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# Sheltering Standards and Procedures

## Disaster Cycle Services Standards & Procedures

### DCS SP RESPOND



June 2015



# Change Log

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**For reviewers – when you see the references to job tools, such as Shelter Facilities - Readiness Job Tool or Shelter Staffing Job Tool, please note that all of these job tools are available for review during this review cycle. To review any of the sheltering job tools, please go back to the stage gate email and click on the job tool links.**

# Introduction

Sheltering, like all Red Cross services, is guided by the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and the Mission of the American Red Cross.

Sheltering activities meet the temporary housing needs of individuals and communities directly impacted by disaster. These services are typically available within hours of notification. Sheltering includes more than just a facility and is designed to provide a safe space where a variety of clients' needs can be met.



## Purpose


Individuals, families and communities have varying immediate and on-going disaster caused needs. The Red Cross has the ability to understand and meet their changing needs to help them on the road to their recovery.

The purpose of this document is to describe the process activities, standards, responsibilities, authorities and control mechanisms for the sheltering program. This includes guidance for the entire sheltering cycle – planning and readiness, opening, organizing, operating, closing, and after actions review with community partners.

## Relation to Other Documents

This document provides standards and procedures for the disaster workforce to provide sheltering services in response to disasters, through the Respond process. It is part of the Sheltering set of Disaster Cycle Services doctrine. Together with the Respond Framework, Respond Program Essentials, and related standards and procedures and job tools, this document provides a foundation of programmatic intent. Workers can use this to confidently act and provide services to clients, measure program effectiveness, and inform continuous improvement.

Other related documents include the Concept of Operations Program Essentials, Operations Planning Standards and Procedures,  Regional Movement of Materials Standards and Procedures, and Disaster Workforce Management Handbook  Related Corporate policies include the American Red Cross Disaster Policy and Policy on Protecting Personal Information Policy.

All response activities  converge in shelters, depending on the scale and needs of the affected individuals and community. Response activities most commonly include Sheltering, Feeding, Health, Services, Mental Health Services, Spiritual Care Services, Reunification, Direct Client Assistance, Distribution of Relief Supplies, Information and Referrals.

## Audience

This document provides standards and procedures for the entire workforce responsible for providing sheltering to disaster clients throughout the sheltering cycle.

## Scope

This Standards and Procedures document covers the traditional sheltering services, where sheltering

services are provided within shelter facilities. It does not include non-traditional sheltering activities in large open space shelters, which are large outdoor environments (e.g., fairgrounds or parks) and use modified or temporarily constructed structures.

## Sheltering Program Design Principles

The Sheltering Program goal is to align with the Disaster Cycle Services principles, improve the quality of the shelter resident experience, and ensure that sheltering services are accessible by all and delivered consistently by Red Cross workers. Success measures include principles from the perspectives of our clients, workers, and programmatic features.

### Our Clients

- 1) I can access the shelter and all services provided.
- 2) My immediate needs are met and I receive services where and when I need them.
- 3) I feel empowered to make the best decisions for myself and my family.
- 4) I feel safe, secure, and comfortable.
- 5) Workers in the shelter are courteous and knowledgeable. They treat me with respect and dignity.
- 6) I am able to stay with the people and/or animals I came with and I can connect with my loved one.
- 7) I have the information I need to return home safely and begin my recovery.
- 8) I am connected to community resources. I don't have to do it all alone.

### Our Responders

- 1) I treat all clients with respect and dignity and I put the needs of our clients above all else.
- 2) I am empowered to make decisions to meet client's immediate needs.
- 3) I have the training and resources I need to help clients.

### Our Shelter Program

- 1) Shelter services are predictable, repeatable and are executed consistently across the country.
- 2) The Shelter Program is designed first on the needs and expectations of clients and community and then those of key stakeholders.
- 3) The Shelter Program builds on existing local commitments, capabilities, and relationships.
- 4) The Shelter Program is continuously improved to meet the evolving needs of our clients and constituents.

## Definition

*Shelter*

Shelters are accessible buildings temporarily set up to provide a safe place for people displaced by disasters. 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 where prior usage agreements have been made.



## Sheltering

Sheltering is an integral part of Red Cross disaster response. It includes all activities related to helping clients find shelter, register, sleep, eat, shower, and other activities that will help them on the road to recovery.

### Shelter capacity

Shelter capacity refers to the maximum number of people that any one shelter is equipped to handle. The Red Cross strives to open shelters that are both safe and convenient for the people who need help. If a shelter reaches capacity, the Red Cross may open additional shelters to help everyone in need.

### National Shelter System (NSS)

The National Shelter System is a Web-based application that serves as a centralized database of all facilities that can be used as shelters within the United States. The National Shelter System is to be used for planning, tracking, supporting and reporting data on shelters. NSS is used by FEMA, state/local governments, other non-governmental agencies (NGOs) to record shelter information.

The national shelter database will provide pre-disaster facility information on the location, status, and support available. The American public will be able to find open and active shelters in their community during disasters via the Red Cross website ([www.redcross.org/find-help/shelter](http://www.redcross.org/find-help/shelter)) and the Red Cross Emergency app.

## Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities

Sheltering activities involve Red Cross staff from across various functions as well as partners from the community.

Sheltering workers may be located at a shelter or at the Operation Headquarters. Operation Headquarters are scaled to meet the support requirements of the operation and headquarters staffing is limited to only the staff necessary to support field operations. Refer to the [Concept of Operations Program Essentials](#) found on The Exchange for detailed Steady State Roles and Operational roles and responsibilities. In addition to the sheltering activity workers, sheltering will include workers from other activities, too.

### Regional Disaster Officer (RDO)

The RDO has the overall responsibility for capacity planning, capability analysis, and readiness for sheltering in the region.

### Disaster Program Manager (DPM)

The DPM provides supervision and administrative support at the regional level and is responsible for managing volunteer recruitment and training to prepare for a disaster.

### State Mass Care Lead

The State Mass Care Lead provides subject matter expertise to the sheltering activity for planning and readiness. Consult with the State Mass Care Lead during disaster response and sheltering activities.

## Sheltering Lead

The Sheltering Lead is responsible for ensuring that shelter agreements are in place with community partners to use facilities as shelters during a disaster; ensuring that shelter surveys/assessment/reassessment are conducted as needed and facility information is entered into NSS correctly; and recruiting and managing sheltering volunteers and ensuring they have a training and career progression plan.

## Shelter Manager

The Shelter Manager provides supervision and administrative support at a shelter facility including managing shelter supervisors and workers. The Shelter Manager has the overall responsibility of ensuring that the shelter is a safe place for clients and staff and that clients' needs are continually assessed and met. Other primary responsibilities of shelter manager include reporting important information to operation headquarters and ensuring that shelter staff maintain accurate records of sheltering activities.

