li>• If supplies are available at the shelter, get permission to use them.</li><li>• Control all equipment and supply inventories. See <a href="#">Managing Supply and Equipment Inventories</a> in this handbook.</li></ul>
2	Allocate sleeping areas in a dormitory-style arrangement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include wide accessible aisles between cots.</li><li>• Allow 40–60 square feet of sleeping space per person.</li><li>• Plan as much as 100 square feet for people with functional/access needs who require lift equipment, mobility devices and service animals.</li><li>• Allocate separate space for families with small children, single men and women, the elderly, night workers who sleep during the day and other unique situations, such as an isolation care area in consultation with Disaster Health Services.</li></ul>
3	Set up cots and place two blankets on each cot. Arrange cots to allow access for people with disabilities and/or functional or access needs. Anchor cots to enable people who need extra stability to get up and down easily.
4	Assign sleeping areas to shelter residents. Assign spaces that allow people with functional or access needs easy access to restrooms, feeding areas and emergency exits. Work with shelter residents with functional or access needs to determine their optimal sleeping location in the dormitory.
5	Draw a room layout, including doors, restrooms, aisles, fire extinguishers, AEDs (automated external defibrillators), etc. Use this layout and small post-it notes to map the locations of shelter resident cot assignments. Post the layout where it will be accessible only to staff, who can use it to assist in keeping accurate shelter counts, learning resident names, giving wake-up calls, etc.

*Continued on next page*

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**Set up the  
dormitory**  
(Continued)

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
6	Post Red Cross signage in the dormitory.
7	Post times for lights out and quiet hours in the dormitory, and communicate them verbally for people with vision impairments.
8	Arrange for very dim lighting that can be on during sleeping times.

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**Monitor  
dormitory areas**

Protect the privacy, safety and well-being of shelter residents by making sure the dormitory is secure and sanitary.

- Coordinate with shelter security personnel, if available, or with dormitory workers, to make sure that patrols circulate throughout the dormitory and surrounding areas and to make sure that dormitory areas are secure. See, [Maintain Safety and Security](#) for more information.
  - Make sure that entrance and exit controls have been set up and sleeping areas are monitored, especially at night.
  - Ensure residents are not storing extra food in the sleeping area.
  - Monitor the area to prevent residents from bringing firearms, alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, and other prohibited items into the dormitory.
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# Close the Dormitory

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## Introduction

When plans for closing the shelter are underway, the shelter manager may begin planning for closing the dormitory as well.

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## Roles and responsibilities

The shelter manager supervises the dormitory lead in coordinating actions for the dormitory. You should assist in these activities with guidance from your supervisor.

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## Return dormitory area to pre-occupancy condition

Before turning the dormitory area over to the facility owner, the shelter team will:

- Remove signs and save for reuse whenever possible;
  - When possible, clean and dry all cots, using the [Cot Cleaning instructions](#) on the Mass Care neighborhood.
  - If it's not possible to clean cots on-site, clearly identify used and unused cots for appropriate cleaning after transport;
  - Clearly identify broken or incomplete cots;
  - Properly clean and inspect the dormitory and return equipment to proper location;
  - Work with Logistics to correct damage that occurred during Red Cross use.
- 

## Prepare narrative report

The dormitory lead will prepare a narrative report on the activities of the dormitory operation, with accomplishments, problems, solutions and recommendations for future operations.

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# Chapter 11: Individual Client Services

## Overview

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### Introduction

Individual Client Services include the Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Client Casework activities, as well as the Recovery Planning and Assistance activity. Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Client Casework staff may all be present at the shelter assisting shelter clients. You can help to provide quality service to our clients by supporting and coordinating with the service delivery activities of Individual Client Services.

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### In this chapter

This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Work with Disaster Health Services</a>
<a href="#">Work with Disaster Mental Health</a>
<a href="#">Work with Client Casework</a>

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### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for supervising Individual Client Services staff at the shelter and for assisting them with procuring the space, staff and resources they need to work. He or she also ensures that all shelter workers work to identify client needs and make appropriate referrals to Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Client Caseworkers.

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# Work with Disaster Health Services

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## Introduction

In Red Cross shelters, the Disaster Health Services activity serves clients' health-related needs and ensures that the shelter meets public health standards. Shelter workers assist by facilitating client access to Disaster Health Services staff at the shelter.

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## What is the Disaster Health Services activity?

The Disaster Health Services activity provides health-related services and secures resources to meet the health needs of people affected by disaster. Disaster Health Services staff provide support to people who have disaster-related or disaster-aggravated health needs; help clients find resources to meet health-related financial obligations; and provide Red Cross financial assistance to clients for medical expenses, as necessary. All Disaster Health Services personnel must have a current license or certificate in their field.

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## The role of Disaster Health Services staff at the shelter

In addition to helping to meet the disaster-related health needs of people at the shelter, Disaster Health Services workers act as advisors to the shelter manager and the feeding lead on general health and safety issues. Disaster Health Services staff are available at the shelter 24 hours a day.

Disaster Health Services duties in the shelter include the following:

- Determining the health needs of all shelter occupants and arranging to meet those needs. This work includes:
    - Assessing and referring, if needed, the ill and injured for health care;
    - Treating minor illnesses and injuries;
    - Looking for unreported health problems of shelter occupants and taking necessary action to care for these problems;
    - If a client needs replacement medical equipment or essential medications, arranging for replacement through either Red Cross resources, government requisition, in-kind donations or partnerships with other organizations;
    - Directing and/or assisting with the care of individuals with functional and/or access needs.
  - Monitoring any people who have a communicable disease, isolating them from the rest of the shelter occupants as needed and reporting a noticeable trend in illness to the shelter manager and local health department.
  - Working with public health officials to make sure that shelters meet public health regulations and the shelter manager is aware of public health notifications such as “boil water” notices caused by the disaster.
  - Assisting the shelter manager with providing a safe shelter environment by assessing need for infection prevention actions (e.g., location of baby changing areas, hand washing access/compliance, hand sanitizer placement, sanitation needed for toys or living/sleeping areas to prevent or respond to a contagious disease outbreak, etc.).
  - Assisting with Staff Wellness as necessary.
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**Working with  
Disaster Health  
Services staff**

