

# 2022/2023 Emergency Overnight Shelter Volunteer Manual

*Our mission is to help vulnerable individuals stabilize their lives  
through housing and supportive services.*

**Office Location:**

Ogden Avenue Supportive Housing  
9601 Ogden Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525  
Open 8am – 4pm, Monday - Friday  
708.354.0858  
[www.beds-plus.org](http://www.beds-plus.org)



## WELCOME VOLUNTEERS!

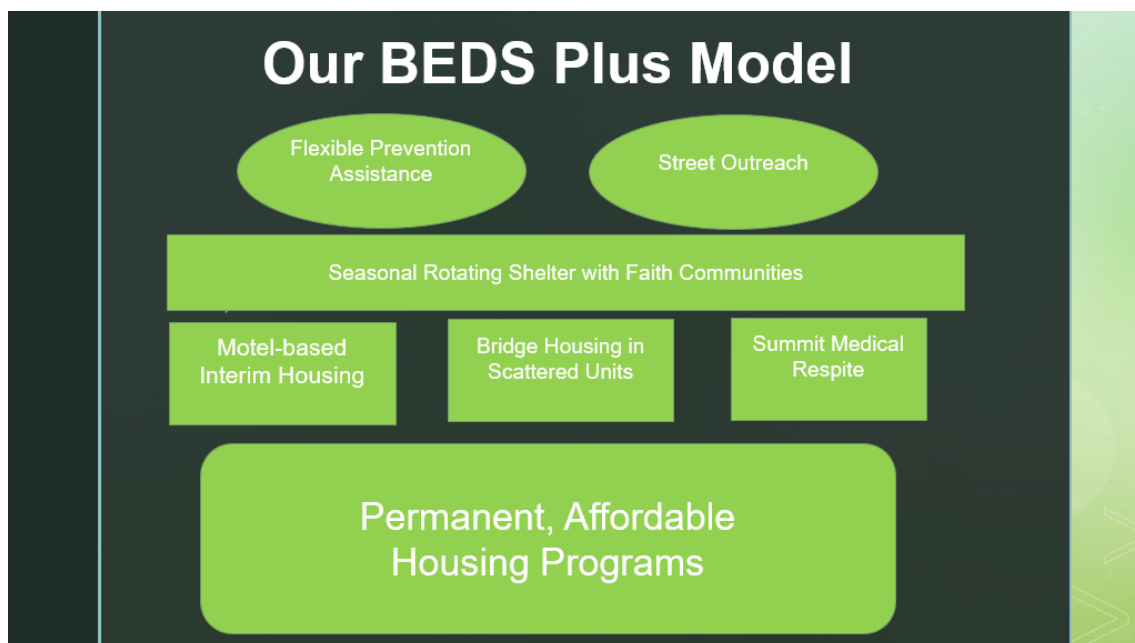
Thank you for joining us in starting the rotating emergency shelter program after a long pandemic break. Many of our practices will return but, some things have changed. Please read this guide carefully and follow-up with one of our key staff if you have questions. We are glad to be back!

With your help, BEDS Plus offers free, low-barrier emergency overnight shelter easily accessible to homeless individuals. The purpose of the program is to meet an immediate need for safe shelter and serve as an access point for more suitable housing. The rotating shelter is an extension of our street outreach program and provides an immediate access point to housing services.

The guidelines in this volunteer manual have evolved during 35 years of experience operating the program through which we strive to offer safe and consistent services in each shelter. All BEDS Plus volunteers and staff are expected to follow these guidelines.

Each program participant has the right to an acceptable place to sleep and security. Shelter locations must be free of known pollutants. At a minimum, shelters must have the following features: functioning temperature control and water supply; minimum fire safety standards; sufficient illumination; adequate restrooms; and a designated food preparation area. BEDS staff and site managers strive to institute infection control and mitigation measures at the shelter in order to reduce the opportunity for spreading COVID19 or other diseases. Therefore, each shelter will need to implement a reduced capacity and social distancing measures. Masks are also always recommended.

The rotating emergency shelter is an important part of how the agency stabilizes individuals and helps connect them with services. Our programs include a prevention assistance, community by community street outreach and a wide variety of short and long-term housing programs. We have decided to run the emergency shelter during the coldest months of the year so the most vulnerable people in our community can have a safe place to stay and continued opportunities to connect to services.