## Shelter Shift Supervisors

Shelter Shift Supervisors provide supervision and administrative support at the shelter, under the direction of the shelter manager, as part of the shelter management team. The number of supervisors depends on the size and scale of the disaster. Other primary responsibilities of shelter supervisors include reporting important information to Operation Headquarters and ensuring that shelter staff maintain accurate records of shelter activities.

## Sheltering Associates

Sheltering Associates are assigned to work sites and job responsibilities by the shelter manager/supervisor.

- 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 clients on arrival, manage the system for shelter registrations, and maintain a system for signing in and out of the shelter.
- Providing information workers provide clients access to disaster and recovery information and information about shelter rules, routines, and services.
- Reunification workers assist clients with contacting loved ones outside of the disaster area and assist with connecting family members separated by the disaster. They also assist clients with the Safe and Well Linking website.

Other primary responsibilities of sheltering associates include maintaining information for management reporting and keeping accurate records of shelter activities; fielding incoming offers of in-kind donations; making appropriate referrals or accepting/declining offers as appropriate with guidance from shelter manager/supervisor; and completing documentation on accepted in-kind donations.

## Other Activity Workers

### Feeding Lead

The Feeding Lead supervises food services and works with Logistics, Shelter Manager to procure feeding supplies. They coordinate with Health Services to identify and plan to address special dietary needs.

### *Disaster Health Services workers*

Disaster Health Services workers address clients' disaster-related health needs and functional and access needs. They collaborate with shelter management to protect health and prevent contagious diseases at the shelter.

### *Disaster Mental Health workers*

Disaster Mental Health workers provide Disaster Mental Health services to clients and staff, including crisis intervention and psychological first aid.

### *Client caseworkers*

Client caseworkers assist clients with comfort, wellness, communication and information needs. They connect clients with community resources, donations, bulk distribution products and other Red Cross and community assistance.

### *Logistics workers*

Logistics workers ensure the safety, security and sanitation of the shelter. They procure, store and distribute supplies and equipment and work with the facility representative to ensure that the facility is properly used.

### *Disaster Services Technology workers*

Disaster Services Technology workers provide computer and communication resources for Red Cross workers at the shelter.

### *Disaster Public Affairs workers*

Disaster Public Affairs workers engage the news media to explain Red Cross services to individuals affected by the disaster. They escort reporters, photographers or video crews through the shelter.

### *External partners*

External partners may assist with shelter operations, assist clients in recovery planning and/or help clients transition out of the shelter to longer-term housing.

## The Sheltering Cycle

This section describes the sheltering cycle that begins with pre-disaster planning and ends with a post-disaster review.

#### Planning

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

#### Opening the shelter

Opening the shelter requires selecting an appropriate available location after assessing the disaster impact and the sheltering needs of the community.

#### Organizing the shelter

Organizing the shelter to provide services to clients requires many tasks including acquiring necessary supplies and equipment, recruiting sufficient staff, and arranging for shelter security, if needed.

**Operating the shelter**

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

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

**Closing the shelter**

A decreasing shelter population is a sign that it is time to plan closing the shelter. The shelter 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 clients and with community partners 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.

**After-action review and planning**

The final step for shelter operations leads back to preparedness. By conducting an after-action meeting with shelter staff and partners, regions 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.

This diagram illustrates the sheltering cycle.

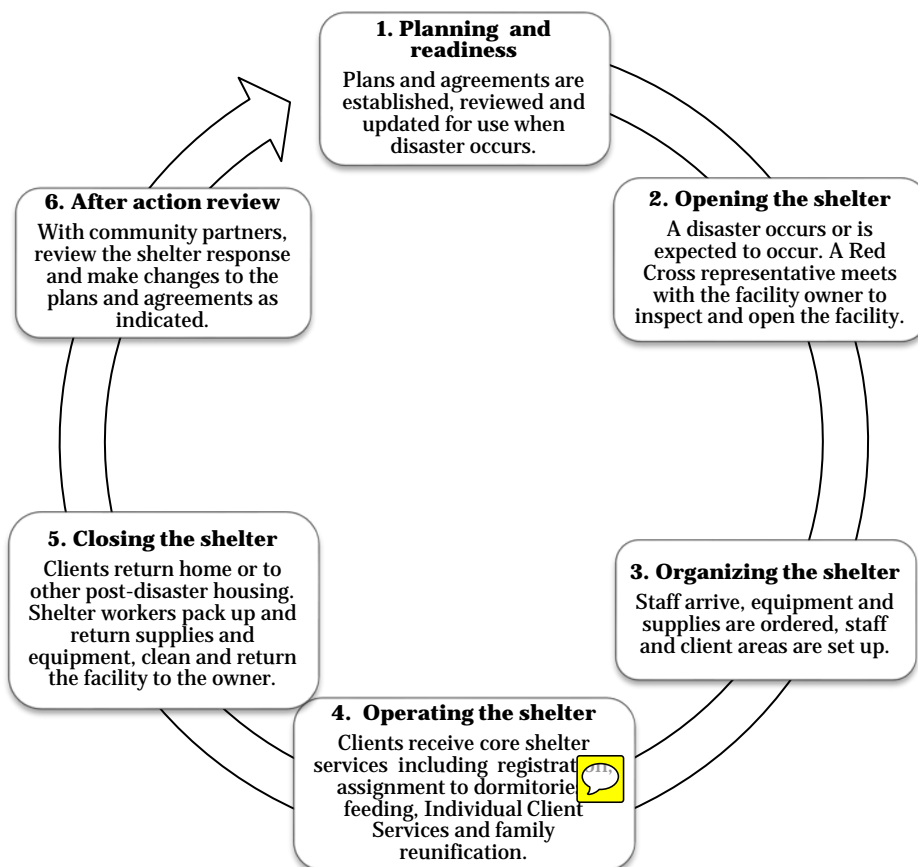


Diagram 1: Sheltering cycle

# Procedures

## 1. Planning and Readiness

In keeping with the principles of humanity and impartiality, people of all races, cultures, ethnicities, languages, religions and beliefs are welcome 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.



To prepare to provide sheltering during disaster response, assess the risks and needs of the community, build the capacity of region to respond, and create a regional disaster response plan.

### 1.1 Assess Community Risks and Needs

Key considerations to identify are:

- The types of hazards that could pose a threat to the community;
- The demographics of the people who might be affected;
- Specific needs of the 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.

### 1.2 Build the Sheltering Capacity

On the basis of the above analysis, follow these steps to build the sheltering capacity:

- 1) Identify community facilities for use as disaster shelters.
- 2) Complete a pre-disaster Shelter Facility Survey and Shelter Agreement for each identified shelter and enter shelter information into the National Shelter System.
- 3) Recruit and train sufficient staff to sustain a shelter operation for at least 72 hours.
- 4) Set up vendor accounts and agreements 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 begin operating shelter.