Shelter workers can assist Disaster Health Services workers in providing health-related services to clients by:

- Arranging a Disaster Health Services area within the shelter that is both easily accessible and provides some privacy;
- Monitoring clients' moods and behavior to spot health issues and referring them to Disaster Health Services;
- Working with Disaster Health Services to maintain a sanitary and safe environment in the shelter;
- Supporting clients with activities of daily living such as dressing and bathing;
- Conferring with Disaster Health Services staff on all issues related to health, cleanliness, sanitation and hazards at the shelter;
- Assisting Disaster Health Services with procuring necessary health-related material resources (this includes making sure that Disaster Health Services staff have access to the nurse's kit stocked in the shelter kit and assisting with procurement of other health-related supplies needed at the shelter);
- Assisting Disaster Health Services staff with keeping records and supplies secure, returning supplies and forwarding records when the shelter closes.

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**Requirement**

Client health information is confidential. All shelter staff must maintain this confidentiality by making sure that any communication with Disaster Health Services staff related to client health is in confidence and that any records containing client health information are kept secure.

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# Work with Disaster Mental Health

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## Introduction

When the Red Cross opens shelters, Disaster Mental Health workers provide mental health support to shelter residents and workers. Shelter workers help meet clients' emotional needs by providing basic psychological first aid and by making referrals to Disaster Mental Health workers at the shelter.

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## What is the Disaster Mental Health activity?

The Disaster Mental Health activity provides individual triage, mental health surveillance, psychoeducation, enhanced psychological first aid, crisis intervention, advocacy, casualty support and community-level support. Red Cross Disaster Mental Health workers must have at least a master's degree and an independent license in a mental health discipline.

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## The role of Disaster Mental Health staff at the shelter

Disaster Mental Health workers are assigned to shelters to meet the mental health needs of clients and workers. They do this in part by acting as advisors to the shelter manager on issues that affect the emotional health of shelter residents and workers. Disaster Mental Health workers are available at the shelter 24 hours a day.

Disaster Mental Health duties in the shelter include:

- Consulting with the shelter manager to review the mental health needs of shelter workers and residents.
  - Providing 24-hour staff mental health coverage for shelter residents and workers.
  - Making appropriate referrals to local care providers and agencies.
  - Recommending alternate accommodations to the shelter manager when the stress of communal living or preexisting mental health conditions would be significantly detrimental to the mental health of a client or the shelter population.
  - Providing enhanced psychological first aid training for shelter workers.
  - Conducting mental health surveillance to provide support to high-risk clients.
  - Collaborating with public mental health officials.
  - Working with the shelter manager and staff to implement strategies to help reduce stress for residents and shelter workers.
- 

## Working with Disaster Mental Health

Shelter workers can assist Disaster Mental Health staff by:

- Understanding and using psychological first aid to assist clients, themselves and other shelter workers.
- Listening for client risk factors (taught as part of the psychological first aid class) and monitoring clients' moods and behaviors that warrant a referral to Disaster Mental Health.
- Assisting Disaster Mental Health with required tasks, as needed.
- Assisting Disaster Mental Health staff with securing records and supplies and processing them properly when closing the shelter.
- Being sensitive to clients' needs, including their mental health.
- Arranging a Disaster Mental Health area within the shelter that is both easily accessible and provides some privacy.
- Assisting Disaster Mental Health with procuring supplies and equipment.
- Conferring with Disaster Mental Health workers on any significant mental health and stress issues within the shelter.
- Supporting Disaster Mental Health efforts to work with both shelter residents and shelter workers to alleviate stress.

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**Requirement**

Client health information, including mental information, is confidential. All shelter staff must maintain this confidentiality by making sure that any communication with Disaster Mental Health staff related to client mental health is in confidence and that any records containing client information are kept secure.

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# Work with Client Casework

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## Introduction

The Client Casework activity provides direct assistance to individuals affected by disasters. Client Caseworkers connect clients with two forms of assistance, depending on the individual needs of the client: soft assistance, which includes listening, providing information, advocacy, counseling and referrals, and hard assistance, which includes bulk distribution and emergency financial assistance. As a shelter worker, you can provide better service to clients by identifying disaster-caused emergency and recovery needs and referring clients to the Client Casework activity.

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## The role of Client Casework staff at the shelter

Client caseworkers interview shelter residents to identify their disaster-caused or disaster-aggravated needs and help them initiate the process of recovering from the disaster. The caseworker's role at the shelter is to work with shelter clients to connect them with resources and assist them with meeting their own recovery needs.

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## Working with client caseworkers

Shelter workers should assist client caseworkers by:

- Organizing the shelter so that space is available for confidential interviews;
  - Providing secure storage space for confidential information;
  - Helping clients understand the Client Casework process and encouraging them to discuss their recovery needs and plans with caseworkers;
  - Identifying client needs and communicating them to caseworkers;
  - Speaking with clients to help determine their housing needs and referring them to Client Casework for assistance with identifying housing resources;
  - Notifying Client Casework of clients with ongoing needs or unusual circumstances;
  - Asking Client Casework staff for recovery information that can be shared with clients and posted for shelter resident use;
  - Referring clients to 1-800-Red-Cross to access casework services if Client Caseworkers are not assigned to the shelter and the number has been activated.
- 

## Client confidentiality

Client information associated with the Client Casework process is confidential. All shelter staff must maintain this confidentiality by making sure that any communication among staff related to a client's case is in confidence and that any records containing client information are kept secure.

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## Chapter 12: Bulk Distribution

### Distribute Bulk Recovery Supplies to Shelter Clients

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#### Introduction

The Mass Care Bulk Distribution activity provides relief and cleanup supplies to individuals affected by a disaster. Typical bulk distribution items include blankets and comfort items for use at the shelter, as well as cleanup items such as cleaning products, flashlights, tarps, shovels, rakes, water, gloves and protective masks. Shelter workers help by identifying and communicating the needs of shelter residents and by referring clients to bulk distribution points.

