

Emerging Practices to Enhance Safety at Congregate Shelters

Part 3: Staff Training



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Introduction

Each year, thousands of adults and children turn to homeless shelters for assistance. Loss of a job, lack of available services for mental health or substance use issues, lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, and other factors leave thousands of people without access to safe, stable housing. While shelters vary in size, mission, and approach, they can be key in helping people stabilize and move toward housing. Individuals who may have current or historical behavioral health issues or trauma may find a shelter environment to be intimidating, overwhelming, and unsafe. For these individuals, living on the streets may feel like a better option than navigating the complex structure of shelter environments. For some individuals, shelters are not an option, because they feel unsafe and traumatized within them.

Creating inclusive and welcoming communities is a fundamental part of the mission of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Toward that mission, this guide provides information to enhance safety measures for shelter operators, shelter staff, and participants.

Black, Indigenous, People of Color, individuals with disabilities, individuals who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other intersectional identities are overrepresented amongst people experiencing homelessness and within our homelessness response systems. Addressing the impact of disparities amplified by other systems requires intentionally different approaches for initiatives, practices, evaluation methods, and [data collection](#) with equity. Communities engaged in meaningful partnerships and shared decision making with [individuals with lived experience in the local homeless response](#) systems design data collection processes and overall homeless response systems in ways that better meet the needs of those most impacted.

Communities employing a person-centered approach to reviewing current safety practices, protocols, and priorities will help establish a shelter environment anchored by:

- [Racial trauma and trauma informed practices](#),
- [Cultural humility](#); and
- [A persons first, data informed perspective](#).

This may increase the number of individuals experiencing homelessness who access shelter as part of ending their experience of homelessness.

Part 3 covers Staff Training. Other sections can be found on the [HUD Exchange](#). This section offers suggestions for best practice improvements that help to enhance safety for staff, volunteers, and guests. Answering the below questions may assist a project in assessing how the shelter program currently promotes safety through staff training and other policies and procedures:

- How are staff and volunteers trained to support the organizational mission and operational procedures and the guests of the program?
- How does the shelter training program incorporate practice improvements, (i.e., trauma-informed approaches, screening for victims of human trafficking or abuse, providing equal access in accordance with gender identity, and harm reduction)?

- Are there clear standards of behavior and consequences for staff, volunteers, and guests?
- What are the shelter’s policies and procedures to defuse confrontation, and to handle incidents that escalate? How do staff support each other?

Staff Training

From the very first interaction with guests, staff communicate the values and intent of a project. As the face of a project and the main contact for many guests, project staff are crucial to establishing a welcoming and respectful environment while ensuring safety in every program. Staff also can benefit from feeling safe in their work environment and supported by organizational leadership. Structured training on agency operating procedures and handling emergency situations supports a safer environment for staff, volunteers, and guests. Direct service staff should receive additional training in trauma-informed care approaches, non-violent crisis intervention techniques, interpersonal skills, cultural competency, first aid procedures including responding to overdoses, and utilizing response services.

Skilled Staffing

A welcoming, mutually respectful environment where staff communicates well with guests and is able to de-escalate conflict can further the goal of creating a safe shelter environment. To this end, many shelter administrators implement a recruiting and hiring process to ensure that they hire individuals who can support the mission and values of the organization, reflect the culture and language of the population, and are willing to develop new skills in a continuously evolving environment. To retain these staff members, administrators should pay staff sufficiently, and provide a supportive, nondiscriminatory, inclusive, and accessible work environment that minimizes the impact of secondary traumatic stress. For example, health benefits offered to staff should not have exclusions for gender-affirming care for transgender people; staff should have reasonable hours; and administrators should implement best practices to reduce bias in supervision and make it easy for staff to request and receive accommodations. An informed and competent leadership that provides on-going training opportunities for self and staff sets the tone of a project’s culture and models expectations for staff and guest interactions. Dedicated, well-trained, and properly supported staff are better able to maintain shelter safety and assist guests in obtaining permanent housing. Components that contribute to a strong program include:

- **Inclusive Environment**

Incorporate individual voices representing different cultures, experiences and perspectives into the development and maintenance of a diverse and inclusive shelter environment.

- **Fluent Language Skills**

A team that communicates in the commonly spoken language(s) of the shelter community is more effective. Train interpreters and other staff in cultural humility.

Find more information about improving Race Equity within your organization [here](#).

- **Lived Experience**

Staff with shared life experience, in this case a past experience of homelessness, can be a powerful asset for establishing rapport with guests. Staff members with lived experience may need support navigating the complexity of their own past. Early in a candidate's hiring process and shadow shifts specific supervisory support may provide value.

- **A Culture of Professional Development**

Providing program staff with the opportunity to strengthen and diversify their skills demonstrates an organizational commitment to continuous improvement. Remaining aware of new and developing practices, reading new research in relevant fields, reflecting on feedback from guests, and piloting evidence-based innovations all support an organization to deliver the best possible services.

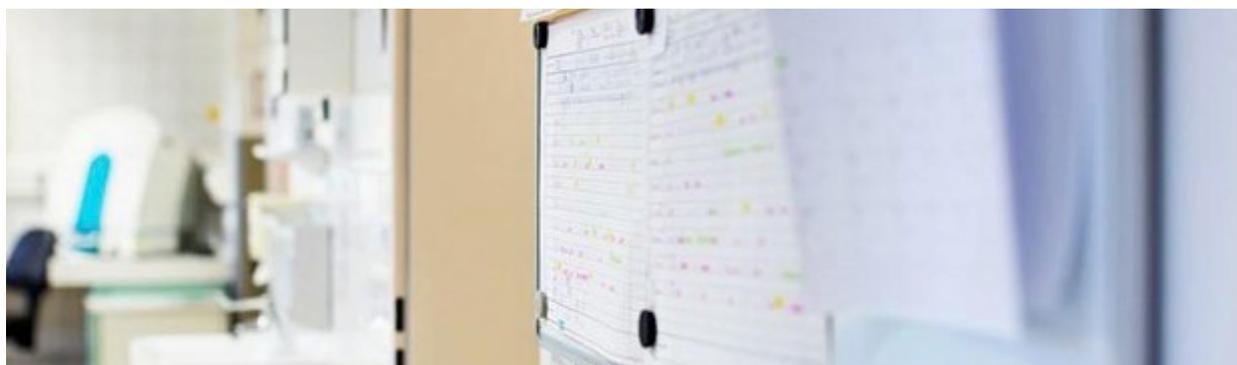
- **Competent Volunteers and Contractors**

As many organizations also rely upon a volunteer or contracted workforce that may have limited prior experience in working with people experiencing homelessness, a required shelter orientation supports a successful onboarding process. This can include an opportunity to review the shelter's organizational culture, values, and goals. For any contracted workforce, which may include security staff, understanding and adhering to expectations around low-barrier design, equal access, and fair housing is essential to supporting all program guests. Organizations are responsible for the conduct of volunteers and contractors granted access to a project site.