### 1.3 Characteristics of Sheltering Operations

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. These are the characteristics of shelter operations, based on how long the shelter is likely to be open and whether or not 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.</p> <p>...There is more time for obtaining supplies.</p> <p>...Red Cross staff can arrive before clients.</p> <p>...Clients can be advised to bring essential items.</p>	<p>...There is less opportunity to consider site selection.</p> <p>...There is less time for obtaining supplies.</p> <p>...Clients may arrive before Red Cross staff.</p> <p>...Clients have little or no time to gather essential items.</p>



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

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

When a disaster is expected, clients will 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 short-term sheltering operation. Some examples of sheltering needs that may change as sheltering needs 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 need to 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 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 needs becomes longer term and people begin to resume their pre-disaster activities.

### **1.4 Shelter Facilities**

To open shelters for people displaced by disaster, the Red Cross needs accessible buildings to use on a temporary basis.



As part of the planning and readiness process, regions 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. Identifying, acquiring, maintaining and returning shelter facilities are key tasks for successful shelter operations.

Locate several possible facilities so that, when a disaster occurs, there will be a variety of buildings to select from. Remember to include external partners in the facility survey whenever possible. During conversations with facility representatives and visits to potential shelter sites, use the Shelter Facility Survey to assess the facilities and determine any action required by the region to open the shelter. In hurricane-prone areas, shelters for hurricane evacuations must also meet the criteria outlined in the [Standards for Hurricane Evacuation Shelter Selection \(ARC 4496\)](#) found on The Exchange.

A Shelter Facility Survey is a form that Red Cross workers use to assess the suitability of a facility for sheltering and to record information about the facility. Update shelter surveys every four years. It is recommended that regions update 25 percent of their shelter surveys each year.

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. Review Shelter Agreements annually during conversations with facilities to update their points of contact and determine if the facility has undergone significant renovations.

See Shelter Facilities - Readiness Job Tool for more information.

### *1.5 Staff Requirements*

The shelter manager is responsible for planning, requesting and managing shelter staff. In large shelters, he or she may receive assistance from Staff Services activity. Shelter workers need to be prepared to work with new volunteers who have not been trained by the Red Cross.

Partner organizations could 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 could be released to work in a shelter; or a partner providing medical services may volunteer to assist with health-related issues in a shelter.

The diagram below illustrates the communication and reporting structure for a shelter operation. Refer to the [Concept of Operations Program Essentials](#) found on The Exchange for more details about the Disaster Operations structure. The operation structure is organized, staffed and managed in a manner consistent with adapted Incident Command System (ICS) principles and is led by a designated disaster leadership team, often located at an operation headquarters.



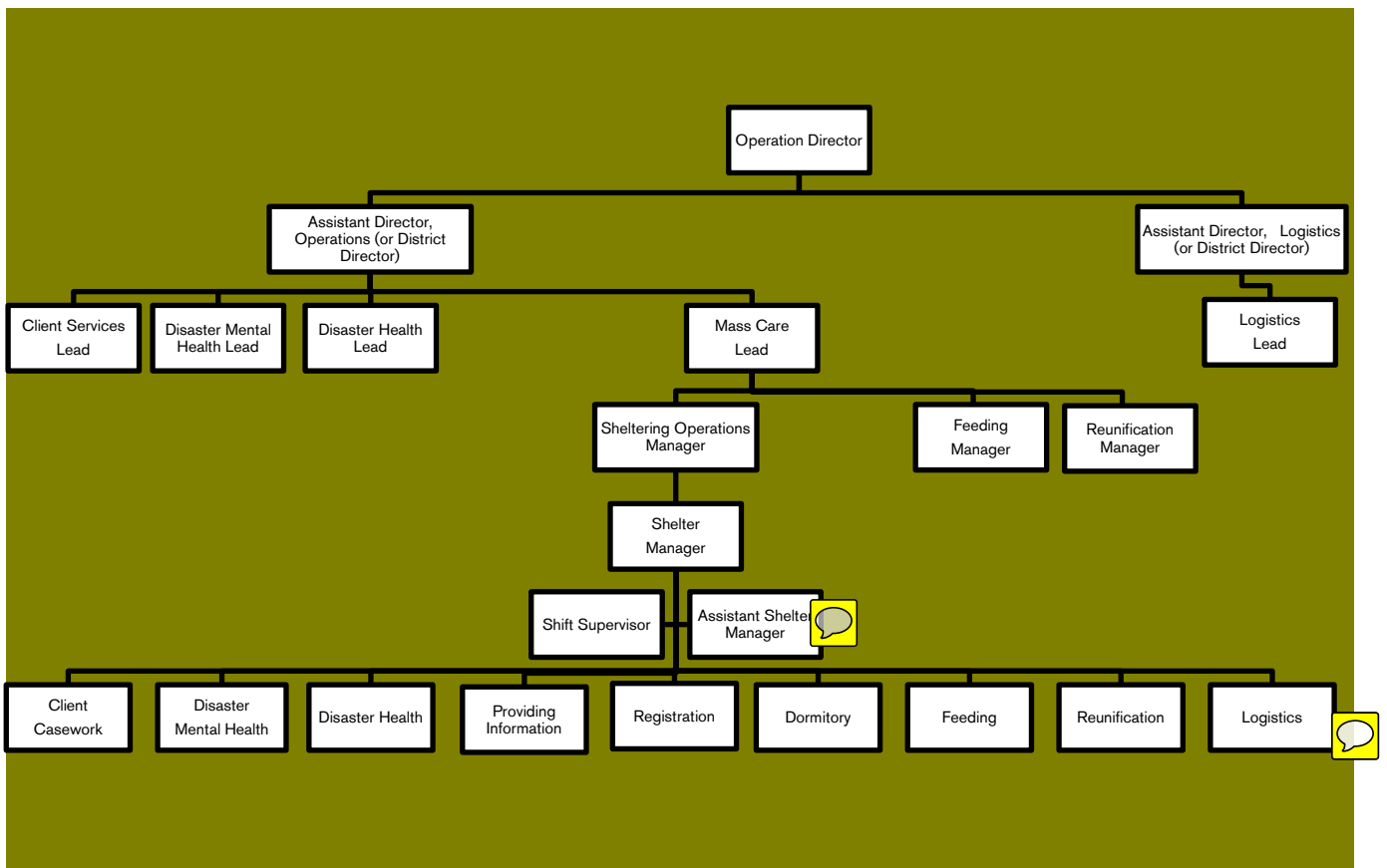


Diagram 2: Sheltering table of organization

Positions above the horizontal dashed line are located at the operation headquarters. Those below the line are located at the shelter. The shelter manager supervises all workers at the shelter regardless of their activity. Workers affiliated with activities other than Sheltering receive technical support from their activity leadership at operation headquarters. For a large relief operation, all the positions in the diagram are usually filled. For a smaller relief operation, positions in dashed boxes may not be filled immediately, or required at all, and some responsibilities may be combined and assigned to the same person.