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#### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for coordinating with the Bulk Distribution activity to make distribution of bulk items available to shelter clients and for ensuring that shelter workers help to identify and communicate shelter residents' needs for personal items and supplies to meet emergency needs and aid recovery.

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#### How to work with the Bulk Distribution activity at the shelter

Shelter workers help with the Bulk Distribution process by:

- Monitoring widespread needs for specific items and reporting these needs to the shelter manager;
- Referring shelter residents to distribution areas when bulk supplies are available.

Shelter workers may also assist the Bulk Distribution activity to coordinate distribution at the shelter by:

- Identifying an appropriate location for distribution that allows for the flow of clients and organized distribution of goods;
  - Collecting or receiving supplies at the designated location;
  - Notifying the shelter manager, registration workers and others of distribution site locations.
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## Chapter 13: Additional Shelter Services

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### Introduction

In addition to the shelter services described in the previous chapters, shelter residents may have additional needs, such as transportation, Internet access, laundry services or access to phones. These needs are more common in longer-term shelters. Shelter workers should work to identify shelter residents' needs as they arise. Some possible needs and ways of addressing them are described below.

---

### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for identifying and addressing needs associated with staying at the shelter and ensuring that shelter workers identify these needs as they arise. The shelter manager should work with the Sheltering Manager and with Community Partnership and Government Operations staff to access resources to meet additional needs of shelter residents.

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### Provide recreational activities

Especially in long-term shelters, shelter residents need opportunities to relax and relieve some of the stress associated with disaster recovery and shelter life. Shelter staff should assess available resources in the shelter for keeping clients entertained and occupied and offer recreational opportunities. If possible, set up a schedule of regular recreational activities. Some possible recreational activities to make available include:

- Videos, music and computers;
  - Games and sports;
  - Reading materials including books, magazines and newspapers.
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### Facilitate access to additional services for clients as needed

Other services that may be needed, especially in long-term shelters, include:

- Laundry: If the shelter facility does not include laundry equipment, clients may need help accessing laundry facilities or services;
  - Transportation: Shelter residents may need transportation to facilitate recovery activities such as meeting with partner agencies to apply for assistance, returning to work, attending medical appointments or shopping to replace essentials lost or made inaccessible by the disaster;
  - Internet access: If the shelter does not have Internet-enabled computers, assist shelter residents in locating and accessing the Internet at local libraries or other locations offering free Internet services;
  - Communication equipment: Through the sheltering manager, obtain communication equipment from Disaster Services Technology, including laptops and cell phones for resident use.
- 

### Working with partners to meet additional client needs

Community Partnerships, Government Operations or chapter staff may be helpful in identifying prearranged or new partnerships for meeting client needs that are outside of the scope of Red Cross sheltering services. See [Working with Partners](#) in this handbook for more information on activating local and national partnership agreements and working with partners in the shelter.

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# Providing Information for Clients

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## Introduction

Communication within the shelter community is essential to the smooth operation of the shelter and providing quality assistance to clients. This section includes guidance for providing a clear and consistent flow of information for clients and shelter staff.

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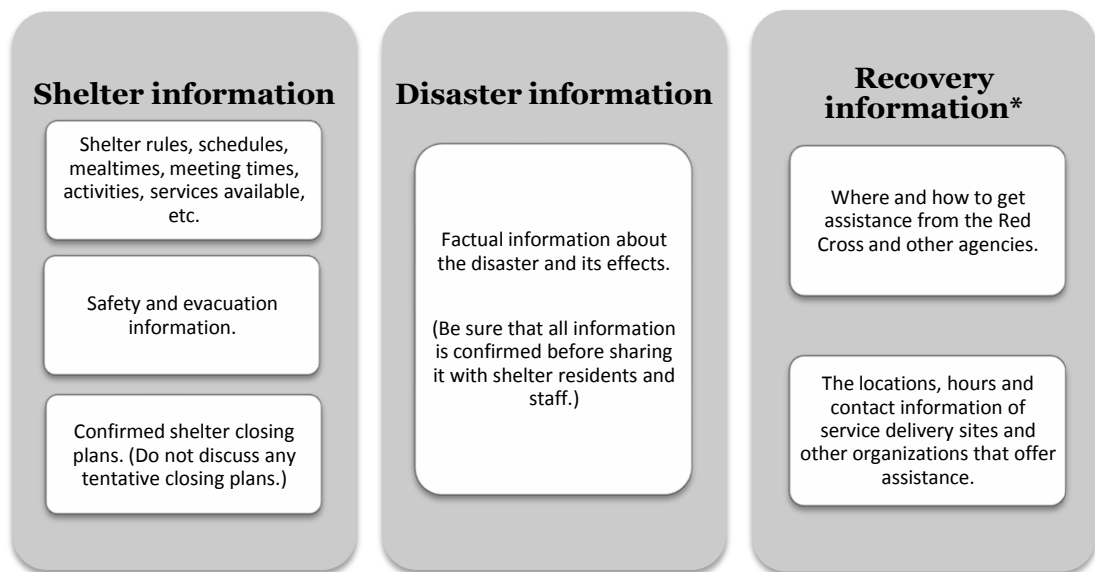
## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for establishing and maintaining good communication in the shelter. If possible, the shelter manager may assign a shelter worker to develop pathways for relevant, accurate and timely information.

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## Types of information to communicate

Provide the following types of information to shelter residents on a consistent basis:



\* Work with External Relations at relief operation headquarters to get up-to-date recovery information for clients and to invite agency or government speakers to the shelter.

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## Make information accessible to all shelter residents and staff

To accommodate different language and communication needs at the shelter and make information accessible to everyone, follow these guidelines:

- Do not assume that everyone can read posted notices or hear spoken announcements. Choose various methods for communicating important information to shelter residents (verbally, in writing, etc.) so that all shelter residents and staff receive all information.
  - Make sure that all information is shared in multiple languages according to the language needs of shelter residents and staff.
  - Communicate all shelter information in ways that are accessible to people with hearing and/or vision impairments.
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**Methods for communicating information to shelter residents**

Here are some effective methods of providing information to clients:

**Shelter meetings**

Regularly scheduled shelter meetings give residents and staff an opportunity to discuss shelter issues and disaster information. Use shelter meetings to review shelter rules and issues, discuss volunteer opportunities in the shelter, give disaster updates and share recovery information. Allow ample time for questions and make sure that the information is also communicated in ways that are accessible to people who are hearing impaired or have language needs.