Consider producing a staff training manual to ensure that all staff have the same education, information and understanding of the shelter needs, policies and procedures. Find an example of a staff training manual from the City of San Diego [here](#).

Training

Thorough training supports staff to correctly utilize their skills to aid guests to obtain stable housing. Training helps prepare staff and should be ongoing. Best practices evolve regularly and new techniques help improve effectiveness. Shelters can determine which trainings to prioritize through assessing best practice, gaps in knowledge, and through guest listening sessions and town halls. Regularly scheduled staff meetings can easily accommodate short training components to ensure the focus on skill development is prioritized.



- **Emphasize cultural humility and anti-bias training.**

Train staff to understand the systemic racism and discriminatory practices that have led some communities to be over-represented within the homelessness response system. Anti-racist service delivery includes anti-racist practices and engaging in cultural humility. Reviewing and assessing shelter data with a focus on Race Equity can be particularly effective. More information can be found [here](#).

- **Routinely review training and rules.**

Establish a schedule for assessing rules and policies. Include staff and guest input about which rules are not effective or are not leading to intended outcomes. More information about assessing rules and policies can be found [here](#).

- **Schedule regular leadership trainings for managers.**

This provides an opportunity to teach mentoring, staff development, and supervision skills to managers.

- **Train staff in motivational interviewing and employing empathetic listening.**

This will help staff to be patient and non-judgmental when interacting with guests. More information from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration on motivational interviewing can be found [here](#).

- **Train staff in trauma-informed care.**

Teaching staff to practice a racial trauma- and trauma-informed approach with all guests can enhance the safety of staff and guests. A resource guide from the Administration of Children and Families to trauma-informed human services can be found [here](#). In addition, staff should be prepared to respond to guests who are victims ([Attachment 2](#)) or belong to other vulnerable populations ([Attachment 3](#)).

- **Train staff about substance use.**

Train staff on substance use, effects of substances, and how to support guests experiencing withdrawal symptoms within shelter. This should include specific training on de-escalation and on supporting people with significant mental health concerns, support for people with co-occurring mental health and substance use challenges.

- **Become aware of personal biases.**

Training on how to identify personal biases against guests and remain emotionally neutral in the moment can enable staff to better focus on guest needs. A toolkit from Learning for Justice for identifying personal biases can be found [here](#).

Programs should consider developing a structured training program that includes information on the following:

- A primer on homelessness
- Program-specific policies and procedures
- Common characteristics of their population
- Basic guiding principles for interactions with guests
- Trauma-Informed Care
- [Equal Access](#) and gender identity
- [Medical interventions \(basic first aid, CPR/epipen/narcan administration\)](#)
- Self-care
- [Race Equity](#)

Also helpful are skill-building opportunities around:

- Empathy development
- Active listening
- Conflict resolution
- Bystander intervention

In addition, consider bringing in experts on topics such as:

- Mental health
- Sexual/domestic violence
- Immigration/language barriers
- Legal support
- SNAPS
- Housing
- Disabilities
- LGBTQ individuals

Combining staff for joint trainings with nearby projects may help stretch training resources.

- **Encourage self-care for staff.**

Teaching staff self-care during their initial training will help avoid burnout. This includes supervisors who can continue to model and explicitly encourage self-care on a daily basis. A self-care starter kit from the State University of New York at Buffalo, School of Social Work for social workers can be found [here](#).

De-escalation Techniques

Deciding when to intervene or retreat and request assistance is a critical element of maintaining safety. Clear policy and training support staff to address violence, threats, bullying, and to know how to de-escalate these situations. De-escalation techniques also support guests to constructively manage conflict directly, when appropriate. Effective strategies include:¹⁻²⁻³

- **Staying calm and maintaining a safe distance** to keep the harasser from feeling threatened and further escalating the situation.
- **Naming the harassment and the harasser**, and specifically identifying what they are doing, can make the harasser stop. Often it is more effective to talk to the harasser privately in order to calmly discern the larger issue.
- **Helping the person being harassed** to leave the area can end the situation. For example, staff might say, “Can I speak to you in the other room?”
- **Staff, like any bystander, should make sure they are safe before intervening** so that they do not endanger themselves. Other staff should be notified before the intervention, and the security team or police should be called if needed.

Educating staff about standard procedures for how and when to respond to violence, harassment, threats, and intimidation is essential to ensure shelter safety.⁴ This training will make it easier for staff to make decisions in the moment. The [Mandt System](#) is an example of an approach to preventing, de-escalating, and, if necessary, intervening when the behavior of an individual poses a threat of harm to themselves or others. For additional concrete steps, Michigan State University Extension published a helpful [article](#) that provides concrete steps for intervening in a bullying incident.

Staff Safety

Shelters should maintain appropriate levels of staffing at all times. Staffing ratios will vary based on program size and resources. Having more than one staff member on site at all times is recommended for safety, as staff can themselves be the target of harassment, aggression, or violence. Control over whether or not a person sleeps in a shelter or on the streets is a potential source of significant conflict. Staff trained to withstand and redirect a certain amount of guest frustration can smooth conflicts and de-escalate situations. Remaining emotionally neutral even in the face of direct harassment and not taking

1 PRI. “5 Ways to Respond When You Witness Hate or Harassment.” <https://theworld.org/stories/2017-05-29/5-ways-respond-when-you-witness-hate-or-harassment>

2 The New York Times. “How to Help if Someone is Being Harassed.” (2016). <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/opinion/how-to-help-if-someone-is-being-harassed.html>

3 Michigan State University Extension. “Help young people move from being passive bystanders to powerful allies – part 2.” (2014).

4 S. Bayes “Bridging the Divide” 2012

the behavior personally can be challenging. The hostility staff endure can feel personal and humiliating. Projects should have methods in place to recognize and address these incidents and to debrief with staff so they can re-establish emotional equilibrium. Violence or threats against staff may occur at some point, and the project should be ready to help the staff member feel safe again.

Training staff on clear protocols strengthens consistent responses to an emergency. Developing and adjusting safety protocols and procedures as new safety concerns arise or shelter values shift ensures that staff will have clear, relevant guidance should situations arise (for example, see [Attachment 1](#)). Teach staff how and with whom to debrief, where to find support, and how to file grievances. The following protocols should be considered:

- **Well-Informed Staff**

Make sure staff are well-informed about new protocols and procedures. Ensure they understand the purpose and implementation of new rules and are comfortable applying them. Weekly staff meetings can be an effective channel for keeping staff informed.

- **Emergency Management**

Training protocols to identify and respond to life-threatening situations supports a safer shelter. Standard training on interventions like CPR, automated external defibrillation (AED), or Narcan administration can save lives. Requiring that staff carry a radio or cell phone at all times ensures that they are able to call 911 or other staff for help during an emergency. For agencies with single staffing, staff should be well-versed in safety procedures that may include the need to call 911 and contact an on-call supervisor should an issue arise. Providing staff with the clear instruction that they have the authority to call 911 can support more rapid responses to emergencies.

- **Escort System**

Implementing an escort system for staff can help them feel safer if they are wary of leaving the shelter alone. Some shelters use other staff or security personnel to accompany staff from the building to another safe place, depending on resources.