See the Shelter Staffing Job Tool for more information.


### 1.6 Other Considerations

#### **Pet Sheltering**

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 only allows service animals inside of shelters. In addition, the Red Cross does not assume primary responsibility for providing alternative arrangements for pets.





Determining how to include pet shelters needs to occur during the regional planning process before disasters occur. Regions partner with local community organizations and agencies to build relationships and establish triggers for them to open collocated or offsite shelters for pets. Local animal control, animal shelters and local emergency management offices can inform and assist with this process.



We recognize and appreciate the benefit of therapy animals and encourage regions 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  at their own locations.



Although we do not host pets in shelters, shelter staff need to be prepared to provide referral information to clients seeking temporary care for their pets while staying at a Red Cross shelter.

### **Mega Shelters**


**Mega shelters** may be opened because of fires, floods, pande  outbreaks or other disasters in  communities. ~~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 clients.

The Red Cross plays an important role in mega-shelters. It is a community and interagency effort; we do not open and operate them on our own. We support local and state governments as they plan for and operate mega-shelters.

### **Information**

Regions, relief operation  emergency management officials, and other organizations share information so that services are coordinated and delivered in an effective manner. It's important to understand the information and reporting needs of everyone and setting up an effective information collection and dissemination strategy for the community. 

### **Client assistance**



Partners assist shelter clients by helping them with their activities of daily living, registering for FEMA assistance, accessing local and/or state recovery services, identifying unmet needs and concerns, and connecting with community-based recovery services and resources. Identify all the partner resources and have agreements to trigger their support. 

See the Provide Services in Shelters Job Tool for  more  information.





### **Media**

Anyone from the Red Cross may be perceived as a Red Cross spokesperson, so media representatives may seek information from anyone wearing Red Cross identification. Every shelter worker should be familiar with Red Cross [Disaster Public Affairs guidelines](#) for working with the media. 

## 2. Opening the Shelter

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. When a disaster occurs and sheltering services are needed, choose a facility  that meets the needs of the situation. Determine sheltering needs on the basis of information from  disaster Assessment, emergency management, the region's disaster plan and other sources.

### 2.1 Shelter Facility

Under some circumstance  workers in the Logistics activity will arrange use of facilities for ~~relie~~  operations. When Logistic  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 guideline](#).  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 operation leadership to inform the public and our partners. When no previously identified shelter is available, arrange to use an

appropriate facility. Follow the guidelines for pre-identifying shelter facilities to identify a suitable location in the Shelter Facilities - Readiness Job Tool.

After you have selected a facility, before opening the shelter, conduct an opening inspection. The opening inspection identifies potential safety hazards and documents the condition of the facility. Verify that there is a completed Shelter Facility Survey and Shelter Agreement, conduct a facility inspection, and complete the Opening Inspection section of the Facility/Shelter Opening and Closing Inspection with the facility representative. See the Shelter Facilities - Operations Job Tool for more information.

The Red Cross emblem is a well-known symbol of refuge and safety. Displaying the Red Cross emblem in the shelter facility will identify it and make it easy for clients to locate. Follow the guidelines in the Shelter Facilities - Operations Job Tool for posting Red Cross identification and other signage outside and inside the shelter.

## 2.2 Staff at Opening

Use the Shelter Staffing Template to determine the numbers of workers needed to open a shelter operation. Combine some positions during the first few hours of the disaster response, until all the requested staff arrives at the shelter. 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. See the Shelter Staffing Job Tool for more information.

## 2.3 Material Resources

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. In 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.

Other organizations or government agencies may agree to provide food or supplies to support a shelter operation. The shelter manager records it in the opening inventory. The shelter manager is responsible for ensuring that supplies and equipment are checked, inventoried carefully, and staged appropriately at the shelter.

The shelter manager works with the Disaster Services Technology agency to set up Internet access and communications between the shelter and the operation headquarters.

# 3. Organizing the shelter

## 3.1 Designated Areas

The shelter manager is responsible for allocating shelter spaces within the identified facility. Directing and supervising shelter set up can be delegated while the shelter manager completes the opening inspection.

The Shelter Agreement may hold the Red Cross responsible for cleaning, removing trash and providing other services and utilities for the building. The shelter manager should review the agreement with the facility owner and be aware of all the responsibilities.

The shelter manager or delegate designates and sets up the areas to provide room for shelter staff to work and for storage. 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. Areas for providing services to clients include reception and registration, information, feeding, dormitory, individual client services,

temporary respite care for children, a play area for children, breastfeeding area, quiet area, and a recreation area for teens and adults.

### **Reception and Registration**

The Reception and Registration area is where clients are received as they enter the shelter and listed through the registration process. Registration is the process of collecting information from clients arriving at the shelter and referring them for assistance with their disaster-caused needs.

### **Information**

The information area needs to be as close to the entrance as possible so clients who only need information or referrals can get them without going through registration. Establish and maintain good communication in the shelter and develop pathways for relevant, accurate and timely information.

### **Feeding**

Feeding areas are used to provide meals, snacks and beverages to clients. In some cases, disaster relief workers such as emergency workers, cleanup crews and partner agencies that are working with us to provide assistance to disaster-affected clients may also receive meals at the shelter. Set up appropriate areas for receiving, storing, preparing and serving snacks and meals. Areas to plan for include snack and beverage area, receiving area, storage area, food preparation area, serving area, dining area, and garbage disposal area. The shelter manager identifies resources by working closely with partners to find the best available means of providing safe and sanitary food service to the clients.

### **Dormitory area**

A shelter dormitory is an area used for resting, reading or 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. The shelter manager, who may assign a dormitory lead, is responsible for making sure that the dormitory is set up, monitored and maintained. The shelter manager is responsible for arranging shelter accommodations to meet the diverse needs of our clients and for ensuring that all shelter workers provide assistance that is impartial, nondiscriminatory and that respects the diversity of our clients.

### **Individual Client Services**


Individual Client Services includes 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 workers may all be present at the shelter to assist shelter clients. Provide quality service to our clients by supporting and coordinating with the service delivery activities of Individual Client Services.

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 identify client needs and make appropriate referrals to Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Client Caseworkers.

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.

## **3.2 Staff Requirements**

A staffing plan helps the shelter manager anticipate the number of Red Cross workers that will be necessary to ensure that clients receive quality service at the shelter. Collect and assess information to determine shelter staffing needs. On smaller, region-led relief operations, this information can be

obtained directly from Disaster Assessment and/or the Government Relations activity. On large relief operations, request this information from operation headquarters. 