**Bulletin boards, signs and posters**

Locate bulletin boards in the registration or recreation areas. Use them to post news releases, shelter rules and routines, messages from friends and family, lists of available resources and other helpful information. Supplement bulletin boards with signs and posters in other areas of the shelter. Make sure all written information on bulletin boards is made available to clients with vision impairments in an appropriate, accessible format and that materials are posted in appropriate languages for shelter clients.

Include information about the following:

- Registration
- Smoking
- Responsibility for personal belongings
- Pets
- Responsibility for supervising children
- Medical problems or injuries
- Alcohol and drugs
- Weapons
- Volunteering
- Telephones
- Housekeeping
- Quiet hours
- News media
- Where to go with problems and complaints

**Shelter staff**

Make sure that registration staff and other shelter staff are well briefed and prepared to answer common questions from shelter residents. If possible, have interpretation services available at registration, and be prepared to communicate in ways that accommodate individuals with hearing impairments.

**Newsletters**

In large shelters and long-term shelters, daily newsletters may be used to deliver information to both workers and clients. Make sure this information is presented in another format for any individuals for whom written materials are not accessible.

**Television, radio and newspapers**

Arrange for a television with closed captioning and/or a radio and copies of a daily newspaper, if possible, so residents can get information about current disaster conditions.

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**Caution!**

Always verify information regarding the disaster and/or services available to the shelter residents by checking with the source of the information, your supervisor or relief operation headquarters before disseminating it.

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# Safe and Well Linking

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## Introduction

Safe and Well Linking services focus on helping Red Cross clients make contact with their loved ones during disasters. Shelter workers can facilitate communication by encouraging clients to make contact with their loved ones and facilitating their doing so and by referring clients to the Safe and Well Linking activity.

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## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for ensuring that all shelter workers offer clients access to Red Cross Safe and Well Linking services.

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## What is the Safe and Well Website?

The [Safe and Well Website](http://www.redcross.org/safeandwell) is a public website managed by the Safe and Well Linking activity. It allows people who are affected by disaster to post standard and custom messages about their well-being. Concerned family members and loved ones anywhere can search for the messages posted by people who self-register. The site is available in English, Spanish and French and can also be accessed by mobile phone. Users can update their Safe and Well status on Facebook and Twitter. The [Safe and Well Website](http://www.redcross.org/safeandwell) is publicly available via the Internet at <http://www.redcross.org/safeandwell>.

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## Make Safe and Well registration available to shelter clients

Use the following guidelines to help ensure that the [Safe and Well Website](http://www.redcross.org/safeandwell) is used as effectively as possible:

- Before a disaster strikes, make the Safe and Well Website accessible to shelter registrants who have evacuated their home and are staying in an evacuation shelter.
  - Provide information to shelter residents about how to use the Safe and Well Website, including the direct link to the website: (<http://www.redcross.org/safeandwell>), and help them with registration if they need assistance.
  - Use the Helper Tool, which is an Excel spreadsheet that shelter staff can use to record many registrations at once. It is especially useful in areas with limited or no Internet access. Once information is captured in the spreadsheet, it can be quickly uploaded to the Safe and Well Website from another location where Internet access is available.
  - Upon closing the shelter, forward all completed Safe & Well Linking documents to the Safe and Well Linking activity at relief operation headquarters.
- 

## Refer clients to Safe and Well Linking

In addition to helping clients within the disaster area to notify their loved ones that they are safe and well, the Safe and Well Linking activity reunites family members separated from one another as a direct result of the disaster. It also manages requests initiated by family members concerned about the health or mental health of a loved one inside the disaster area.

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# Special Situations

## Chapter 14: Accommodating Individual Needs

### Overview

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#### Introduction

During a disaster, people with different and unique needs will need shelter. The elderly, children, people with disabilities and/or access and functional needs, and people with a diversity of cultural and customary practices may all seek help from the Red Cross. This chapter provides guidance on how to safely accommodate these diverse needs at the shelter.

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#### In this chapter

This chapter includes the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Clients with Disabilities and/or Functional or Access Needs</a>
<a href="#">Children in Shelters</a>
<a href="#">Clients with Ethnic, Cultural, Religious or Language-Related Needs</a>
<a href="#">Clients with Animals</a>
<a href="#">Pre-Disaster Homeless</a>

---

#### Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for arranging shelter accommodations to meet the diverse needs of our clients and for ensuring that all shelter staff provide assistance that is impartial and nondiscriminatory and that respects the diversity of our clients.

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# Clients with Disabilities and/or Functional or Access Needs

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## Introduction

The Red Cross values and promotes diversity and inclusiveness among its volunteers and employees. We recognize our obligation to ensure, to the highest degree possible, that all individuals have access to the goods and services provided as part of the Disaster Services Program. The following section will assist you in providing quality services to people with disabilities and/or functional or access needs.

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## Determine whether needs can be safely met at the shelter

During registration, the [Initial Intake and Assessment Tool](#) helps shelter workers identify individuals who need additional assistance or accommodations to safely reside at the shelter. Based on this assessment, Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health may determine that some individuals cannot be safely accommodated at the shelter. If this occurs, Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health will assist the individual in finding shelter at an appropriate facility. Disaster Health Services staff should work with public health officials and relief operation leadership to accomplish an appropriate placement.

After Disaster Health Services and/or Disaster Mental Health staff determine if a person with disabilities or functional or access needs can be safely accommodated at the shelter, the shelter manager and staff should work with Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health to make sure that the person is accommodated in a way that provides quality Red Cross service.

