



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?