Use the Shelter Staffing Template to determine the numbers of staff needed to staff a shelter operation. Create a table of organization based on the information you have collected.

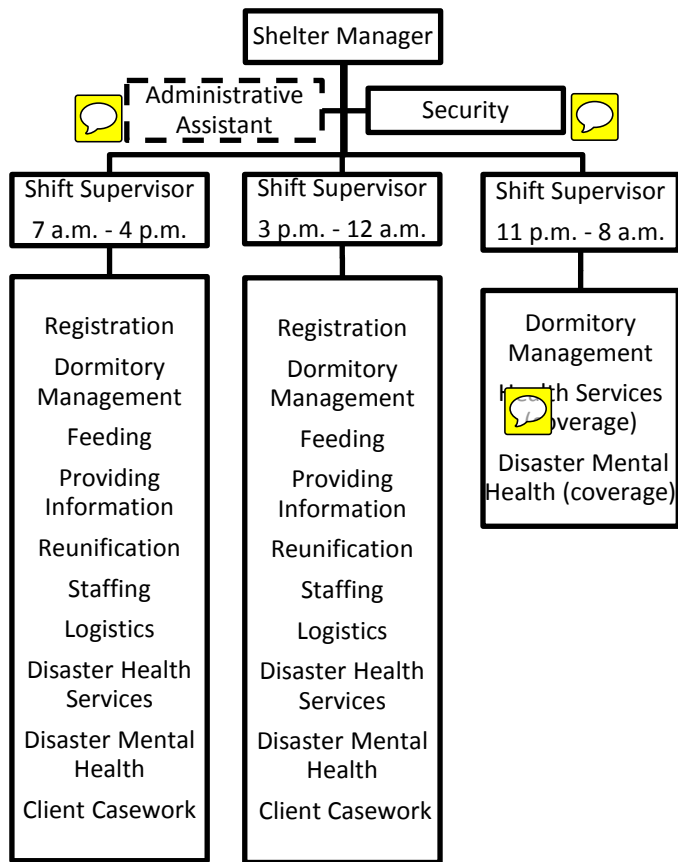



Diagram 3: Sample sheltering table of organization

The shelter manager ensures 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, assign them to positions on the shelter team and conduct a job induction.

See the Shelter Staffing Job Tool for more information.

### 3.3 Materials Requirements

Record the supplies and equipment already available at the shelter. This will help determine what additional materials will be needed and ensure an accurate record of items used at the shelter. 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 how long they will be needed.

Assess supply and equipment needs. In many cases, supply and equipment needs for relief operations will be made through the Logistics Supply activity at operations headquarters through the region for region-managed operations. 

If it becomes necessary to order supplies directly from the community, the shelter manager coordinates with Logistics Supply at operations headquarters or the regional region-managed operations. Logistics Supply, or the region, 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, it may be necessary to purchase shelter supplies immediately. Follow the guidance for using a Mass Care Procurement Card (MCPC). See the Shelter Facilities - Operations Job Tool for detailed steps.

### 3.4 Safety

The safety and security of shelter clients and staff is a top priority for all shelter workers. The shelter manager is responsible for overseeing the safety and security of the shelter and for promoting a positive shelter environment. 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. If the circumstances require evacuation of a shelter to protect clients' safety during an emergency, be prepared and respond immediately. Engage with Life Safety and Asset Protection workers, if available.

## 4. Operating the Shelter

While the shelter is open and operational, 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. 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. Routine inspections of the shelter facility are necessary to identify and address any conditions that pose a hazard to clients and workers or to the facility.

### 4.1 Staff Requirements

During ongoing shelter operations, the shelter manager creates a work schedule for shelter staff, schedule shifts, maintain staffing records, conduct staff meetings, and respond to staff issues and concerns. Keep track of staff assigned to the shelter for safety reasons and to ensure that workers 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. Schedule about 30 minutes of overlap time as the shift changes, and plan shift transition briefings to facilitate this process.

Schedule staff meetings at regular intervals throughout the operation and whenever important information needs to be communicated to the workers.

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.

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.

Event-based 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, or with financial instruments (cash, checks, CACs, etc.)

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.



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. Workers in Client Casework, Community Partnerships, ~~Life Safety and Access Protection~~ Disaster Services Technology and many others play a role in supporting shelter services. A shelter worker needs to be familiar with all of the activities on the operation to be able to call on them appropriately and meet the client's needs.

#### 4.2 Material Requirements

When Red Cross supplies and equipment arrive at the shelter, all assigned workers are responsible for careful recordkeeping to make sure they are accurately accounted for and used efficiently and appropriately. Verify orders before items are released for use. Keeping accurate records and regular reporting to relief operation management helps 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.~~

#### 4.3 Communication

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 maintaining a positive environment for clients and staff.

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.

Creating and maintaining a positive shelter environment begins with respect. A shelter must have guidelines to protect the safety and well-being of everyone. Routines help to structure the daily life of the shelter and provide stability during stressful times.


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.

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. 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.

Shelter managers and supervisors are responsible for maintaining a positive working relationship with workers and clients by projecting a constructive attitude, providing a compassionate presence and offering frequent meetings and other opportunities for good communication.

Communicating accurate information is essential for effective relief operations. Shelter staff need to keep accurate records, report metrics and information regularly to relief operation management and maintain consistent communications, and 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.

Accommodate different language and communication needs at the shelter and make information accessible to everyone. Create bulletin boards to post news releases, shelter rules and routines, messages from friends and family, lists of available resources and other helpful information. Always

verify information regarding the disaster and/or services available to the clients by checking with the shelter manager or operation headquarters before disseminating it. 

In cases where the disaster has interfered with normal telephone and Internet communication, 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.


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


## 4.4 Services

### **Shelter Registration**

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 shelter residents. Registration requires the efforts of reception, registration, Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health workers. 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 helps shelter workers keep track of the number of shelter residents and collect other information about the disaster, which helps the Red Cross effectively plan the relief operation.

The Red Cross is committed to protecting the privacy and personal information of our clients. To meet that commitment, shelter staff safeguard client privacy whenever collecting, using, maintaining, storing and permitting access to client information. In general, Red Cross staff 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, shelter workers collect only the information necessary to complete ordinary records. Shelter workers may disclose personal information about shelter residents only under exceptional circumstances and then only to the extent necessary. 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. Shelter managers, working closely with the Shelter Operations Manager at the operation headquarters and cooperating with law enforcement officials, are responsible for implementing Red Cross guidance regarding sex offenders. 

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. 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. 

### **Feeding**

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. The shelter manager is responsible for working closely with the Mass Care team at operation headquarters and the feeding lead at the shelter to plan, organize and provide food service at the shelter. Based on the needs of the shelter and factors such as the likely duration of sheltering, the number of shelter clients, and the cultural and dietary needs of the shelter population, the shelter manager and feeding lead coordinate with the

Shelter Operations Manager at relief operation headquarters to determine the best process for providing food for shelter residents and staff.