The emergency shelter program relies on hundreds of people to make the operation run smoothly. You will work directly with a team of people on your shift or meal team regularly and you can look to your volunteer site leader for guidance and support. You should familiarize yourself with the people on your site's schedule. Agency staff are responsible for coordinating supplies, assisting with volunteer recruitment and providing care to our clients at the shelter. Please feel free to reach out to staff if you have any questions, ideas or concerns. Staff is primarily working at the emergency shelter at registration and shelter clean up.

**Staff Key Volunteer Contacts:**

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## **Section #1: JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

### **Site Manager:**

A Site Manager is responsible for the general operation of a shelter site.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- To work 6:00-11:00 pm, or as needed on site – once a week or in conjunction with a partner volunteer (other site managers or weekly team leaders).
- Oversee shelter to assure adherence to BEDS PLUS policies and procedures.
- Supervise site volunteers.
- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Operations Manager to develop and maintain a site schedule and ensure adequate staffing on all shifts and provide for cooks and laundry service for each night.
- Report any pertinent client or shelter information to case management staff on duty.
- Attend site manager meetings at least once a year.
- Maintain communication with volunteers about program information throughout sheltering season.
- Be a positive role model for volunteers.
- Relay facility maintenance information to BEDS staff & act as a BEDS liaison with site church staff.
- Provide site-specific training to volunteers as necessary.

### **Emergency Overnight Shelter Volunteer:**

Volunteers are expected to fulfill their shift duties and support the operations of the emergency overnight shelter.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Commit to a one-time or ongoing shift at the emergency overnight shelter.
- Arrive on-time for scheduled shift.
- Find a reasonable replacement for your shift when you are unable to work your scheduled shift. Inform *Site Manager* of the change.
- Maintain confidentiality of BEDS Plus clients.
- Accept guidance of the Site Coordinators, Case Managers and BEDS Plus staff.
- Participate in periodic educational programs.

### **BEDS Staff:**

The staff person on-duty is the person responsible for client care and management.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Present on-site from 6:00 – 10pm (at a minimum).
- Oversee client registration process.
- Conduct intake/registration for new clients.
- Troubleshoot client and shelter issues as they arise throughout the night.
- Document outreach and interventions for clients throughout the shelter evening.
- Serve on-call throughout the evening for any client issues, questions or emergencies.
- Submit shelter reports to Manager of Emergency Services before 10:00 AM on the next business day.

## **Section #2 – SHIFT DUTIES**

### **OUTLINE OF SHIFT DUTIES: Site Volunteers**

**SHIFT 1** 6:00 to 11:00 pm 5 - 8 Volunteers

1. Set up sleeping mats, bins and linens for use as shelter. Sleeping mats should be placed in a row with spacing of at least one foot apart with clearance for a walking path to bathrooms and emergency exits.
2. Greet and register clients who must present BEDS current ID or current picture ID.
3. Check all clients against the current Do Not Admit list (DNA). Do not allow anyone on this list to enter the shelter. Direct them to staff-on-duty or site manager. Otherwise, direct them to the support center on the next business day to speak to staff regarding re-entry.
4. Serve dinner between 7:00-8:30 pm.
5. Lock doors at 9:00 pm.
6. Lights out at 10:00 pm.
7. Keep noise level and conversations low after 10pm.

**SHIFT 2** 11:00 pm to 3:00 am 2 - 4 Volunteers

1. Review *Volunteer Sign-in & Communications Log*.
2. Monitor site.
3. Greet approved late arriving clients.
4. Check site and bathrooms every 15 minutes.

**SHIFT 3** 3:00 am to 7:15 am 2- 4 Volunteers

1. Review *Volunteer Sign-in & Communications Log* for any early wake ups and wake clients up at designated time.  
*Start coffee 5:30 am*
2. Check site and bathrooms every 15 minutes.
3. Wake clients at 5:45 am.
4. Prepare and serve breakfast from 5:45 am to 6:30 am.
5. Make sure clients leave the site by 7:00 am.
6. Clean-up site.

### **SHIFT 4**

1. Prepare and serve breakfast from 5:45 am to 6:30 am.
2. Make sure clients leave the site by 7:00 am.
3. Clean-up site.

*Number of volunteers needed per shift is determined by the volume of duties on those shifts with a minimum ratio of 1 volunteer per 20 clients with no less than two adult volunteers per shift.*

## **SECTION #3 OUTLINE OF EMERGENCY OVERNIGHT SHELTER SUPPORT ROLES**

### **Meal Teams**

**Meal teams provide dinner for guests on site.** Meal teams may be comprised of a variety of individuals working together to provide up to three meals for emergency overnight shelter guests each day. All meal team volunteers are encouraged to obtain a food handlers certification (online courses available at low/no cost). Each meal team is assigned a regular date and time on the schedule. Each team should designate a leader to coordinate the meal plans and delivery. Meal team leaders correspond with the site manager to coordinate specific details of delivery, amount of food needed and heating instructions. The agency has access to food rescue groups and food donations which can be used by shelter cook teams. If you would like information about this resource, please contact the Shelter Operations Manager.

