



Preparedness Checklist:

Evacuation and Transportation for People Experiencing Homelessness

Effective evacuation plans address common barriers faced by people experiencing homelessness in a typical evacuation. This requires additional partners and new approaches. One strategy is to designate an Evacuation Lead, a person (or agency) who will coordinate with the emergency planners and service providers to ensure a comprehensive evacuation. (This lead may be the same person or agency coordinating warnings and notifications and/or shelter and services.) The Evacuation Lead can use this checklist to increase the coverage of evacuation plans for everyone in your community, including the vulnerable and hard to reach.¹ The Lead will also follow up during the disaster ensure that shelter and service providers are able to carry through with plans. See the [Disaster Checklist for Evacuation and Transportation](#).

Know where to find people experiencing homelessness. This includes, but is not limited to, shelters, encampments, cars, and motels. Consider areas where people experiencing homelessness congregate during the day such as libraries, day shelters, day labor sites, and public facilities.

- Work with **local service providers** to identify and document the places where people experiencing homelessness can be reached.
- Review community **data on homelessness**. (See the [Planning Guide](#)). When working with local service providers, ask them for detailed demographics on their client base to obtain a deeper knowledge of the local homeless population.
- Create a **map or list** of critical locations that must be targeted in outreach. A GIS map showing known homeless programs and encampments can provide a visual representation of where outreach teams and messaging efforts should concentrate.
- Designate a responsible entity** for tracking, updating, and disseminating this information to all partners involved in executing the evacuation plan.

¹ This checklist supports Emergency Service Function (ESF) #1 (Transportation).



Work with your service provider network to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to ensure the accessibility of the evacuation effort for people experiencing homelessness.

- Designate a **liaison at each local service provider** to activate disaster response protocols and coordinate each local service provider's role in the evacuation.
- Develop an **evacuation communication plan** to facilitate information sharing with local service providers about evacuation progress before, during, and after the disaster. This plan should address:
 - How evacuation messages will be sent to service providers.
 - How service providers can share information related to evacuation progress.
 - How service disruptions (such as bus breakdowns or route obstructions) will be communicated and addressed, as well as the roles and responsibilities for communication.
 - What information data providers and the jurisdiction will be collecting during the evacuation to establish where individuals are sheltered and confirm that the evacuation is going as planned.
 - How providers and the jurisdiction will be sharing and reporting data to enhance the ability of response and recovery personnel to activate the correct resources to support the community.
 - This should be planned alongside the outreach communication plan, so the two elements of the outreach and evacuation effort are coordinated.
 - Discuss data sharing with local partners: CoCs, emergency managers, and Red Cross. During normal operations determine what data will and won't be shared. Execute formal agreements.
- Contact existing emergency shelters and homeless service organizations to ensure that they have **evacuation plans** in place, or help them establish one.
 - Confirm they have transportation available for all project participants.
 - If a shelter does not have sufficient transportation available, can the jurisdiction leverage mass transportation, taxi, ridesharing (e.g., Uber), or another method of transportation in a cost effective manner?
 - Coordinate with partners (e.g., local government agencies, the CoC, homeless service providers) on transportation resource planning to ensure that any existing plans are not using the same resources – rather, they should complement each other if possible – and that everyone knows the plan for evacuating shelters.
 - Designate shelters as pickup points for the evacuation, if appropriate.
- Establish **assembly points** for unsheltered homeless people that are familiar and accessible.
 - Make sure these are communicated to target populations (See [Warnings and Notification checklist](#)).
 - Establish alternatives to assembly points for people who cannot get to those locations or if those locations are affected by the disaster.
 - Provide adequate transportation to and from the assembly points.



- Ensure that transportation for the evacuation will be **accessible** to people experiencing homelessness.
 - Drivers should be trained to accept all people, including those with different types of disabilities, and to follow specific procedures if an individual presents a danger to others and cannot be accommodated. Provide this training, or help coordinate to make sure it happens.
 - Outreach workers can be placed at pickup points and on evacuation vehicles to provide expertise and professional support to drivers.
 - Make sure transportation methods take into account that the evacuation involves people, potentially pets, and often times a large amount of belongings. This may limit transportation options.
 - Execute MOUs with local transportation entities, including public transportation, bus and taxi companies, school buses, and ride services.
- Confirm that **destinations**, such as disaster shelters, hotels, and public facilities, are prepared to receive people experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations. Provide training to these groups if needed. Consider placing project staff at hotels during arrival to allay concerns of survivors and property managers (See the [Shelter and Services Checklist](#)).
- It is important to inform people being evacuated that they will not be arrested for seeking help. However, only law enforcement can ensure this. Therefore, in planning, local emergency managers, homeless service providers, and law enforcement should engage in discussions to **establish a policy for how misdemeanor and felony warrants will be managed**. Particularly with respect to immigration issues, they should consider the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (See [HUD guidance](#)).
- Establish **alternative evacuation arrangements** for those who can use them. Some people experiencing homelessness have cars but may lack a place to go or money for fuel. Work with providers to:
 - Provide funds or vouchers for fuel, and a system for people to obtain these (and to determine who can receive the funds/vouchers). Make sure to communicate how and where eligible people can access the funds/vouchers when a disaster strikes.
 - Provide directions to disaster shelters.
 - Provide transportation vouchers to people who have a place to stay but have no means to get there.
- Coordinate with [family reunification systems](#) to **document the destination of evacuees to enable family and friends to determine status**, and train providers on this system. Use this system to communicate with evacuees post disaster to inform them that it is safe to come home.
- Partner with local animal rescue groups to help homeless individuals and others with pets ensure their pets' safety so they may be evacuated. Coordinate how the actual evacuation will occur and how pets will be returned afterwards. You might also want to talk with people experiencing homelessness who have pets to prepare them for the possibility that they might have to be separated from their pet if a disaster occurs.
- Consider creating temporary storage arrangements for people to store critical items (sleeping bags, clothing, documents), to reduce the loss of property during the evacuation.