Title: Shelter Assessment Tool Training

Dangerous conditions may mean that people are not able to stay at home and may need to stay in a temporary shelter before, during, and after a disaster or emergency.

Shelters, while providing a lifesaving service, come with their own health and safety concerns.

They may be crowded with people of all ages and abilities. They also may be dealing with a lack of safe water or electricity.

As public health professionals, one of our main tasks during any disaster is to assess the needs of disaster shelter occupants so we can ensure a safe living environment in these facilities.

Environmental public health practitioners have the important job of assessing shelters.

To assist with this process, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has collaborated with health professionals from state and local environmental health programs and the American Red Cross to develop a tool to guide practitioners through a disaster shelter assessment, called the CDC Environmental Health Assessment Form for Disaster Shelters.

28   This recording will give you an overview of the shelter assessment tool and how to

29   use it.

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31   One of the main uses of the tool is to help you identify priority health and safety

32   issues. Information in this tool is designed to supplement existing assessment tools,

33   plans, procedures, and guidelines.

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35   The tool will help provide shelter managers with information about the

36   environmental conditions at each shelter and recommendations for improving any

37   deficiencies or conditions found, if needed.

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39   The form captures data and documents issues found within the shelter so that the

40   information can be used in future planning.

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42   CDC encourages users to share their assessment findings with shelter managers

43   and local emergency management agencies to keep them informed of needs that

44   exist in shelters and prompt them to correct problems.

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46   Let's look at the assessment tool.

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48   It's a standardized instrument with two basic parts: the environmental health

49   assessment form for shelters, and an instruction sheet to guide you through the

50   assessment process.

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52   The form is divided into 14 sections. Each section addresses different aspects of

53   shelter health and safety.

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The instruction sheet is numbered to correspond with the assessment form.

Each numbered instruction describes the section in detail, explains the intent, and provides standards and/or criteria for answering the questions on the form.

We will briefly review each section. Then we will give you more detail about the information in each section.

- Section 1 is for recording agency data. It also includes an area to flag if the environmental health assessor identifies immediate needs in the shelter.

- Section 2 records the facility name, facility type, and counts of the shelter residents.

- Section 3 evaluates the physical aspects of the facility.

- Section 4 evaluates the food supply.

- Section 5 evaluates the availability of safe drinking water and ice.

- Section 6 covers the shelter's health and medical requirements.

- Section 7 is about sanitation and hygiene.

- Section 8 deals with waste management.

- Section 9 covers childcare.

- Section 10 assesses the adequacy of the sleeping areas.

- Section 11 identifies shelter facilities and services for companion animals.

- Section 12 covers questions that do not fall into the previous categories.

- Section 13 is for general comments about needs and problems identified in the shelter, and

- Section 14 is an "immediate needs" sheet.

Now we're going to return to Section 1 and review the information this assessment tool can provide, to give you a better idea of how it can be used most effectively.

In Section 1, capture data about the organization assessing the shelter, information about who is completing the assessment, and that person's contact information, in case follow-up is needed.

Section 1 contains a shaded box labeled "immediate needs identified."

However, this box should only be filled in after the entire assessment has been completed.

106 It will alert reviewers to the fact that immediate needs exist and should be

107 addressed.

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109 In Section 2, record the type of shelter, for example, whether it is a general

110 population shelter or medical shelter; whether the American Red Cross is operating

111 the shelter; and where the shelter is located.

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113 If known, include the longitude and latitude, street address, city, and county.

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115 Also include contact information for the persons managing the shelter and note the

116 census of the shelter at the time of the visit.

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118 In Section 3, record information about the facility and its condition.

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120 Include information related to the building structure, security, ventilation, pest

121 management, and injury hazards, as well as type of power, water and other utilities.

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123 In Section 4, record information about the safe supply of food and facilities for

124 food preparation, and document safe food handling practices.

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126 In this section you will also assess the presence of adequate dishwashing facilities

127 and the general cleanliness of the kitchen area.

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129 In Section 5 you will capture information about the adequacy of the water and ice

130 supply, and whether the water and ice come from a safe source.

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Use this section to document how shelter managers ensure that water and ice meet state, local, and federal safe drinking water standards.

Section 6 is the health and medical section.

This is where you record health and medical issues that shelter residents and staff may be experiencing and the types of medical care services available at the shelter.

Use this section to document any reports of unusual illnesses or injuries.

Section 7 covers sanitation issues such as the availability of laundry services, and supply and adequacy of toilets, showers, and hand-washing stations.

This section also addresses the cleanliness of these areas and the type of sewage the facility uses.

In Section 8 you will address solid waste issues, including the supply of waste receptacles and the proper methods of disposal.

Consider whether the facility has appropriate storage facilities of adequate size and whether solid waste is being removed in a timely manner.

In Section 9 you assess the child care area.

Among the basic facilities needed are a clean diaper-changing area, a place for workers and children to wash their hands, and an adequate process for cleaning age-appropriate toys.

The childcare area should also be assessed for a food and bottle preparation area and appropriate ratio of children to caregivers.

Use Section 10 to assess the shelter's sleeping area.

Is the number of cots and beds or mats provided adequate for the number of individuals staying at the shelter?

Use this area to consider sleeping arrangements for small children who may need cribs and the cleaning routine of sleeping materials used on cots or beds.

There should also be adequate space between each individual's sleeping area.

Section 11 allows you to assess the shelter's companion animals' area.

If service animals, such as seeing-eye dogs, are housed within the facilities, are designated areas provided for residents and their animals?

Are the areas regularly cleaned and maintained?

These animals should also have designated relief areas.

Section 12 covers two unrelated but important topics.

This is where you report whether the shelter facility is accessible to disabled residents and whether it conforms to legal standards of accessibility.

You also record the presence or absence of designated smoking areas outside the shelter.

Section 13 collects all the comments related to items identified in previous sections.

When you identify an item that calls for a comment, turn to Section 13 and write the section number along with the notes that detail what you found.

For example, Item 76 looks for an adequate number of operational hand washing stations.

If your answer is, "No," you can record #76 and comment something like "More hand washing stations are needed in the restroom area of the shelter."

The last section, Section 14, is the place to highlight items from other sections that require immediate action because they raise serious public health issues.

For example, if the water provided to the facility does not meet safe drinking water standards; that would warrant immediate action.

Or if toilets are overflowing, and people are forced to walk though sewage on the ground, the issue would certainly need to be addressed quickly.

Recording that observation in Section 14 alerts emergency managers receiving the form to issues requiring urgent attention.

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214 Also be sure that immediate needs, in section 1, marked as #105 has a "yes"

215 response if this is the case.

216

217 When you complete your assessment, return to Section 1, and check the

218 appropriate answer in the "Immediate Needs" box to flag the shelter if it needs

219 urgent assistance.

220

221 Environmental and public health officials play a vital role in protecting the health

222 and safety of individuals at shelters. We must work together with partners;

223 volunteers; key agencies, such as the American Red Cross; and other organizations

224 to meet the needs of communities and care for those who are most vulnerable after

225 an event.

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227 A critical component of that care is meeting appropriate health and safety

228 standards.

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230 Disasters are complex situations that require standardized public health tools that

231 are broad in scope and easy to implement.

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233 Used in conjunction with other planning and preparedness measures, this shelter

234 assessment form can help you ensure that shelters are safe for everyone.

235

236 We're pleased to join you in protecting the health and safety of your community

237 after an emergency or disaster.