- **Safety Drills**

Scheduling regular safety drills and internal/external safety inspections will keep safety protocols up to date and help prepare staff for emergencies such as fires, evacuations, unauthorized intruders (including active shooters), and weather events.

- **Support After an Incident Occurs**

Besides debriefing with guests, a supervisor should always connect with staff members after an incident occurs. This will provide a space to listen to the experience of the staff, validate concerns, and determine what next steps, if any, are necessary and appropriate. Making sure staff know there

is a structured moment for them to express their fears and debrief after an incident will encourage staff to voice their worries rather than pretending that they are unaffected. Making debriefs mandatory removes the potential misconception that expressing vulnerability will reflect poorly on the staff member. This can encourage staff to trust their instincts and allow them to engage in self-care to help avoid burnout.

- **Staff Input**

Opportunities for staff input in rulemaking and developing safety procedures can keep them invested and affirm a sense of being valued by leadership. For example, if there is a project-wide increase in racially-motivated verbal abuse, ask staff (as well as guests) what they think is causing the shift and invite them to share potential ways to change the behavior.



Leadership Support

- **Debriefing After an Incident Occurs**

Debriefing an incident with staff gives leadership the opportunity to help staff grow in a safe environment. Leadership can respectfully help staff recognize their own biases and opportunities for growth while planning strategies to better prevent conflict in the future. For instance, if unequal consequences are given to guests and a grievance is filed, leadership could approach the conversation without judgment: “We’ve been working to be sure that suspensions are delivered evenly, so I’d like to understand your choice to suspend Jon for 30 days and only give Michael a warning. Can you tell me what happened before Jon and Michael were yelling at each other?”

Some shelters use the following questions as a guide:

- What was the situation?
- What worked?
- What didn’t work?
- Is there anything you would do differently?

- **Manager or Supervisor On Call at All Times**

A policy in which there is always a manager or supervisor on call in case of an emergency, along with a clear posted schedule, lets staff know who to call in addition to the police. Supervisors in on-call positions should be available to come to the shelter as back up or to provide advice for possible next steps.

- **Proactive Problem-Solving**

Introducing changes in policies or procedures gradually allows staff to adapt and work through concerns. This proactive problem-solving can inspire confidence, trust, and momentum with the staff and project guests.

Attachment 1

Sample Emergency Procedures and Protocols Manual

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

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IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

IMPORTANT: In an emergency, after the proper authorities have been notified, please notify the Vice President of Building Services & Safety office at: XXX-XXX-XXXX or by cell at: XXX-XXX-XXXX

SECURITY COMPANY	XXX-XXX-XXXX
BUILDING SERVICES	XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXX-XXX-XXXX
ENERGY (gas & electric)	XXX-XXX-XXXX
WATER	XXX-XXX-XXXX
FIRE SYSTEM	XXX-XXX-XXXX and follow prompts
SYSTEMS GROUP (security alarms)	XXX-XXX-XXXX
AMBULANCE (All Areas)	911
ARSON HOTLINE	XXX-XXX-XXXX
FIRE (All Areas)	911
POISON CONTROL (All Areas)	XXX-XXX-XXXX
POLICE (All Areas)	911
Non-Emergency District 1	XXX-XXX-XXXX
Non-Emergency District 2	XXX-XXX-XXXX
Non-Emergency District 3	XXX-XXX-XXXX
Non-Emergency District 4	XXX-XXX-XXXX
Non-Emergency District 5	XXX-XXX-XXXX
Non-Emergency District 6	XXX-XXX-XXXX
RESCUE/PARAMEDICS (All Areas)	911
STATE PATROL	XXX-XXX-XXXX
SUICIDE HOTLINE	XXX-XXX-XXXX
To Report a TORNADO	911

NOTE: When calling 911, you must disclose your building name and location.

ROAD CONDITIONS..... 511

BUILDING SERVICES OFFICE.....XXX-XXX-XXXX

IF no answer, dial.....XXX-XXX-XXXX

 MaintenanceXXX-XXX-XXXX

 MaintenanceXXX-XXX-XXXX

 MaintenanceXXX-XXX-XXXX

 MaintenanceXXX-XXX-XXXX

SAMPLE

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

A fire or other emergencies within our buildings can pose unique problems for building management, building occupants, and the Fire Department. Experience dictates that a safe and successful evacuation during an emergency situation is dependent upon thorough knowledge of emergency response and preplanning of evacuation procedures.

In a fire or other emergency situations, occupants may have to rely upon their own knowledge and disciplined response to practice the procedures for self-survival.

To provide safe evacuation of this building in the event of a fire, bomb threat, or other emergency, the procedures in this manual are to be followed unless otherwise directed by Police or Fire Department officials.

In addition, to ensure a safe and orderly evacuation, each emergency procedures representative should become familiar with the building emergency equipment and this emergency plan.

Each shelter employee should be knowledgeable in these procedures in case of an emergency. The following comprehensive procedures are online for any employee interested in an in-depth understanding of how to deal with an emergency.

EVACUATION ROUTES

Evacuation route maps have been posted in each work area. The following information is marked on evacuation maps:

1. Emergency exits
2. Primary and secondary evacuation routes
3. Locations of fire extinguishers
4. Fire alarm pull stations' location
5. Assembly points

Site personnel should know at least two evacuation routes.

II. PANIC CONTROL

Panic is a sudden, unreasoning terror, often spreading quickly, and often accompanied by mass flight. Panic is caused by fear, although those involved may not know what they fear. People may be tempted to join a fleeing crowd – the flight of those in motion is enough to suggest the presence of something to fear. When this stage is reached, it may become difficult to control the group. Attempting to reason with such a crowd may be futile, but it may be possible to control the group by assuming leadership, or by distracting key members of the group. In any case, corrective action should be taken before the movement stage, if possible.

A. PANIC DETERRENTS

1. Inform personnel as to what is expected of them in an emergency.
2. Exemplify strong, competent leadership.

B. ANTIDOTES FOR PANIC

1. Provide assurance.
2. Exert positive leadership.
3. Reassure the group by giving information and instructions calmly.
4. Eliminate unrest.
5. Dispel rumors.
6. Identify frantic people and prevent them from spreading discontent and fear.
7. Demonstrate decisiveness.
8. Suggest positive actions.
9. Indicate what to do, rather than what not to do.

These panic control recommendations are offered as a guide to action. In the final analysis, it is entirely up to you to properly react and control panic. This decision is yours.

III. BUILDING LIFE SAFETY SYSTEMS

A. Overview – The shelter was renovated around XXXX. The building has a modern life safety system constructed in accordance with the National Fire Code for existing structures. The building is wood frame construction with a stucco exterior. The roof structure is wood overlain with asphalt shingles. This type of construction with the sprinkler system has a low level of risk during a fire. The following is a description of the primary components of the building's life safety systems.