#### Dinners (For 40 shelter clients):

- Meals should include a protein, vegetable and a starch. Salads & desserts are welcomed as well.
- Gallons of milk may be requested and accompanying condiments for the provided meal.
- **If there is extra food, please contact the Site Manager or Staff-on-Duty.**

#### Bag Lunch (For 40 shelter clients):

- At some sites, lunches are prepared by the second shift volunteers.
- Bag lunch supplies generally include a lunch meat, bread, chips/granola bars and a drink. Site Managers may request brown paper bags and sandwich bags if site supplies are short.
- Alternatively, teams may provide prepared lunches at one of our daytime support center locations. Consult the Volunteer Coordinator/Shelter Operations Manager for available opportunities.

#### Breakfast (For 40 shelter clients):

- Breakfast can be a separate meal team or served by Shift 3 & 4 volunteers.
- Breakfast suggestion include gallons of milk and/or juice as well as your choice of muffins, cereal, donuts, coffeecake, bread for toast, eggs, breakfast meat or a breakfast casserole. Coffee is provided on-site as part of the shelter supplies.

### **Laundry Teams**

Site laundry is usually done by a team of people. *Laundry* includes linens, towels and washcloths used in the shelter.

- Laundry should be picked up by 7 a.m. and returned to the site by 6:00 pm the following week (or sooner). Consult with the Site Manager for site specific pick-up and delivery details.
- Green laundry bags should be used for soiled laundry. Use caution when handling soiled laundry.
- Extra sheets should be stored at each site in the event of an issue with the weekly laundry.
- Personal clothing items found in the laundry bag should be discarded.
- Some shelters to work with laundry partners such as schools, hospitals or professional laundry services. For sites working with these outside groups, laundry teams simply drop-off soiled linens and pick-up clean linens. Consult the Site Manager for specific details.
- BEDS Plus does not reimburse volunteers for meal or laundry expenses. Check with your tax advisor to determine if your donation is tax deductible. BEDS Plus will provide appropriate documentation upon request.

## **SECTION #4 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS AT THE EMERGENCY OVERNIGHT SHELTER**

### **SHIFT SUBSTITUTIONS**

To ensure adequate staffing at all sites, **volunteers are responsible for identifying an appropriate substitute for their shift.**

- If you know in advance that you cannot fulfill an assigned shift, please trade evenings with someone on your schedule. BEDS Plus requires a minimum of 1 male on site for each shift. Please keep this in mind when making a trade.
- Notify your Site Manager of the change as soon as possible.
- If you are unable to find your own substitute, your Site Manager or Team Leader will work with BEDS Plus staff to identify a substitute.

### **PAPERWORK and COMMUNICATION**

Two (2) forms are required for record keeping. The forms must be completed each night and submitted to the BEDS Plus office within one week.

#### **1. Evening Register (Blue)**

- Filled out by the volunteers posted at registration table.
- Provide all information requested.
- Bring back to the kitchen after 9pm.

#### **2. Volunteer Sign-in & Communications Log (Yellow)**

- Volunteers must sign-in whenever they work. This tracks adequate staffing and documents volunteer hours, which is required by many funding sources.
- If a volunteer is on the schedule but fails to attend a shift, please make a notation on this form.
- Please also note laundry & meal team contact information.
- If other donations are provided, please provide contact information and donation description. BEDS will send a thank you note to the donor based on this information.
- Directions for subsequent shifts such as early wake-up, food instructions or building issues.
- Please indicate any supplies needed on this form. Supplies will be delivered to the site before the next shelter night.

### **CHILDREN AT THE SHELTER**

- Children 12 and over are welcome to volunteer at the emergency overnight shelter with an adult chaperone 1:1 who agrees to take full responsibility for their well-being and behavior while at the shelter. The adult chaperon must always accompany the minor.
- Clients under the age of 18 are the full responsibility of their parent(s). Parents are responsible for the well-being and behavior of their children while at the shelter. Clients are not allowed to delegate that responsibility outside of the family to other clients or volunteers while at the emergency overnight shelter.

