Implementing Effective Emergency Shelter: A Checklist

This checklist can help your community maximize the impact of its emergency shelter capacity and strengthen its crisis response system. For more information on these strategies, see Key Considerations for Implementing Emergency Shelter Within and Effective Crisis Response System.

Promote Dignity and Respect

☐ Does your emergency shelter consistently implement practices to meet people where they are and provide person-centered care that focuses on personal strengths?

☐ Do your policies or value statements convey clear expectations that shelter guests will be treated with dignity and respect, and does the shelter monitor adherence to these expectations?

☐ Are expectations of shelter guests clearly communicated and easily accessible for review by guests?

☐ Do you have specific practices that help ensure that the shelter exhibits cultural competency and provides appropriate protections for shelter seekers across demographic differences?

☐ Does the shelter set only minimal and reasonable requirements for shelter guests, and does the shelter enforce these requirements in a fair and transparent way?

☐ Does the shelter involve shelter guests in governance and operations?

Divert People from the Homelessness Service System When Possible

☐ Does your community’s process for accessing shelter assess options for diverting from shelter?

☐ Does your community’s diversion approach include, when needed, financial assistance, mediation, housing location, legal assistance, or other supports?

☐ Do mainstream programs play a role in supporting shelter seekers and diversion efforts?
Adopt a Housing First Approach and Create Low-Barrier Access to Emergency Shelter

☐ Does your emergency shelter have minimal expectations or requirements of people seeking shelter?

☐ Does your emergency shelter focus on addressing disruptive or dangerous behaviors rather than compliance to rules or case plans?

☐ Does your shelter welcome self-defined family and kinship groups to seek shelter together?

☐ Can your emergency shelter identify financial resources that can support the adoption of low-barrier policies and practices and support extended or flexible hours and adapted service-delivery models?

☐ Does your shelter accommodate pets and belongings?

☐ Do your shelter intake process and housing navigation services coordinate closely with community-based outreach services and coordinated entry?

☐ Does your shelter create flexible and predictable access for people seeking shelter?

Use Emergency Shelter Stays as a Platform for Housing Access

☐ Does your emergency shelter provide immediate assistance and link guests with housing options?

☐ Does your emergency shelter use data routinely to detect trends, identify frequent users, and monitor housing success and other performance measures?

☐ Does your emergency shelter provide population-specific supports, as appropriate, and does it promote safety and reduce risk for all shelter guests?

☐ Does your emergency shelter coordinate with the broader homelessness service and housing systems in system-level planning?

☐ Does your emergency shelter assess and address the safety risks for people fleeing domestic violence?