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. 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.

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.

### ***Disaster Health and Mental Health***

In Red Cross shelters, the Disaster Health Services activity assists with 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. When the Red Cross opens shelters, Disaster Mental Health workers provide mental health support to clients 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. 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.

### ***Client Casework and Recovery***

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. Shelter workers can provide better service to clients by identifying disaster-caused emergency and recovery needs and referring clients to the Client Casework activity.

### ***Distribution of Relief Supplies***

Distribution of relief supplies 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 clients and by referring clients to bulk distribution points. 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 clients' needs for personal items and supplies to meet emergency needs and aid recovery.

### ***Family Reunification***

Reunification services focus on helping 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 access to the Safe and Well Linking resources.

### ***Recreational Activities***

Activities for adults and children need to be organized at shelters. All shelter workers should follow Red Cross guidance as described in [section 4.5: Special Situations in Shelters](#) of this document when working with unaccompanied minors in shelters. Recreational activities help adults and children to cope with the disruption of shelter life and the stress of the disaster.

### ***Temporary Respite Care for 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.



## **Service Animals**

The Red Cross welcomes service animals in shelters, and all shelter workers should follow the guidance as described in [section 4.5: Special Situations in Shelters](#) of this document. Shelter workers should only ask the clients if the animal has been trained to provide a service and what services the animal provides. Workers do not ask a client for a license, certification, identification tag, medical certificate or any other type of documentation for a service animal. Shelter workers refer any other 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 with the client. Provide information on nearby pet sheltering. For the purpose of Red Cross shelters, animals that provide **therapy, emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship are not considered service animals** and fall under pet sheltering services.

## **Working with Partners and Media**

When a disaster affects a community, the Red Cross and its partners share the responsibility of meeting mutual constituents' needs. By working together to help clients, we can more effectively serve them and the community as a whole. Shelter workers 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.

The shelter manager works closely with the Shelter Operations 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 ensures that all shelter workers understand Red Cross guidelines for partners in shelters and works to facilitate client access to the resources that partners offer.

It is always important that regions 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. To ensure appropriate contact and messaging with the media, follow the guidelines provided by [Disaster Public Affairs](#) located on The Exchange.

## *4.5 Special Situations in Shelters*

### **Disclosing Client Information**

The shelter manager supervises shelter workers to ensure that they follow Red Cross privacy policies and uphold our commitment to safeguard client privacy and personal information. All shelter workers should follow the guidance provided in the [Red Cross policy on protecting personal information](#). All shelter client records are stored in a secure area at the shelter. Upon closing the shelter, client records are secured and forwarded to the region or operation headquarters according to instructions provided by the Shelter Operations Manager at operation headquarters.

**Shelter staff disclose** personal information about shelter clients only under exceptional circumstances and then only to the extent necessary. **All requests for information disclosure are escalated to the shelter manager for resolution.**

To resolve requests for client information:

- 1) Obtain client consent.
- 2) Understand exceptional circumstances.
- 3) Disclose client information based upon exceptional circumstances.
- 4) Respond to a subpoena.

Follow these steps to resolve requests for client information:

1) Obtain 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 **Sheltering - 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.

2) Understand exceptional circumstances.

- 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.

3) Disclose client information based upon exceptional circumstances.

- The only exception to the following guidelines 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 operation headquarters as soon as possible.
- 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.
- Forward the request through the Shelter Operations Manager at operation headquarters to operation leadership.
- If you are directed to disclose client information by 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.
- Create a written record of the disclosure, using the **Sheltering - Disclosure Tracking Log**, including the following:
  - Date of disclosure;
  - Name of the individual and entity that received the information and their address;
  - A brief description of the information disclosed;
  - A brief statement of the purpose of the disclosure, and/or;
  - A copy of the written request for disclosure, and/or;
  - A copy of the written authorization provided by the individual who received the disclosure.

- Record multiple disclosures to the same party for a single purpose in a summary entry.
- Store the **Sheltering - Disclosure Tracking Log** with the Shelter Manager's confidential **Sheltering - Log** in a secure location, and forward it to the Shelter Operations Manager for distribution to the region upon closing the shelter.
- NOTE: It is not necessary to document disclosures of a client's information to the client or pursuant to the client's authorization.

#### 4) Respond to a subpoena.

- If a subpoena or court orders seeking information about a shelter client arrives at the shelter:
  - Accept the subpoena or court order.
  - 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.
  - Immediately notify the Shelter Operations Manager. He or she will contact the operation director.
  - Keep information about subpoenas or court orders confidential.
    - Do not discuss them with shelter staff, clients or the media.



### ***Unaccompanied Minors***

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.

If unaccompanied minors arrive at the shelter:

- 1) Ensure the safety of unaccompanied minors.
- 2) Meet immediate or urgent medical needs.
- 3) Transfer custody.
- 4) Document unaccompanied minor information.

Follow these steps if unaccompanied minors arrive at the shelter:

- 1) Ensure the safety of unaccompanied minors.
  - Make immediate and ongoing efforts to reach the minor's parent or guardian.
  - Contact local law enforcement or the appropriate authority in your state, if unable to reach a legal guardian.
  - Arrange for supervision of the minor by:
    - Assigning responsibility for the minor to a licensed worker from Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health, when possible;
    - Assigning responsibility for the minor to a registered Red Cross worker when a licensed worker is not available;
    - Assigning at least two workers at a time to supervise **an unaccompanied minor**, when possible.
    - 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.


- 2) Meet immediate or urgent medical needs.
  - When an unaccompanied minor arrives at a shelter with health needs that require immediate and urgent medical care or assessment, ensure that Health Services workers refer the minor to the appropriate available medical facilities.
    - Disaster Health Services and/or Disaster Mental Health workers carefully follow their guidance regarding urgent referrals to a higher level of care to assist in tracking the minor.
  - 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.
  - Notify appropriate law enforcement authorities of any change in the minor's condition and of any transfers of responsibility.
    - Use the **Sheltering - Unaccompanied Minors Report Form** to record this activity.
- 3) Transfer custody.
  - To parent or guardian
    - Ask the guardian or parent for government-issued identification (such as a driver's license).
    - Use the **Sheltering - Unaccompanied Minors Report Form** to record the following information before the minor leaves the shelter:
      - The guardian or parent's name, address, phone number or other contact information;
      - Personal information (birth date, etc.) from the government identification.
  - To law enforcement or other government agency
    - Use the **Sheltering - Unaccompanied Minors Report Form** to record the following information before the minor leaves the shelter:
      - Identification information from the official taking custody of the minor;
      - Document the transfer details of the minor from the shelter to local law enforcement.
- 4) Document unaccompanied minor information.
  - Use the **Sheltering - Unaccompanied Minors Report Form** to record information for each case of an unaccompanied minor.
    - If the form is unavailable, record the following information in another format:
      - Minor's name and address, if possible to ascertain;
      - Any information to identify the parents or guardians;
      - Information about the location where minor was found or was separated from the parent or guardian;
      - 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;
      - Detailed information on transfer of minor into the custody of law enforcement authorities when that transfer takes place.
  - File the completed **Sheltering - Unaccompanied Minors 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 Shelter Operations Manager for appropriate disposition.

