



Tip Sheet: Transportation for Shelter Clients

Disaster Cycle Services Job Tools
Response/Sheltering

Clients often come to shelters without vehicles, and public transportation does not always serve the location of many shelters. These factors make it difficult for clients to reach Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC) and recovery-related appointments, shop for needed items, keep medical appointments, or get to work.

Clients needing transportation may have little or no money due to the disaster or other circumstances, requiring the disaster operation to rely on other financial support for transportation.

Transportation for clients is not a shelter responsibility but sheltering leaders must advocate for and help arrange transportation with disaster leadership and community organizations to serve client needs.

External Transportation Support

Emergency Management agencies typically arrange initial transportation to shelters for those without vehicles. This often involves public transportation or rented buses. Sheltering Managers/Coordinators should request that External Relations or Logistics determine if transportation services can be adapted to serve shelter residents or if arrangements can be made with private/non-profit organizations to provide needed services keeping in mind those with access and functional needs.

Scheduled and on-demand services involving buses, vans, and automobiles can serve shelter client needs:

- Service might be provided by a city or county bus service on a regular scheduled route, a route altered to serve the shelter, or special service at scheduled times.
- Some clients may need medical or access and functional need assistance vans or ride services suited for seniors.
- Taxi or ride-share services, such as Uber and Lyft, may be arranged for free or reduced services. These services tend not to operate effectively in the initial days following a widespread disaster.
- Private companies or non-profit organizations may contribute or have a contract to provide van or automobile services for clients.

Shelter Transportation Facilitation

As soon as transportation arrangements are in place, shelter staff should post information and procedures for using the transportation services, including schedules, sign-up rosters, and guidelines, such as no pets and mileage or distance limitations where most clients congregate and at the registration desk.

Shelter staff maintains awareness of issues involving clients and the transportation operators, such as schedules and stops not being conducted as listed or misbehavior by operators or clients.

Depending on the locale and services involved, client identification, such as a wrist band, may be required to use transportation services.

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.