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## Working with people with disabilities and/or functional or access needs

Follow these guidelines to determine the best way to provide services to people with disabilities and/or functional or access needs:

- Be aware that disabilities manifest themselves in varied ways, as physical, sensory, cognitive, behavioral, mental health and/or chronic conditions. Therefore, there is no such thing as a “one size fits all” approach. Treat every person as an individual and address his or her needs accordingly.
  - Seek guidance from individuals with disabilities and/or functional or access needs about the best ways to accommodate them. Ask them, “How can we help you today?” They are the best resource for information on how to assist.
  - Do not assume that just because a person has a disability or functional or access need that he or she will require assistance. Before you attempt to assist a person, ask the person if he or she would like help.
  - Assess the availability of family members, friends or health care agency personnel to provide assistance or special care for tasks that individuals cannot perform on their own. Facilitate access to this assistance if possible.
  - If an individual has been separated from his or her assistive devices, identify community organizations that can assist in finding replacements. The local public health department might be able to provide assistance. Work with Disaster Health Services to access financial assistance to replace the items.
  - Ask shelter residents with durable medical equipment that requires power if they would like their cot near a power source.
  - Accommodate service animals at the shelter. They are entitled by law to accompany their owners. See [Clients with Animals](#) in this handbook. Shelter staff should direct any concerns about a service animal in a shelter to the shelter manager.
- 

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**Working with people with disabilities and/or functional or access needs**  
(Continued)

- Provide information to people with disabilities and/or functional or access needs to the same degree as you provide information to people without these needs.
    - Obtain qualified sign language interpreters.
    - Activate the caption function on all televisions in the shelter.
    - Provide volunteer readers.
    - Make audio announcements available visually.
  - Remember to secure information regarding clients in need of additional services, whether medical or otherwise, to protect privacy and confidentiality.
  - Accommodate dietary needs of the shelter population (e.g., low-salt, low-sugar and gluten-free diets).
  - Many individuals find shelters difficult, especially because they are separated from their personal items and familiar surroundings. This environment can be even more challenging for an individual with a disability or functional or access need who is cut off from people and equipment on which he or she relies for assistance. Be sensitive to these feelings and work with clients to access equipment and assistance that will help them to negotiate the shelter more comfortably.
  - Providing access to a quiet room or space will help some people function better in a shelter environment (e.g., the elderly, people with psychiatric disabilities, parents with very young children, or children and adults with autism).
- 

**Co-location of nursing homes or similar facilities**

If a nursing home or a similar facility must be evacuated, there may be a request to bring residents to a Red Cross shelter. The Red Cross may authorize the co-location, and the shelter manager must ensure that:

- There is a separate space to accommodate the people, supplies and equipment;
- The facility's staff will continue to be responsible for the care of their clients.

Under these circumstances, shelter staff should carefully follow these guidelines:

- Contact relief operation headquarters before agreeing to this arrangement.
  - Use signs to identify the separate spaces for the Red Cross shelter and the other facility to reduce confusion.
  - If available, assign the Disaster Health Services lead at the shelter to serve as a liaison between the shelter and the institution's staff.
  - Inform the nursing home/facility staff that:
    - They must be continuously present and provide the usual care that they give to their clients;
    - The Red Cross is not responsible for managing the section of the shelter that houses clients of the evacuated facility;
    - All legal risks and responsibilities remain with the nursing home institution.
  - Collaborate with Disaster Health Services and nursing home staff to contact public health authorities for assistance if the nursing home staff cannot comply with these requirements.
  - The Red Cross can provide support to the lead agency but is not the primary or lead agency providing assistance.
    - All Red Cross services for shelter residents should also be available to residents of the evacuated facility, including regular and universal cots, blankets, comfort kits and food.
    - The Red Cross will bear financial responsibility for costs of traditional Red Cross shelter services. The expense of specialized medical equipment or supplies needed by patients is the responsibility of the facility or public health authority.
-

## Temporary infirmaries

When the shelter population includes many medical cases requiring more than the usual care that Disaster Health Services staff can provide, Disaster Health Services, in consultation with Operations Management, may contact local public health authorities and inform them that public health intervention is needed, or request that they establish a temporary infirmary.

- As with temporary infirmaries set up by evacuated institutions, temporary infirmaries set up by the local public health authority are to be operated under the medical supervision of the public health authority, not by the Red Cross.
  - If the public health authority requests assistance, the Red Cross may assist with staff who are then under the supervision and control of the public health officer.
  - The Red Cross may also help with food and procuring supplies and equipment. However, the responsibility for providing medical and nursing care rests solely with the local public health department.
- 

## Adapt shelter for people with mobility-related needs

People who use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes or any other mobility device may have differing abilities to access and move about in the shelter. Note any shelter residents with such access needs and make reasonable accommodations, wherever possible.

The following are suggestions for making the shelter more accessible to people with mobility-related needs:

- Make sure there is ample room for individuals with mobility assistance devices to maneuver by keeping aisles and passageways wide and clear. Allow 100 square feet of dormitory space for people in wheelchairs or scooters.
  - Find or arrange an accessible entrance to the building, such as a garage or temporary ramp, if there is no access through usual entrances. If there is no alternative, recruit Red Cross staff to lift a person in a wheelchair onto sidewalks without a curb cut and up and down stairs. However, use caution. Lifting up stairs and over curb cuts can be dangerous for both the person in the wheelchair and the people doing the lifting and may be impossible if the individual uses a motorized wheelchair.
  - Work with identified local partners to build or provide temporary ramps, or consult with the sheltering manager to work with the External Relations group for assistance.
  - Make sure that restroom facilities are accessible to people who use mobility assistance devices. Accessible portable toilets and showers may be secured if there is no access to these facilities within the shelter.
  - In facilities where wall-mounted equipment such as drinking fountains and pay phones are out of reach to people who use wheelchairs or are hard to operate for individuals using walking aids, have alternatives such as bottled water with flex straws or pliable paper cups or desktop or cellular phones.
  - If the shelter is only expected to be open for a few hours, identify a Red Cross worker or other shelter resident willing to assist the client in moving in and out of the shelter and to other areas within the shelter. If the client expects to remain at the shelter for more than 24 hours or usually has a personal attendant or companion to provide services at home, ask the client to make arrangements for that person to come to the shelter, or the client may have to be relocated. Disaster Health Services may also assist with the care of residents with mobility-related disabilities.
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**Adapt shelter for people with mobility-related needs**  
(Continued)