B. Life Safety Components

1. Personnel – This building has a team of a building maintenance technician and a Vice President of Building Services & Safety who are familiar with life safety considerations and the building mechanical systems. This team is on duty from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on call 24 hours per day, seven days per week. During non-business hours, refer to the Maintenance on-call calendar given to each facility.
2. Alarm Equipment – This building is equipped with an automated early warning fire detection system which automatically notifies a 24 hour per day monitoring service, the Fire Department and the building tenants. The components of the system include the following:
 - a. Smoke detectors are located in ducts at all air handler locations in the building. In the event smoke is detected, an alarm is transmitted to a 4 hour per day monitoring service that notifies the Fire Department. There is a master control panel located on the first floor near the main entrance which will graphically display the location of the alarm.
 - b. All areas of the building have fire suppression sprinkler heads which are automatically activated by heat or flame, and which transmit an alarm to the 24-hour per day monitoring service, the fire panel and the Fire Department. Each sprinkler head, when activated, provides water to a radius of 80 square feet at a rate of 25 gallons per minute.

C. Fire Protection Equipment – The building has equipment which can be used by the Fire Department, maintenance personnel, or building occupants.

1. Fire extinguishers are located in the hallways and kitchen areas. If the fire is small and users are properly trained, these extinguishers can be used by building occupants and personnel. (It has been suggested by the Fire Department to NOT use the fire extinguishers and just exit the building.)
2. Emergency lighting system – There are battery packs with lights attached located in stairwells, and corridors which lead to exits.

3. Fire alarm system – This building is equipped with an automated early warning fire detection system which automatically notifies a 24 hour per day monitoring service, the Fire Department and the building tenants.
4. If smoke detectors in the ductwork are activated, the heating and cooling supply fans will shut off to prevent the transfer of smoke through other areas of the building.

D. Fire Communications – Communication with the building occupants is critical in a fire emergency situation.

1. When a smoke detector or heat detector has been activated, an automatic siren and light strobe occurs.
2. An evacuation graphic is posted in the facility near the front entrance.
3. There are Emergency Representatives designated for the facility. A listing of designated employees is located in the Emergency Evacuation Binder.

E. Evacuation and Relocation

1. Evacuate with coats and keys, if possible, so that you are protected in the event re-entry is not possible for an extended period of time.
2. Evacuation of the building occurs through the East and West exit doors.
3. Once out of the building, proceed directly across the street to the East. Do not congregate in areas where emergency equipment and vehicles might need access (alley, street, closed-in parking areas).
4. Do not attempt to re-enter the building until you have been authorized to do so.

IV. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A. User Responsibilities

1. Each department or division must assign a minimum of one Emergency Representative, and one alternate.
2. Those assigned as Representatives or assistants must attend training sessions at least once per year which are provided by either the Fire Department, Building Services, or the Safety Committee.
3. Emergency procedures representatives are responsible for keeping an up-to-date list of employees with disabilities in the Directors Office as well as the Emergency Evacuation Binder.
4. Employees are responsible for notifying Representatives of any debilitating injury/condition so they may be added to the list of occupants with disabilities. Also, notification needs to be made when conditions change.
5. Building fire drills should be held once a year.

B. Emergency Representatives

The Emergency Representatives are responsible for the occupant condition of their floor or area and for evacuating occupants during an emergency. The Emergency Representatives must be familiar with the layout of their floor, the details of the Emergency Response Plan and the location of routes to exit areas.

1. Administrative Responsibilities

Other Administrative duties of the Representatives include:

- a. Maintaining an up to date list of employees with disabilities.
- b. Notifying the Director when changes occur to personnel with disabilities.
- c. The Representative should know and be able to identify all employees in their area.
- d. Order relocation of employees if danger is present.
- e. Notify the Fire Department at 911 and give them your building location.

During an emergency, Representatives are responsible for the positive exercise of leadership to provide for the safety of employees. The responsibility continues even after an evacuation, until the emergency is terminated. In the event of an emergency, employees should follow their Representative's instructions and offer their full cooperation.

C. Emergency Responsibilities

1. If there is a fire, and the alarm has not sounded, the Emergency Representative or person finding the fire is to:
 - a. Close any doors to the fire area, if apparent.
 - b. Call the Fire Department at 911 and give them your building location. Provide them with the following information:
 1. Building Name
 2. Street Address
 3. Street Side
 - c. Notify Vice President of Building Services & Safety or maintenance staff at XXX-XXX-XXXX.
 - d. Prepare for evacuation.

D. In the event that the alarm is sounded, follow the procedures outlined below:

1. Proceed to the nearest emergency exit and exit the building in a calm orderly fashion. Based on the location of the fire, it may be necessary to evacuate through an alternate exit.
2. Any area affected by fire or smoke is to be evacuated immediately. Emergency Representatives should make certain any or all doors leading into such an area are closed after checking that everyone is out of the area, if there is time. Other responsibilities are as follows:
 - To search all restrooms and any other areas of their floors to ensure that all persons are aware of the fire alarm.
 - They will assist any persons who may faint or become disabled.
 - If possible, close all doors. Contain the fire if possible.
 - *Please remember that your safety comes first!*
3. Post a sign on front door of building that warns people not to enter building (Page 19).
4. After evacuation has occurred, the Representative should verify all the people in their area are accounted for. If there is a discrepancy, immediately notify the Fire Department or Director.
5. When instructed by the Fire Department, the Representatives are to prepare their groups to relocate based upon Fire Department instruction.

E. OCCUPANTS WITH DISABILITIES

The following procedures have been implemented to provide maximum safety for anyone who has disabilities in this building.

- a. A comprehensive list of all people with disabilities, and where they are located, is kept in the Emergency Evacuation Binder. The list includes:
 1. The person's name;
 2. The office in which s/he works;
 3. The name of the responsible Emergency Representative; and
 4. The nature of the disability.
- b. We ask that each Representative assign at least two (2) people to be the person with a disability's "buddy." This way, someone is always able to be with and stay with the person with a disability during an emergency.
- c. People with disabilities should be encouraged to create personal emergency plans. They can use checklists in resources like *Stay Safe! Stay in Control! Emergency Planning for Persons with Disabilities, Seniors, and Others with Access and Function Needs (AFN)* as a guide.
- d. In the event of an emergency, the person with a disability should never be left alone. In case of smoke or fire, or if the Fire Department instructs everyone to leave the area, the "buddy" should always take the person with a disability to the nearest exit.

NOTE: Once out of the building, proceed directly across the street to the East. The Fire Department will direct you to relocate if the area is in danger. Do not attempt to re-enter the building for any reason without authorization.

Emergency Representative Form

This form must be on file in the Directors office as well as the Emergency Evacuation Binder, designating the Emergency Representative. The representative is responsible for reporting to the management personnel during an emergency (whether actual or a drill) evacuation to ensure that all employees within the area have been evacuated. Please refer back to the Emergency Manual, pages 8-10, on further responsibilities.