### ***Registered Sex Offenders***




Several interests must be balanced when registered sex offenders arrive at a shelter—the Red Cross nondiscriminatory humanitarian mission, the need to safeguard the public in shelters, and the unique

legal status of sex offenders. Registration workers refer all clients who answer yes to the **Sheltering - Registration Form** question “Are you required by law to register with any state or local government agency for any reason?” to the shelter manager.

If registered sex offenders arrive at the shelter:

- 1) Respond to a registered sex offender arriving at the shelter.
- 2) Comply with individual state laws relating to registered sex offenders in shelters. 
- 3) Respond to a request from law enforcement for access to Red Cross documents to determine whether registered sex offenders are present in the shelter.

Follow these steps if registered sex offenders arrive at the shelter:

- 1) Respond to a registered sex offender arriving at the shelter. 
  - Have a conversation with the incoming shelter client 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, do not disclose personal information, including someone’s status as a registered sex offender, to anyone who does not have a business reason to know.
  - 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:
    - If 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. 
    - If 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.
    - If the individual states any other reason for registration, address the situation on a case-by-case basis.
  - Record the individual’s full name and current address in a confidential location accessible only to the shelter manager.
  - Advise the client that Red Cross requires notification of local law enforcement in such situations.
  - If the individual chooses to remain at the shelter, immediately inform shelter security personnel (if present), local law enforcement, and the Shelter Operations Manager at 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.
  - 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.
  - 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 clients, and request guidance from law enforcement on how to ensure safety at the shelter.
  - 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.
  - Document all incidents related to registered sex offenders and all interactions with law enforcement in the Shelter Manager’s confidential **Sheltering – Log**.
- 2) Comply with individual state laws relating to registered sex offenders in shelters.
  - In some jurisdictions, local laws impose additional requirements regarding registered sex offenders in shelters.
  - Know and comply with the local laws where you are sheltering.
    - For example, 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 client names.

- To comply with Louisiana state law, follow these steps in addition to the steps above:
  - If the shelter has a computer and Internet access, check the name of each shelter registrant against the Louisiana State Police Sex Offender and Child Predator Internet Registry (stated as “Registry” below).
  - 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 Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) does not deliver the Registry within eight hours of the shelter’s opening, advise the local Emergency Operations Center.
- If a shelter client’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 client 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.
- 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.
- If state or local government has established a shelter for registered sex offenders, encourage the individual to go to that shelter if possible.
- 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.

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

- If 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 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.
- If 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, check the list against Red Cross shelter registration information.
- If law enforcement cannot provide a list, offer to make Red Cross shelter registration records available for review (but not copying) at the shelter.
- If law enforcement officials insist on receiving copies of Red Cross lists or records, contact the Shelter Operations Manager.
- If law enforcement determines a registered sex offender is present in the shelter, follow steps above under “[Respond to a registered sex offender arriving at the shelter.](#)”
- If the shelter receives a subpoena or court order, follow the steps in the [Disclosing Client Information](#) section above under “Respond to a subpoena.”

## ***Clients with Animals***

The Red Cross allows only service animals in our shelters.

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.

When clients arrive at the shelter with animals:

- 1) Understand definitions.
- 2) Ensure acceptance of service animals into the shelter.
- 3) Plan ahead for the care of animals following a disaster.

Follow these steps when clients arrive at the shelter with animals:

- 1) Understand definitions.
  - Service Animal
    - 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.
  - Therapy or Emotional Support Animal
    - **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.**
    - **Therapy or Emotional Support 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.
  - All other animals
    - All other animals are not allowed in Red Cross service delivery sites for the following reasons:
      - Health and safety concerns
      - Sanitation
      - Allergies
- 2) Ensure acceptance of service animals into the shelter
  - The Red Cross welcomes service animals in shelters.
  - When it is not apparent that an animal is a service animal, shelter workers may ask only two questions to help determine whether an animal is a service animal:
    - Do you need this animal because of a disability?
    - What work or tasks has the animal been trained to perform?
  - Do not require a license, certification, identification tag, medical certificate or any other type of documentation for a service animal.
  - If the animal has not been trained to perform work or tasks, the animal is not allowed in the shelter.
  - 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).
- Be prepared to provide referral information to clients seeking temporary care for their pets while staying at a Red Cross shelter.
- If another client has allergies to the service animals within the shelter:
  - Coordinate with Disaster Health Services to determine the best housing solution for the individual with allergies.
    - If possible, relocate the allergic client to another area in the shelter.
    - If the allergy is too severe to remain in the same shelter, relocate the client with allergies to an alternative shelter option.

### 3) Plan ahead for the care of animals following a disaster.

- Include pet shelters in the regional planning process before disasters occur.
  - Pre-identify community partners that can provide co-located pet shelters.
  - 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.
  - Identify and incorporate local laws pertaining to animals in shelters.
- Pre-identify community partners or vendors that can assist in providing supplies for service animals within the Red Cross shelter, such as dishes for food and water, arrangements for the hygienic disposal of waste and, if requested, portable kennels for containment.
- Red Cross recognizes and appreciates the benefit of therapy animals and encourages regions 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.
- Consider working with partners already engaged in pet sheltering plans or local veterinarians, animal hospitals and animal response teams.
  - 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).

### ***Pre-Disaster Homeless***

Shelter clients 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.

If pre-disaster homeless individuals arrive at the shelter:

- 1) Respond to requests for shelter.
- 2) Facilitate post-shelter placement of pre-disaster homeless individuals.



Follow these steps if pre-disaster homeless individuals arrive at the shelter:

- 1) Respond to requests for shelter.
  - When registration workers register clients who were homeless before the disaster, ensure they:
    - Complete the Shelter Registration Form with as much information as possible.
    - Accept the client into the shelter and provide them with the same services as any other client.
- 2) Facilitate post-shelter placement.
  - Notify the Shelter Operations Manager at operation headquarters 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.

### ***Pandemic Outbreak***

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

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

- 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.

### ***4.6 Continual Needs Assessment***

In addition to the sheltering services described above, clients may have additional needs, such as transportation, Internet access, laundry services or access to phones. These needs are more common in longer-term shelters. Community Partnerships, Government Operations or region 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. Shelter workers identify shelter residents' needs as they arise. Some possible needs and ways of addressing them are described below.