- Provide hotel accommodations if a shelter facility cannot be made accessible or if a person cannot use a cot. Work with the shelter resident and Disaster Health Services to determine the best solution.
  - Even if a facility is accessible, some clients may have additional needs, such as a place to recharge wheelchair batteries, assistance getting onto and up from cots, or carrying meals or other personal items. Be sensitive to these needs and ask the client what assistance may be required.
  - For clients who have mobility-related access needs, transportation to and from a service center, job location or a medical appointment may be difficult. Arrange for accessible transportation, or work with the shelter manager and Individual Client Services to have a worker come to the shelter to meet with clients.
- 

**Adapt shelter for people with visual disabilities**

For a person who is blind or has a visual impairment, a shelter can pose several challenges. Cots, tables, chairs and bedding may easily become hazards to such individuals. Also, we often use visual means such as signs, posters and information sheets to convey information, so the shelter environment may also cause communication barriers. To help make their shelter stay more comfortable, identify any individuals with visual impairments and attempt, wherever possible, to take reasonable steps to accommodate them.

- Provide verbal orientation to the facility.
  - Provide, when needed, assistance with equipment such as phones.
  - Offer assistance when going through food lines.
  - Post information in large print.
  - Offer to read notices, bulletins and other written information.
  - Assign a cot in an area with a permanent fixture, such as a wall or column, and where the individual can access other areas such as eating areas and restrooms without passing through obstructed areas.
- 

**Adapt shelter for people with hearing disabilities**

Hearing impairments may vary widely, from some difficulty hearing to profound deafness. As with our shelter residents with vision impairments, remember that shelter residents with hearing impairments have the same need for information as everyone else. Note individuals with hearing impairments and, wherever possible, take reasonable steps to accommodate them at the shelter. For example:

- Discuss with the person the level of assistance needed to communicate.
  - If the client communicates through American Sign Language (ASL), ask if there are any workers or other clients who know ASL.
  - If the resident is hard of hearing, assist them to quiet areas of the shelter.
  - If the resident is able to read lips, remind staff and shelter residents interacting with them to position themselves where they can be seen when speaking and to speak normally.
  - Provide written versions of all important shelter information and instructions.
  - Post general information in numerous locations, particularly when announcements are made over a loudspeaker or other amplification device.
  - It may be helpful to assign a volunteer or another client who is willing to assist the person who is deaf.
  - Have workers carry paper and pens, and provide them to clients who may be communicating with the client.
- 

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**Adapt shelter  
for people with  
hearing  
disabilities**  
(Continued)

- Provide access to closed-captioned televisions and a telecommunications display device for telephone access.
  - Make sure that information about the disaster from radio is relayed to the client.
  - If there are numerous questions to be asked, write them out with space for the client to complete them.
-



# Children in Shelters

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## Introduction

When children are residents of a shelter, they require special considerations and attention. Especially in large shelters or long-term shelter situations, the shelter manager may wish to assign responsibilities for coordinating programming for children to a designated supervisor. While the Red Cross does not provide child care services to families in shelters, programs might include recreation, partner-provided temporary respite care for families with children and, depending on the length of the sheltering operation, arrangements for access to education.

In addition to the guidelines for organizing services for children at shelters with their families, all shelter staff should pay special attention to Red Cross guidance for working with unaccompanied minors in shelters. See [Section 3: Unaccompanied Minors](#) in [Reception and Registration](#) in this handbook.

---

## Organize recreation for children

Recreational activities help children to cope with the disruption of shelter life and the stress of the disaster. To meet the recreational needs of children at the shelter:

- Organize age-appropriate activities according to the ages of the children at the shelter;
  - Identify available resources within the shelter for keeping children entertained and occupied;
  - Determine the availability of video, music and recreational items;
  - Ensure the appropriateness of the materials in terms of age range, language, etc.;
  - Establish a schedule for recreational activities;
  - Identify space that can be used as dedicated areas for recreation (post signs for that area);
  - Return borrowed equipment used for recreational purposes to the facility or partner who provided it.
- 

## Temporary respite care for families with children

Temporary respite care for families with children provides relief for children, parents, guardians and caregivers. It is a secure, supervised and supportive play experience for children in the shelter. To arrange a temporary respite care program, the shelter manager should:

- Notify the Sheltering Manager if there is a need for temporary respite care for children (the Sheltering Manager will have access to agreements with partner agencies that can assist with providing these services, or contact the Disaster Operations Center to activate national agreements);
  - Ensure that respite workers are qualified partner volunteers who have completed a background check;
  - Set up the respite care area where the extra noise will not bother others;
  - Remind parents, guardians or caregivers that, when placing their child or children in this area, the Red Cross does not provide day care and caregivers are required to stay onsite at the shelter, or designate a person to be responsible for their child or children, who will stay onsite;
  - Provide parents, guardians or caregivers with clear, complete and easy-to-understand information about hours of operation and other information related to their children's participation;
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*Continued on next page*

**Temporary  
respite care for  
families with  
children**  
(Continued)

- Direct workers providing temporary respite care to keep a log of all clients served that includes:
    - The names of the children and their guardians,
    - The ages of the children,
    - The days and times that the services were used;
  - Monitor the temporary respite care program to ensure that activities are both appropriate and serve the interests of the clients;
  - Work with Disaster Health Services to inspect the respite care area daily to make sure that there are no safety hazards and that the area is secure and sanitary;
  - Support partner agencies in establishing regulations for client use of temporary respite care services. Partner agencies that specialize in disaster child care will have their own procedures. Verify that their procedures meet all Red Cross principles, policies and safety requirements.
- 

**Arrange for  
access to  
education**

Under some conditions, school-aged children will require access to education while they are residing at the shelter. Coordinate with Government Operations to initiate discussion regarding continuation of educational programs in cases where schools will not be reopened for a significant period of time.

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# Clients with Ethnic, Cultural, Religious or Language-Related Needs

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## Introduction

In keeping with the principles of humanity and impartiality, we welcome people of all races, cultures, ethnicities, languages, religions and beliefs at Red Cross shelters. To provide quality service to all of our clients, we strive to deliver our services in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner to everyone we serve.