NAME: _____

DIVISION: _____

Building: _____

Floor: _____

ALTERNATE: _____

NAME: _____

DIVISION: _____

Building: _____

Floor: _____

Notification of Occupant with a Disability

Evacuation Information

A comprehensive list of all occupants with disabilities is kept in the Directors office and Emergency Evacuation Binder for use during an emergency situation. Please fill out the following information for each person with a disability in your office:

NAME: _____

BUILDING: _____

FLOOR: _____

PERSON'S LOCATION WITHIN OFFICE:

NATURE OF DISABILITY:

*BUDDIES:

* Every occupant with a disability should have two “buddies” to assist during an emergency.

V. ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS

A. AT YOUR FACILITY

In the event of an accident or illness of an employee or visitor on your premises, we recommend that you:

1. Dial **911** and give your building location and ask for the Fire Department and an ambulance. Police, paramedics, and ambulance are automatically dispatched at the same time.
2. GIVE THE OPERATOR THIS INFORMATION:
 - a. The building name
 - b. The building address
 - c. The floor or location of the emergency
 - d. Any available details on the accident or illness
3. Call the Vice President of Building Services & Safety Office at XXX-XXX-XXXX.
4. Do not move injured or ill persons.
5. Have someone meet the emergency units where the emergency is; preferably an emergency representative, manager or someone certified in First Aid/CPR.

B. Building Staff Reaction

1. Open the main entrance door for emergency medical staff. First, the Fire Department will arrive, and soon after an ambulance will arrive. Each group must be met and escorted to the location of the person requiring medical attention.
2. Meet emergency medical staff at the main building entrance.
3. Go with the emergency medical staff to the location of the person requiring medical attention.
4. Assist the emergency staff as needed.

VI. BOMB THREAT PROCEDURES

A. Basic User Responsibilities

1. All staff should be familiar with bomb threat procedures.
2. Each phone should have a copy of the bomb threat questionnaire placed within easy reach. (see attached).

B. Bomb Threat Emergency Procedures

1. Receiving Telephone Threats

- a. When a bomb threat is received by telephone, immediately ask the caller the questions listed on the bomb threat questionnaire. This information will be extremely helpful to the police.
- b. After the caller has hung up, immediately fill out the remaining portion of the bomb threat questionnaire. This information will be extremely helpful to the police.
- c. Notify the police department at 911 and give your building location and that you have received a bomb threat, then notify your supervisor or Director, and the Vice President of Building Services & Safety at XXX-XXX-XXXX.
- d. The Director will notify occupants of the building that a bomb threat has been received, and order an evacuation, if determined necessary.
- e. Do not make statements to newspapers, radio or television news, leave that to the police.

2. Receiving Written Threats or Suspicious Packages

- a. Written threats or unmarked packages are less frequent than telephone threats, but they must be considered just as carefully.
- b. If you receive or notice a suspicious package, please follow the procedures listed on the appropriate pages.
- c. Avoid physical handling the written threat or package. This evidence will be analyzed by the Police Department for fingerprints, postmarks, handwriting and typewriting.
- d. Notify the Police Department at 911 and give them your building location, and that you have received a bomb threat or have a suspicious package in your area, then notify your supervisor or Director. The supervisor/Director will notify the Vice President of Building Services & Safety.

3. Evacuation

- a. If a bomb threat is received, evacuation may be required. A decision will be made by the Director or Senior Management Staff.
- b. The Director will notify Police and/or Fire Department(s) of the decision to evacuate.

- c. The fastest routes to safety will be the exits. Bring valuables with you (coat, keys, etc.) so that you are prepared if re-entry is not possible.
- d. Evacuation should occur as outlined on page 8-10 of this manual.
- e. If appropriate, the Police Department will place crime tape at the entrances/exits to the building to prohibit people from re-entering the building.

4. Searching Procedures

- a. When exiting the building, look around to determine if there is anything out of place, new or unusual, and report it to the Emergency Representative.
- b. If a suspected device is found, DO NOT TOUCH IT!
- c. If the police officer believes the suspected device to be a bomb, the officer's authority immediately exceeds that of anyone else and the officer's instructions are to be followed. You are not required to search or re-enter the building.
- d. Two-way radios should never be utilized in the area of a suspected device.

VII. BOMB THREAT QUESTIONNAIRE

LISTEN CAREFULLY AND REMAIN CALM.

TIME CALL WAS RECEIVED: _____

TIME CALL TERMINATED: _____

EXACT WORDS OF CALLER: _____

QUESTIONS TO ASK CALLER:

WHEN will the bomb go off? _____ *WHAT* will cause it to explode? _____

WHERE is the bomb located? _____ *DID* the caller place the bomb? _____

WHAT kind of bomb is it? _____ *WHY* did the caller place the bomb? _____

WHAT does it look like? _____

CHARACTERISTICS OF CALLER

Male/Female _____ Race _____

Age _____ Other _____

VOICE/SPEECH FEATURES:

Loud/Soft _____ Nervous/Calm _____

High/Low _____ Nasal _____

Fast/Slow _____ Accent _____

Distorted/Clear _____ Other _____

Stutter/Slurred _____

BACKGROUND NOISES:

Quiet _____ Music _____

Traffic _____ Machines _____

Voices _____ Other _____

Airplanes _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Did the caller indicate knowledge of the facility? If so, how? _____

Location where the call was received? _____

What line did the call come in on? _____ Was call local or long distance? _____

DID YOU CALL POLICE/FIRE DEPARTMENT? _____

DID YOU CALL BUILDING MANAGEMENT? _____

DO NOT DISCUSS SITUATION WITH ANYONE EXCEPT POLICE/FIRE DEPARTMENT, BUILDING MANAGEMENT, OR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR.

Phone (Office) _____

(Home) _____

Position Title: _____

The Building is Temporarily

CLOSED

Due to an

EMERGENCY

***DO NOT
ENTER!***

VIII. POWER FAILURE PROCEDURES

A. EMERGENCY LIGHTING

Due to the possibility of a failure of electrical service from the Public Service Company, the building is equipped with battery backup for lighting in the event of a power failure. In the event of a power failure, emergency lighting is provided for:

- a. Exits
- b. Corridors
- c. Fire alarm system

B. POWER FAILURE PROCEDURES

1. The emergency lighting will come on automatically and supply lighting to the above mentioned systems for about 1.5 hours.
2. Actions to take:
 - a. Remain in your offices at your work stations. Your supervisor will determine if you are to continue working during a power outage.
 - b. Turn off all electrical equipment to lessen the electrical load on circuits when power is restored.

NOTE: We recommend that each department purchase flashlights and keep them in a convenient location.

EXTENDED POWER LOSS

1. In the event of extended power loss to a facility certain precautionary measures should be taken depending on the geographical location and environment of the facility:
 - Unnecessary electrical equipment and appliances should be turned off in the event that power restoration would surge causing damage to electronics and effecting sensitive equipment.
 - Facilities affected by freezing temperatures should turn off and drain the following lines in the event of a long-term power loss.
 - Fire sprinkler system
 - Standpipes
 - Potable water lines
 - Toilets
 - Add propylene-glycol to drains to prevent traps from freezing.

- Equipment that contains fluids which may freeze due to long term exposure to freezing temperatures should be moved to heated areas, drained of liquids, or provided with auxiliary heat sources.