- 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 assess available resources in the shelter for keeping clients entertained and occupied and offer recreational opportunities.
- Communication within the shelter community is essential to the smooth operation of the shelter and providing quality assistance to clients. The shelter manager establishes and maintains good communication in the shelter. If possible, the shelter manager may assign a shelter worker to develop pathways for relevant, accurate and timely information.
- Regularly scheduled shelter meetings give residents and staff an opportunity to discuss shelter issues, needs and disaster information.

The Red Cross values and promotes diversity and inclusiveness among its volunteers and employees. Every shelter worker needs to be sensitive to all clients, and if needed, reach out to 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.




Recognizing the obligation to ensure, to the highest degree possible, that all individuals have access to the goods and services provided by Disaster Cycle Services is the role of every shelter worker.

## 5. Closing the shelter




When plans for closing the shelter are underway, the shelter manager begins planning for closing the various designated areas and takes care of the staff and materials.

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

### 5.1 Shelter Facility Return

During the closing phase, as shelter residents are returning home or moving on to alternate housing arrangements, shelter workers prepare the facility to return to the facility owner. 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. Conduct a final  walkthrough and return the facility to the owner or representative.

### 5.2 Staff Out-Processed

When the shelter closes, all workers are either transferred to other parts of the relief operation or released and properly out-processed. The shelter manager consults  the Shelter Operations Manager about whether workers may be transferred or released.  The leads in each activity area prepare reports on the activity in their area, secure records, and  follow disposition requirements. The shelter manager and supervisors assist staff with out-processing and personally thank each shelter team member. Shelter workers who supervise other workers 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 operation headquarters for technical input. Forward staffing records to appropriate locations.

### 5.3 Return Unused Supplies


As the shelter population decreases, shelter staff begin developing plans to consolidate and return items that are no longer needed. To return equipment and excess supplies - prepare excess supplies and equipment for disposition, complete a closing inventory of shelter supplies and equipment and return excess supplies and equipment as per the instructions of the shelter manager.

See Shelter Supplies and Equipment Job Tool for detailed steps.


## 6. After-Action Review

Process documents define the way we provide service to our clients and provide the baseline for evaluation and continuous improvement. Compilation of information from each disaster operation can be used to more effectively plan for and respond to future sheltering operations and enable the cycle of Continuous Improvement.

## 1 *Conduct After Action Review*

Conduct After-Action Reviews within four weeks of sheltering activity. 

Include all participants at operation headquarters, districts and shelter facilities as applicable and invite other staff as needed.

Capture event information  successes, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations for future improvement.

Share success stories with the entire Disaster Cycle Services team.

## *6.2 Continuous Improvement*

### **Case Studies**

Collect key observations from the disaster operations of each disaster response and compile them as case studies; to include personal interviews, narratives, After-Action Reports, and evaluations. Conduct interviews with disaster relief staff that served in on-site leadership roles or were part of the support structure. Group the key observations from each case study into several themes, categories and dominant theme. These will act as references to improve the doctrine updates and disaster response in the future.

### **Doctrine Updates**

Collate any recommendations to process and policy changes. Also list anything that did not work and requires systemic changes in the process. Incorporate all these into the doctrine updates and use the stage gate process to conduct reviews and re-publish updated versions.

# References

## Policies

[American Red Cross Disaster Policy, May 2010](#)

[Protecting Personal Information Policy](#)

## Frameworks

[Respond Program Essentials](#) (May 2015)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/core-and-pillar-processes/respond/RespondProgramEssentials.pdf](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/core-and-pillar-processes/respond/RespondProgramEssentials.pdf)

[Respond Framework](#)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/core-and-pillar-processes/respond/RespondFramework.pdf](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/core-and-pillar-processes/respond/RespondFramework.pdf)

## Standards and Procedures

[Regional Movement of Materials Standards and Procedures](#)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/core-and-pillar-processes/deploy-material-resources-and-technology/RegionalMovementofMaterialsStandardsandProcedures.pdf](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/core-and-pillar-processes/deploy-material-resources-and-technology/RegionalMovementofMaterialsStandardsandProcedures.pdf)

[Disaster Workforce Management Handbook](#)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-capabilities/disaster\\_operationshumanresources/DisasterWorkforceManagementHandbook.pdf](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-capabilities/disaster_operationshumanresources/DisasterWorkforceManagementHandbook.pdf)

[Operations Planning: Standards and Procedures](#)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-management/disaster-cycle-service-operations/OperationsPlanningStandardsandProcedures.pdf](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-management/disaster-cycle-service-operations/OperationsPlanningStandardsandProcedures.pdf)

Feeding Standards and Procedures (TBD)

Bulk/D Relief supplies Standards and Procedures (TBD)

Health Services Handbook (August 2013)

Disaster Mental Health Handbook (October 2012)

Staff Wellness Standards and Procedures (December 2014)

CAS 2.0 Standards and Procedures (February 2015)

Financial Controls for Direct Client Assistance Standards and Procedures (April 2015)

Mission Card Standards and Procedures (March 2015)

## Job Tools

Shelter Facilities - Readiness Job Tool  
Shelter Supplies and Equipment Job Tool  
Shelter Staffing Job Tool  
Provide Services Job Tool  
Shelter Facilities - Operational Job Tool  
Special Situations in Shelters Job Tool

## Other

### [Disaster Cycle Services Principles](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/DisasterCycleServicesPrinciples.pdf)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/DisasterCycleServicesPrinciples.pdf](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/DisasterCycleServicesPrinciples.pdf)

### [DCS Job Tools and Forms Index](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/redcross/categories/our_services/disaster-cycle-services/dcs-forms-index.html) - All forms for general use by disaster workforce

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/redcross/categories/our\\_services/disaster-cycle-services/dcs-forms-index.html](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/redcross/categories/our_services/disaster-cycle-services/dcs-forms-index.html)

### [Sheltering Toolkit](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/redcross/categories/our_services/disaster-cycle-services/dcs-capabilities/mass_care/sheltering/sheltering-toolkit.html)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/redcross/categories/our\\_services/disaster-cycle-services/dcs-capabilities/mass\\_care/sheltering/sheltering-toolkit.html](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/redcross/categories/our_services/disaster-cycle-services/dcs-capabilities/mass_care/sheltering/sheltering-toolkit.html)

### [Service Delivery Plan Template](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-capabilities/operations_management/ServiceDeliveryPlanTemplate.xlsx)

[https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our\\_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-capabilities/operations\\_management/ServiceDeliveryPlanTemplate.xlsx](https://intranet.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/documents/our_services/DisasterCycleServices/dcs-capabilities/operations_management/ServiceDeliveryPlanTemplate.xlsx)

