



## Tip Sheet: Creating Separate Shelter Dormitory Areas

Red Cross shelter residents typically reside in a single dormitory area inside a gymnasium or community center. In a dormitory with a large number of clients, creating separate zones or “neighborhoods” helps establish a stronger sense of community and facilitates scheduling different services for clients.

At some large school, church or convention facilities, it may be appropriate to split the dormitory using moveable walls or use more than one room or building at the site to:

- Reduce noise,
- Help increase privacy and security, and
- Align with the cultural norms of some residents.

*Shelter residents must never be separated based on categories that can be perceived as discriminatory. Conditions and services provided in each separate area must be equal.*

### Suggested Approaches

Clients can be assigned to the zones, separate rooms, or buildings based on broad categories, typically:

- Families/households (includes men and women without a familial or household relationship who want to be together);
- Single men; and
- Single women.

### Considerations for Separate Dormitory Spaces

The primary consideration for establishing separate dormitory spaces is to better serve client needs. Reasons for establishing separate spaces include:

- Noise and commotion created by too many clients in one space;
- Lack of privacy for dressing and personal care;
- Clients who work night shifts need a dark, quiet space to sleep during the day;
- Law enforcement direction that some clients must be separated from children or women;
- Some families with children disturbing other clients;
- Shelter population with cultural/religious requirements for separation of men and women.

The secondary considerations include whether sufficient sheltering staff and facility space are available. Separate dormitory areas that are not in the same building require at least two (2) staff assigned to each dormitory for each shift to provide services and maintain safety and security.

### Establishing Separate Spaces in a Single Dormitory

When a large single space, such as a gymnasium or the floor of a sports center, is used as the dormitory, separate zones or neighborhoods can be established.

1. Separate areas using aisles or pedestrian barriers and privacy screens.
2. Create signs to direct clients and staff to each space.
3. Position the dormitory service desk where stationary Red Cross workers can observe all areas of the shelter simultaneously and separation screens do not block their view.
  - Remember that the Dormitory Service Desk is different from the registration desk.
  - Anyone NOT registered to stay in a dormitory should not be able to see into or enter the dormitory.

## Establishing Multiple Dormitories

1. When establishing separate dormitories, each dormitory must have a Shelter Shift Supervisor assigned with at least one other worker. Each dormitory must always have at least 2 sheltering staff present. Thus, rather than having a single Dormitory Supervisor for the day shift and night shift, there will be one for each separate dormitory (like day and night Men's Dormitory Supervisor, day and night Women's Dormitory Supervisor, and day and night Families/Households Dormitory Supervisor).
2. Clients assigned to different dormitories are typically provided different color wrist bands, if wrist bands are used for client identification.