Upon Restoration of heat and power:

- Electronic equipment should be brought up to ambient temperatures before energizing to prevent condensate from forming on circuitry.
- Fire and potable water piping should be checked for leaks from freeze damage after the heat has been restored to the facility and water turned back on.

SAMPLE

IX. TORNADO PROCEDURES

- A. When a TORNADO WATCH is announced, this means that tornadoes are expected in or near your area. Keep your radio turned to a local station for information and advice from your local government and the weather service. Also, keep watching the sky. If you see any revolving, funnel shaped clouds, report them immediately by telephone, using the 911 emergency number, and give the building location.
- B. When a TORNADO WARNING is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been sighted, or has been indicated by radar, and this or other tornadoes may strike in your vicinity. Public warning will come over the radio, TV, or by five-minute steady blasts of a siren by the Civil Defense warning system. Take the following actions immediately!
- C. ACTIONS TO TAKE
1. Get away from the perimeter of the building and exterior glass. Close draperies, blinds, etc., but only if time permits.
 2. Leave your office if located on the building perimeter. Close the door.
 3. Go to the center of the building (central hallway) until the threat has passed.
 4. Sit down and protect yourself by putting your head as close to your lap as possible, or kneel protecting your head.
 5. Do not go outside the building.
 6. Keep your radio or television set turned to a local station for information.
 7. Try not to use the telephone to get information or advice. This only ties circuits up. Updated information will be passed on to you.
 8. If you are trapped in an outside office, seek protection under a desk. Keep calm.

X. FLOODED BUILDING

Because of the extreme electrical danger produced from water, the Fire Department recommends:

- A. *DO NOT STEP* into standing water. *DO NOT* power up equipment with standing water in the area.
- B. Evacuate the area to a dry safe area.
- C. Call Vice President of Building Services & Safety at XXX-XXX-XXXX.
- D. Call the Fire Department at 911 and give your building location. Explain the problem, giving them the building name, address, and floor number.

SAMPLE

XI. EARTHQUAKE

Earthquakes are one of nature's most frightening natural phenomena. When an earthquake occurs, the ground will shake for a relatively short time, perhaps only for a few seconds or for as long as a minute in a larger earthquake.

A. Precautions to Take During an Earthquake

1. Try to remain calm and to reassure others.
2. Do not run for exits, since stairways may be broken and jammed with people. Power for elevators may fail and stop operating. Seek safety where you are at the time of the incident and then leave calmly.
3. Do not be surprised if the electricity goes out, fire and burglar alarms start ringing, or if sprinkler systems go on. Expect to hear noise from breaking glass, cracks in walls and falling objects.
4. Do not be surprised if you feel more than one shock. After the first motion is felt, there may be a temporary decrease in the motion followed by another shock. (This phenomenon is merely the arrival of a different seismic wave from the same earthquake.) Also, aftershocks may occur. These are separate quakes which follow the main shock. Aftershocks may occur several minutes, several hours, or even several days afterwards. Sometimes, aftershocks will cause damage or the collapse of structures that were already weakened by the main earthquake.

B. Precautions to Take After an Earthquake

When the shaking stops, there may be considerable damage, and people may be injured. It is especially important that everyone remain calm and begin the task of taking care of each other. The first concern is for those who are hurt, and the next concern is to prevent fires. The risk of fire after an earthquake is very high. Everyone must be aware of fire procedures. After that, damage can be assessed and remedial measures begun.

1. Remain calm and take time to assess your situation.
2. Help anyone who is hurt and administer emergency first aid when necessary. Cover injured persons with blankets or other coverings to keep them warm. Seek medical help for those who need it.
3. Check for fires and fire hazards. Put out fires immediately if it is safe to do so.
4. The Vice President of Building Services & Safety or building maintenance staff will check for damage to utilities and appliances. They will then make the appropriate calls to utility providers.
5. Do not turn on electrical switches or appliances.
6. Do not touch power lines, electric wiring or objects in contact with them.

7. Do not use the telephone except to report serious emergencies (medical, fire or criminal), or to perform some essential service. Jammed phone lines interfere with emergency services.
8. Natural gas will be shut off by appropriate service provider.
9. Be certain that sewer lines are not broken before resuming regular use of toilets.
10. Clean up and warn others of any spilled material that is dangerous.
11. Listen to the radio for information about earthquake and disaster procedures.
12. Be prepared to experience aftershocks. They often do additional damage to buildings weakened by the main shock.
13. Use great caution when entering or moving about in a damaged building. Collapses can occur without much warning, and there may be dangers from gas leaks, electrical wiring, broken glass, etc.

There are no rules which can eliminate all earthquake danger. However, damage and injury can be greatly reduced by following the simple rules outlined above.

XII. GAS/NOXIOUS ODORS

Should an employee smell an unusual odor or gas/ammonia fumes, leave the immediate area and contact the Vice President of Building Services & Safety at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Do not attempt to locate the source of the odor. Building Services personnel will investigate and contact the Fire Department if necessary.

- A. Do not switch on or off electrical equipment or light switches.
- B. Do not strike a match.
- C. Evacuate the immediate area.
 - A natural gas odor can be recognized by a "rotten egg" smell.
 - Ammonia leaks have a tendency to cause watery eyes and a burning sensation in the sinuses.
 - Freon leaks usually are odorless; however, in large amounts can cause nausea, vomiting and headaches.

NOTE: The evacuation of the building is a decision to be made by the immediate supervisor, Director, Building Services, the Police or Fire Department officials only.

Please contact the Vice President of Building Services & Safety to inform him/her of the decision to evacuate. Evacuation should occur as outlined on pages 8-10 of this manual.

Building Services will contact the Police and/or Fire Department who will make the determination as to when re-entry is safe.

XIII. WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Any suspicious activities should be reported immediately to your supervisor, Director or the Vice President of Building Services & Safety during regular working hours or the on-call personnel after normal business hours. During business hours, management will escort the police officers directly to your area.

CRIME PREVENTION MESSAGE

The shelter is concerned about the safety and protection of our employees, their clients and their property. We are conscious of the various criminal activities to which each of us is exposed.

To reduce crime, emphasis must be placed on preventive rather than reactive measures. Preventive measures against office thefts, burglaries after hours and crimes against persons can best be achieved through the individual efforts of each employee. To minimize incidents, it is important that you establish and routinely monitor procedures, rules and regulations as a means of preventing losses and identifying wrongdoing. Please do not compromise the security of your building by propping open doors or leaving windows open.

We request that these procedures be circulated among all employees and that everyone be made aware of the importance of helping to ensure a safer and more secure work environment. We strongly suggest that valuables and personal property be stored and secured out of sight. All criminal activities should be reported immediately to the Police Department.

THREATS AND VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

On the job: Any person involved in situations where they fear that physical retaliation may take place, or where someone has made verbal threats of physical violence, should immediately discuss it with his/her manager, Director, or Human Resources. Managers should report any reports of threats, vandalism or violent acts to the Director or Human Resources. Employees involved in fighting or making verbal threats will be disciplined, up to and including dismissal.

