



Tip Sheet: Sheltering Support for Pre-Disaster Homeless Clients

Disaster Cycle Services Job Tools
Response/Sheltering

Disasters affect the pre-disaster homeless individuals, so they need Red Cross services and assistance for their recovery. There are different ways that people experience homelessness including being precariously housed, living on the street, sleeping in a vehicle, staying in homeless shelters. Disasters may make their pre-disaster living locations inaccessible or unlivable, and their possessions may become damaged, destroyed, or lost due to the disaster.

In the aftermath of many disasters, local services and programs for homeless people are closed or unavailable, leading pre-disaster homeless individuals to seek services from Red Cross shelters. Pre-disaster homeless are welcome in shelters and must be treated respectfully by clients and other staff.

Sheltering Tips

- House the pre-disaster homeless in general population shelters, family dormitories, or men's and women's dormitories as appropriate.
- Establish quiet rooms and areas for client use to reduce stress.
- Be sensitive and patient in conveying rules and requests for compliance as some homeless clients may relate differently to authority, reprimands, or direct commands.

Service Tips

- Treat all clients like individuals and equally entitled to our services.
- Pre-disaster homeless individuals may have medical and mental health needs that differ from other shelter residents. Red Cross workers should strive to understand and address the needs of all clients.
- Individuals including the pre-disaster homeless may need mental health or special substance abuse services available at the shelter.
 - When a shelter has large numbers of pre-disaster homeless clients, request extra Disaster Health Service / Disaster Mental Health responders, or augment available health / mental health staff with social / psychiatric responders from governmental and homeless service providers.
- Partner with local homeless service providers and veteran services to ensure the availability of appropriate services and resources at the shelter.

Recovery Tips

- Maintain a list of homeless service centers, health care centers, shelters, community kitchens, food pantries, and other resources that serve the homeless population.
 - Include contact information, services provided, hours of services, eligibility requirements, and other relevant information.

Sheltering Tip Sheets provide pointers for handling issues within the guidance outlined in Sheltering Standards and Procedures and other Red Cross doctrine. Please send feedback to sheltering@redcross.org.

- Connect clients directly with the service agency through an initial phone call when given clients' permission.
- Communicate all the steps an individual must take to obtain services.
- Pre-disaster homeless client may need transportation assistance to obtain services to support their transition from the shelter. Arrange through Shelter Manager/Coordinator. (See *Transportation for Clients Tip Sheet*.)
- Confer with Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health, Recovery, Disability Integration, and others with experience dealing with the homeless, especially when approaching the shelter closing date.

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