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## Respecting and accommodating diversity

To sensitively accommodate all clients, be aware of client needs in the following areas. If you need assistance, ask community leaders to provide shelter workers with guidance on how to appropriately and sensitively accommodate ethnic, religious or cultural groups who are present in the shelter:

- **Language needs:** Make shelter information is available in the languages of clients staying at the shelter.
  - **Dietary needs:** Plan menus to accommodate the ethnic preferences and religious restrictions of shelter residents related to diet.
  - **Dormitory layout:** Be aware that shelter residents may have religious or cultural preferences that prevent males and females from sleeping in the same area or that require extended families to remain together. Provide dormitory arrangements to accommodate these needs.
  - **Requests related to religious observance:** Accommodate requests related to religious observance, for example, by providing a room to accommodate prayer or meditation. If possible, identify local religious services for clients and assist them with accessing these services.
  - **Other cultural, religious or ethnic customs:** Be aware of ethnic, religious or cultural customs such as those that restrict physical contact between strangers, limit which family members should be consulted, interpret gestures or behaviors differently, or effect what sorts of information should be shared with strangers. Your sensitivity to these differences will help the Red Cross to provide respectful service to our clients.
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# Clients with Animals

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## Introduction

The Red Cross allows only service animals in our shelters. Follow the guidelines in this section to respond to requests to shelter pets and service animals.

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## Respond to request to shelter pets

The mission of the Red Cross in sheltering is to provide safety and comfort for as many people as possible. Because of health and safety concerns, the Red Cross does not allow animals other than service animals inside of shelters. In addition, the Red Cross does not assume primary responsibility for providing alternative arrangements for pets.

We do, however, recognize and appreciate the importance of pets to their owners. We also appreciate the sense of responsibility and interdependence that pet owners feel toward their pets, especially in times of disaster. To the greatest extent possible, we should make every effort to integrate pet-sheltering initiatives into our service delivery.

Although we do not host pets in shelters, shelter staff should be prepared to provide referral information to clients seeking temporary care for their pets while staying at a Red Cross shelter. We should work proactively with community resources and partner agencies to encourage co-location of pet shelters with our shelters, wherever facilities allow.

---

## Service animal definition

The Red Cross welcomes service animals in shelters.

Service animals are trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities, such as guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, or performing other tasks.

Although the Department of Justice has changed the definition of a service animal under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* to state that a service animal must be a dog, the Red Cross will continue to accept other animals that perform tasks for individuals with disabilities.

When it is not apparent that an animal is a service animal, shelter staff may ask only two questions to help determine whether an animal is a service animal:

1. Do you need this animal because of a disability?
2. What work or tasks has the animal been trained to perform?

Shelter workers may not require a license, certification, identification tag, medical certificate or any other type of documentation for a service animal. Shelter workers should refer any questions or concerns about service animals to the shelter manager. If the animal has not been trained to perform work or tasks, the animal should not be allowed in the shelter.

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**Service animal definition**  
(Continued)

When a service animal is in a shelter, the animal's owner is responsible for its feeding, care and supervision. Shelter staff should work with the animal's owner to identify a relief area for the animal and provide disposable bags or containers for cleanup. Shelter staff may also assist with providing food and supplies for service animals when needed (e.g., dishes for food and water, arrangements for the hygienic disposal of waste and, if requested, portable kennels for containment). Pre-identify community partners or vendors that can assist in meeting these needs. Consider working with partners already engaged in pet sheltering plans or local veterinarians, animal hospitals and animal response teams.

For more information about working with people with service animals, see [Clients with Disabilities and/or Functional or Access Needs](#).

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**Therapy and emotional support animals**

For the purpose of our shelters, animals that provide therapy, emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship are not a part of our disaster services program. These animals are not allowed in Red Cross service delivery sites for the following reasons:

- Disaster survivors are not allowed to bring pets into our service sites and shelters (for safety and health reasons), and it would be confusing and possibly frustrating for these individuals to see a Red Cross worker bring a therapy dog into a service delivery site.
- There are currently no Red Cross protocols, guidelines, credentialing or screening procedures in place to support a therapy dog program.

We do, however, recognize and appreciate the benefit of these animals and encourage chapters to have partners with therapy animal programs as a community resource to offer to clients. These partners could offer their services either outside of our service delivery sites or at their own locations.

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**Additional planning resources**

Chapters should include pet shelters in the planning process before disasters occur. Local animal control, animal shelters and local emergency management offices can inform and assist this process. Check local county and state animal rescue teams for information and planning as well.

State Animal Response Teams (SARTs) are interagency state organizations dedicated to addressing animal issues during disasters. To locate your state's SART, contact the National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs by email: [alliance@NASAAEP.org](mailto:alliance@NASAAEP.org).

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## Pre-Disaster Homeless

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**Introduction** Shelter residents who were homeless before the disaster resemble other shelter clients in terms of their disaster-related needs, but require special assistance to find placement when the shelter closes.

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**Respond to request to shelter the pre-disaster homeless** When you register clients who were homeless before the disaster, complete the [Shelter Registration Form](#) with as much information as possible. Accept them into the shelter and provide them with the same services as any other client.

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**Facilitate post-shelter placement of pre-disaster homeless** Notify the sheltering manager at relief operation headquarters before the shelter closes to facilitate a placement for clients who were homeless before the disaster and referrals for long-term services in the communities. Possible referrals include local homeless shelters, governmental or non-governmental human services agencies and government housing authorities. Workers in the Community Partnerships or Government Relations activities or Individual Client Services group can help in facilitating this placement.

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# Chapter 15: Special Shelter Conditions

## Overview

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**Introduction** This section includes information on Red Cross sheltering under unusual conditions.

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**In this chapter** This chapter contains the following topics:

Topic
<a href="#">Mega-Shelters</a>
<a href="#">Pandemic Outbreak</a>

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# Mega-Shelters

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## Introduction

There are many different ways to provide service to individuals needing shelter before, during and after a disaster. When disasters affect thousands of individuals in a community, a large shelter may be the best way to serve them. These shelters are often called mega-shelters and generally accommodate more than 2,000 residents, with populations as high as 25,000 or more.