XIV. HOSTAGE SITUATION

Report any situation involving hostages to the Police Department by dialing 911.

Helpful information to give the Police Department includes:

1. A physical description of the person or persons, and their location.
2. Whether or not they are armed.
3. The number of hostages and their location.

After the Police have been notified, inform the Vice President of Building Services & Safety of the situation.

Report the presence of suspicious individuals in or about the property to your supervisor or Director and the Vice President of Building Services & Safety. A physical description of the person or persons, and the location where they were last seen will also be very helpful to the Police Department.

SAMPLE

XV. ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY

Notify the Fire Department immediately by dialing 911 of any chemical spill in the building, and quickly evacuate the affected area. Then call the Vice President of Building Services & Safety office at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

When a Large Chemical Spill has occurred:

- Contain the spill with available equipment (e.g., pads, booms, absorbent powder, etc).
- Secure the area and alert other site personnel.
- Do not attempt to clean the spill unless trained to do so.
- Attend to injured personnel and call the medical emergency number, if required.
- Call a local spill cleanup company or the Fire Department (if arrangement has been made) to perform a large chemical (e.g., mercury) spill cleanup.
- Evacuate building if necessary.

When a Small Chemical Spill has occurred:

- If toxic fumes are present, secure the area (with caution tapes or cones) to prevent other personnel from entering.
- Deal with the spill in accordance with the instructions described in the SDS.
- Small spills must be handled in a safe manner, while wearing the proper PPE.
- Review the general spill cleanup procedures.

Those persons with knowledge of the incident need to be available to the Fire Department, Building Services and/or emergency response personnel outside the building in order to answer questions. A description of what happened, where, when and the type of product(s) spilled will be extremely valuable. If possible, try to obtain the level from the product container.

The Fire Department and Building Services will make a decision regarding how to proceed once all the facts have been received. Only when the environmental hazard is removed will the affected areas of the building be allowed to be re-occupied.

FIRE EMERGENCY

If a fire alarm sounds, take it seriously. If you notice a fire or smell smoke:

1. DO NOT fight the fire. Remain calm.
2. Call 911.
 - Give your name.
 - Give the name of the building.
 - Give your location and type of problem.
3. Pull the fire alarm box located nearest to you.
4. Exit the building using nearest exit.
5. Close and secure all doors behind you.
6. Proceed to the designated meeting area(s). Keep quiet and listen for directions from the Vice President of Building Services & Safety, Building Services Staff, Emergency Representatives, or the Fire Department.
7. Notify the first responding agency of any disabled, trapped injured persons.
8. Never re-enter the building unless directed to do so by the Vice President of Building Services & Safety, Building Services Staff, Emergency Representatives, or the Fire Department.

XVI. Personnel with disabilities or needing special assistance

1. If circumstances require evacuation from the shelter, a person with a disability or requiring special assistance is to evacuate the building by the safest and nearest exit and follow the general procedures for emergency evacuation.
2. If a person with a disability or requiring special assistance is unable to evacuate without assistance, he/she may request that any available person notify the Fire Department, the Vice President of Building Services & Safety, Building Services Staff or the Emergency Representatives.
 - The individual should provide the person going for help with any information that may be required in the evacuation process (e.g., wheelchair bound, lift required, etc.).
3. In the event a fire alarm sounds, the Vice President of Building Services & Safety, Building Services Staff or the Emergency Representatives will meet with the first responding agency and coordinate the evacuation of disabled or individuals requiring special assistance.

4. Any person with a disability or requiring special assistance shall have a “Notification of Occupant with a Disability” form filled out and at least one buddy assigned to assist in the event of an emergency.
5. In the event of an evacuation during a non-fire emergency, the same steps described above shall be followed.

SAMPLE

Attachment 2

Supporting Victims of Abuse or Trafficking

During intake or other times throughout a guest's stay, staff may notice behaviors that make them concerned that a guest is the victim of abuse or trafficking. This could be a couple where one partner implies they are being controlled or abused by the other, an elderly parent with an adult child who seems to hold inappropriate power, or a child with an adult who says something to imply they are not family. It could be one person in any adult relationship who has no autonomy or independence or is not allowed to make decisions, even regarding their own person. Staff should have a clear understanding of the procedures to use if an instance like this occurs.

Educate staff.

Understand that the prevalence of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, and trafficking among people experiencing homelessness creates a higher likelihood of encountering [individuals who have experienced or are currently experiencing these traumas](#). Provide training for staff to be able to recognize behaviors observed among shelter guests that may indicate a history or ongoing experience of victimization or trauma. Staff need to be equipped with skills in communicating with guests using trauma-informed techniques.

Develop a system for organizational responses.

Planned responses to indicators and pre-determined cues for when to engage community partners such as domestic violence advocates, mental health providers and law enforcement supports dependable responses across the organization. A set of procedures for when to use each intervention should be clear.

Create opportunities for private discussions.

Former or current trafficking or domestic violence survivors may elect to disclose their status in a private conversation with staff. Projects can create regular moments for adult guests to speak privately with staff members. For example, individuals naturally separate during workshops or skill-building classes.

- If necessary, talk to the survivor about how they will explain their time away from their abuser. For example, providing an informational handout for transportation to work, enrolling kids in school, or other services they may need establishes a reason to have been speaking to staff that does not threaten the abuser's control.
- If an adult arrives with young children, it can be helpful to speak solely to the adult so that they can share information that may not be appropriate for their children to hear.
- Project guests may feel more comfortable disclosing private information to a staff member with whom they have established rapport.

- Guests should be informed about legal and project-specific limits surrounding confidentiality such as mandated reporting requirements.
- Survivors will not usually share their entire story with staff during an initial meeting. They may be unsure that the staff member is safe to talk to, experience triggers when talking about the abuse, or have concerns that information might be shared with their abuser. Shelters should understand that if a survivor shares more details in later conversations than they did in the initial conversation, they aren't necessarily lying or trying to manipulate the staff. Trauma can also affect a survivor's memory and ability to recall details.
- Shelters should develop policies around how to interact with minors who are possibly in danger. Clearly explaining and establishing the requirements of mandated reporting laws is the foundation of any protocol. Understand that minors may not want to disclose abuse that will result in separating them from their caretaker, even if the caretaker is controlling.

Utilize safety plans.

Train staff on safety plan procedures and how to create a safety plan (like the one on [this template](#) from National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence) with guests, or who to contact in order to help create one.

Develop strategies for identifying and barring threatening individuals.

Sometimes there are external threats to a guest from someone who is not in the shelter. Strategies for identifying and barring threatening individuals who may try to gain access to the shelter will further protect guests. For example, a smaller shelter may be able to keep pictures of ex-partners up so staff can easily identify them and prevent them from accessing the facility.

Shelters should be aware that abusive partners sometimes use rules such as “abusive partners cannot access shelter” to keep their victims from getting help. They will accuse survivors of abuse in order to prevent services for their partner. Best practice is to work with individuals that have been accused of being abusive to find them other shelter options, instead of refusing services.

Attachment 3

Resources for Working with Vulnerable Populations

Shelters encounter a variety of people, some of whom are particularly vulnerable to violence or abuse. There are hundreds of organizations throughout the country dedicated to understanding and creating safety for these populations. Below are links to additional information on particular populations. Train staff about common challenges and issues vulnerable populations experience. To ensure that information is accessible, best practice is not to assume guests' reading level or language skills. Having information available in plain language and in languages that are common among a shelter's population supports access to information and choices.

Guests are vulnerable to a number of common threats and are sometimes taken advantage of by other guests. For instance, young people are often pressured by older guests to exchange sex for resources or drugs. Train staff to be on the lookout for subtle indications that these behaviors are occurring and stop them. Shelter providers can use the following resources to assist in increasing a sense of safety and respect within the shelter environment.

LGBTQ+ Youth and Adults

LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) youth experiencing homelessness are a particularly vulnerable population. Among youth experiencing homelessness, almost half (40%) identify as LGBTQ+.¹ This population is at high risk for sex trafficking, harassment, suicide, and attacks on the streets or in a shelter.² Individuals often turn to survival sex for food or shelter, which they perceive as their only option.³ Shelters can assist this population by training staff to treat all guests respectfully, which will increase guests' sense of the shelter as a viable, safe, and welcoming option.

General risks and common trauma:

- [LGBTQ+ Health and Civil Rights](#)

Risk and suicidality:

- [The Trevor Project](#)

LGBTQ+ survivors of intimate partner violence:

- [Trauma-informed Approaches for LGBTQ+ Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence](#)

1 Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011, Page 107.

2 "Sex Trafficking of LGBT Individuals"; <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/preventing-suicide/>

3 "Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth" <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ht/murphy-labor-sex-trafficking-homeless-youth.pdf>

The [Fair Housing Act](#) prohibits housing and housing-related discrimination because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), familial status, and disability. A person who has experienced (or is about to experience) discrimination in housing because of sex, including their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, may [file a complaint with HUD](#). HUD will investigate complaints alleging violations of the Fair Housing Act on this basis.

HUD Equal Access Rule:

- [Equal Access To Housing Final Rule: Housing Discrimination and Persons Identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/ or Queer/Questioning](#)

Toolkits:

<https://translifeline.org/>

<https://truecolorsunited.org/resources/toolkits/>

<https://avp.org/ncavp/tta-center/>

<https://trans-survivors.com/>

<https://www.youthbreakout.org/resources/>

Children

The trauma of experiencing homelessness or having survived the conditions that led a family to homelessness can affect children deeply. Recognizing trauma and providing children with opportunities for skill-building to develop a sense of agency can reduce their trauma responses, improve their safety, and help them develop the resilience needed to break the cycle of homelessness. In addition, shelters should help children establish a sense of normalcy by having an education liaison (or having someone in the shelter in contact with the CoC's education liaison) and by creating play spaces within the shelter.

Comprehensive resource on childhood trauma:

- [About Child Trauma](#)

Toolkit on Child Friendly Spaces in Emergencies:

- <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/global/reports/education-and-child-protection/cfs-handbook-08.pdf>

Older and Elder Individuals

In recent years there has been an increase in older individuals (aged 50 to 64) experiencing homelessness.⁴ One of the major causes of first-time homelessness in this population stems from caregiver abuse. Family, friends, or hired care can drain an individual's financial resources, force them to sign over their house and/or belongings, or physically and emotionally abuse them until they feel unsafe to stay in the caregiver's space. Older individuals are particularly exposed to abuse, financial abuse, and issues stemming from declining health. Providers should be trained to identify these situations, and contact the community's local Adult Protect Services, if abuse is suspected.

⁴ <http://nationalhomeless.org/issues/elderly/>

Overview of elder abuse:

- [Elder Abuse](#)

Signs of elder abuse:

- [Elder Abuse and Neglect](#)

Trauma-informed care for elderly guests:

- [Trauma-informed Care with Older Adults](#)

Elderly issues specific to those experiencing homelessness:

- [Elder Homelessness](#)

Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims

According to Homeless Children and Youth, Causes and Consequences, 80% of women and children who experience homelessness have also experienced domestic violence (DV).⁵ In order to support safety within the shelter, it is important to learn what to look for, how to connect survivors to advocates and other services, and how to keep survivors safe in the shelter environment. Staff should be trained in the dynamics of abusive relationships. The links below provide detailed information.

What is Domestic Violence:

- [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(NCADV\)](#)
- [National Network to End Domestic Violence \(NNEDV\)](#)
- [CDC](#)

Identifying Domestic Violence:

- [NNEDV Law Center Risk Assessment](#)
- [The Hotline](#)

DV-specific trauma-informed care, toolkits for assessment, and practical tips for improvement:

- [Resources for Advocates - Trauma-informed DV Advocacy](#)

5 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/fact-sheet/domestic-violence-and-homelessness-statistics-2016>

Common reactions to trauma and complications of DV:

- [Breaking Free from PTSD](#)

Overview of sexual violence:

- [About Sexual Violence](#)

Common effects of sexual violence:

- [Effects of Sexual Violence](#)
- [Recovering from Rape and Sexual Trauma](#)

Trafficking Victims

There are many barriers to identifying trafficking victims. Traffickers use force, fear, and coercion to control victims and their interactions with others. This, combined with complex trauma, may make victims very distrustful of others, including those offering help. Victims of trafficking often believe that they will be deported, their families will be harmed, or the criminal justice system will treat them as criminals and not victims.² Even shelters that have not previously encountered trafficking should train staff to look for signs of abuse among guests in order to identify potential victims of all types of trafficking.

Recognizing signs of human trafficking:

- [What is Human Trafficking](#)

Common trauma symptoms:

- [Treating the Hidden Wounds: Trauma Treatment and Mental Health Recovery for Victims of Human Trafficking](#)

Trauma-informed care:

- [Using a Trauma-informed Approach](#)

In cases of trafficking, staff should follow a protocol to separate the trafficker from the victim in order to discuss safety options and offer to call the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888). If they agree, the Hotline is a valuable resource that is available 24/7 and can provide referrals and proper guidance. Never take away a victim's control by forcing them into services they are not yet ready for.

² Farrell et al., 2012 and L. Simich "Improving Human Trafficking" 2014

Common signs of trafficking:

According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, common signs are:

Work and Living Conditions:

- Is not free to leave or come and go as they wish
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp or manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of their work
- High security measures exist in the work and/or living locations (e.g. opaque windows, boarded up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.)

Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior:

- Is fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Exhibits unusually fearful or anxious behavior after bringing up law enforcement
- Avoids eye contact

Poor Physical Health:

- Lacks medical care and/or is denied medical services by employer
- Appears malnourished or shows signs of repeated exposure to harmful chemicals
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture

Lack of Control:

- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of their own money, financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of their own identification documents (ID or passport)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating)

Other:

- Claims of "just visiting" and inability to clarify where they are staying/address
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or of what city they are in
- Loss of sense of time