The Red Cross plays an important role in mega-shelters, but we do not open and operate them on our own. Rather, we support local and state governments as they plan for and operate mega-shelters. As a Red Cross shelter worker, you may play a role in this partnership.

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## What is a mega-shelter?

The defining characteristics of mega-shelters are:

- They accommodate large populations of 2,000 or more residents;
  - Local, state or national government entities activate them;
  - They involve multiagency coordination and management, with a unified command that tasks specific agencies, vendors and organizations (including the Red Cross) with roles that contribute to the overall mission;
  - They are located in large, nonconventional sheltering facilities (often facilities generally used for public assembly, such as an arena, convention center or stadium);
  - They generally provide accommodations for clients with longer-term shelter needs beyond evacuation sheltering.
- 

## The role of the Red Cross in mega-shelters

Because of our significant sheltering expertise, the Red Cross plays an important role in the following areas:

- Managing dormitory operations
  - Providing registration services
  - Supporting and coordinating logistical needs
  - Training Red Cross and other agency staff in shelter operations
  - Supporting information dissemination and media relations
  - Supporting health and mental health assessment and first aid services
  - Providing access to the Red Cross “Safe and Well” notification system and family reunification related services
  - Coordinating voluntary agencies that provide other services to clients
  - Supporting the provision of food service
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## Other mega-shelter resources

For more information, see:

- The [Mega-Shelter Planning Guide](#), developed by Red Cross and partner agencies;
  - The [Mega Shelter MOU Template](#), to be used locally.
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# Pandemic Outbreak

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## Introduction

Red Cross might open shelters because of fires, floods or other disasters in communities experiencing pandemic outbreaks. When this occurs, it is important to take extra caution in staffing and conducting the operation to limit the spread of disease. Follow the guidelines in this section if you are operating a shelter under pandemic conditions.

---

## Shelter manager responsibilities

The shelter manager is responsible for working closely with Red Cross Disaster Health Services and public health officials to make sure that the shelter operates according to public health guidance.

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## Follow Red Cross policies and public health protocols for pandemic conditions

During pandemic conditions, Disaster Health Services leadership at national headquarters will make the latest public health and Red Cross guidance available to Disaster Health Services staff and other workers. Follow these steps to make sure you operate the shelter according to the most accurate and up-to-date guidelines.

Step	Action
1	Before opening the shelter, meet with Disaster Health Services and public health leaders in the community to confirm the latest guidance for sheltering under pandemic conditions.
2	Before opening the shelter, ensure the availability of Disaster Health Services workers to support the shelter operation.
3	Verify available stock of sanitation and safety supplies in sufficient quantities for the duration of the shelter operation.
4	Follow all public health and Red Cross guidance related to pandemic conditions.
5	Stay current with the latest guidance related to precautions and protocols appropriate for shelter operations in pandemic conditions.
6	Educate shelter staff about measures that will be in place to prevent the spread of disease.
7	Upon their arrival at the shelter, educate all shelter clients about measures in place to prevent the spread of disease.
8	Upon closing the shelter, follow public health guidance on sanitation of shelter materials and areas to prevent the spread of infection.

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# Appendix

## Sheltering Tools and Resources

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Forms  
referenced in  
the text

[Daily Shelter Report](#)

[Disaster Operations Control \(Form 5266\)](#)

[Disaster Relief Operation Work Performance Evaluation](#)

[Disaster Requisition \(Form 6409\)](#)

[Downloadable Memorandum of Insurance](#)

[DRO Member Registration](#)

[DRO Staff Action Report](#)

[Emergency Welfare Inquiry Form](#)

[Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection](#)

[Information Release](#)

[Initial Intake and Assessment Tool](#)

[Mass Care Procurement Card Authority](#)

[Mass Care Procurement Card User Information Brochure and Register](#)

[Mega Shelter MOU Template](#)

[Resource Record \(Form 6455\)](#)

[Safe and Well Registration Form \(English, Spanish and Vietnamese\)](#)

[Shelter Agreement](#)

[Shelter Agreement Instructions](#)

[Shelter Disclosure Tracking Log](#)

[Shelter Facility Survey](#)

[Shelter Facility Survey Accessibility Instructions](#)

[Shelter Inventory Form](#)

[Shelter Log](#)

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**Forms  
referenced in  
the text  
(Continued)**

[\*Shelter Media Sign-In/Sign-Out Form\*](#)

[\*Shelter Registration Form \(English\)\*](#)

[\*Shelter Registration Form \(Spanish\)\*](#)

[\*Shelter Shift Inspection\*](#)

[\*Shelter Staffing Template\*](#)

[\*Staff Request\*](#)

[\*Unaccompanied Minors Report Form\*](#)

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**Resources  
referenced in  
the text**

[\*Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief\*](#)

[\*Cot Cleaning instructions\*](#)

[\*Disaster Frontline Supervisor Handbook\*](#)

[\*Disaster Public Affairs Activity Manual\*](#)

[\*Guidelines for Cooperating with Media Coverage\*](#)

[\*Job Induction Checklist\*](#)

[\*Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Network\*](#)

[\*Louisiana State Police Sex Offender and Child Predator Internet Registry\*](#)

[\*Mass Care Requirements and Resources\*](#)

[\*Mass Care Standards and Indicators\*](#)

[\*Mega-Shelter Planning Guide\*](#)

[\*Mission Statement of the American Red Cross\*](#)

[\*National Shelter System\*](#)

[\*Overview of the Safe and Well Website\*](#)

[\*Pilot Program for Mass Care Procurement Cards\*](#)

[\*Safe and Well Brochure\*](#)

[\*Safe and Well Wallet Cards \(English\)\*](#)

[\*Safe and Well Wallet Cards \(Spanish\)\*](#)

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**Resources  
referenced in  
the text**  
(Continued)

[Safe and Well Website](#)

[Shelter Resident Information](#)

[Shelter Supply Template](#)

[Standards for Selecting Hurricane Evacuation Shelters \(ARC 4496\)](#)

[Tips for Telling the Red Cross Story](#)

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