### **BEFORE UNLOCKING SHELTER DOOR FOR CLIENTS**

- Store all volunteers' personal belongings in the designated area (usually somewhere in the kitchen).
- Set up sleeping areas. Males under 12 years old may sleep with their mothers.
- Set out sleeping mats, bins and clean linens.

- Sleeping mats should be placed in row with spacing of at least one foot apart with clearance for a walking path to bathrooms and emergency exits.
- Prepare disinfectant solution.
- Receive food and prep instructions from the cooks and set up tables and chairs for dinner.
- Set out paperwork for volunteers along with a pen.
- Post signs at the check in desk.

### **GREETING CLIENTS – REGISTRATION & NEW CLIENT INTAKE PROCESS**

*It is important to have at least one volunteer at the registration desk to admit clients until 9pm.*

- No one may be admitted to the shelter without a BEDS card (temporary or permanent) until they are registered with the case manager.
- Record Client’s BEDS I.D. number on *Evening Register*.
- NEW clients complete an intake with the Staff on Duty. They must present some form of photo ID to enter or a pink temporary ID. If the ID is not current, the individual must be referred to support center and not admitted.
- Give each new client a copy of the BEDS brochure/shelter listing.
- Introduce the client to the Staff on Duty.
- Record new client’s name and I.D. number or temporary ID number on registration form.
- Direct the new client to a pad and a box containing sheets, blanket, and a pillow.
- Orient new clients to site (sleeping mats, restroom location, etc.)

### **EVENING FOOD SERVICE**

- Dinner service begins between 7:00 - 7:30pm. Volunteers serve the food.
- Serve food in generous portions.
- Second helpings if available may not be served until 8pm.
- Persons arriving after 8:30pm will not be served until breakfast. (Serving late arrivals/leftovers is up to the discretion of the Site Manager at each location)
- If available, dessert items may be left out until 10:00 pm.
- All food tables must be cleared and disinfected after food service. If possible, sweep the area under the tables and wipe chairs. Clients are expected to clean up after themselves and assist with general clean up.
- **Food Safety Guidelines:**
  - Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
  - We expect anyone serving or handling food to wear food service gloves provided by BEDS Plus.
  - When serving food buffet style, keep food hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays. Keep food cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice or use small serving trays and replace them often. Hot food should be held at 140 °F or warmer and cold food should be held at 40 °F or colder.
  - Perishable food should not be left out more than 2 hours at room temperature. Discard any food left out for more than two hours.
  - Cutting boards, utensils, and countertops can be sanitized by using a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water

### **ENTERTAINMENT/BEDTIME PROCEDURES**

- After dinner, volunteers are encouraged to visit, play cards, or enjoy TV with our clients.
- To ensure a good night’s rest, lights are turned out in the sleeping area by 10:00 pm.
- TV may remain on low volume until 11 pm. TV out by 11:00 pm



- Cell phones must be placed on silent mode while at the shelter, no calls allowed inside the site. Clients may use their cell phones during smoke breaks. No picture-taking or inappropriate behavior is allowed at the shelter.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- Bus passes are distributed by the Case Managers based on client need.
- Arrangements are made by staff for clients who need rides to important appointments
- Volunteers are not permitted to provide transportation to clients.

### **SITE VISITORS**

- Site visitors are limited to: scheduled volunteers, BEDS Plus staff, and people from approved external agencies.
- Visitors must be noted on the *Volunteer Sign-in and Communications Log*.

### **LATE ARRIVAL LIST**

BEDS Plus Staff on-Duty will provide a *Late Arrival* list to Site Managers.

- Individuals on the late arrival list are expected to arrive after 9:00 pm.
- Consult Staff on-Duty for current, approved list of clients who may enter after shelters close. If a client tries to enter after 9pm without advance permission, they should not be allowed in the shelter for the evening.
- Note all late arrivals on the *Volunteer Sign-in and Communications Log*.

### **MONITORING**

- All areas in the shelter need to be monitored (sleeping area and bathrooms). Attention to this detail can prevent many problems. Sites should be checked every 15 minutes.
- Sleeping areas are never to be shut-off by closed doors.
- Smoke breaks need to be monitored by a volunteer. **Bathrooms are non-smoking areas.**
- Be as quiet as possible when monitoring the site during sleep hours.
- Report and document any suspicious activity.
- Call the police immediately if you suspect any illegal activities happening or someone may be harmed.

### **WAKE-UP and BREAKFAST**

- **No TV** before 5:45 am.
- Awake clients by turning on lights at approximately 5:45 am.
- Breakfast is prepared by the 3rd-Shift volunteers. Food provided by cook teams.
- Breakfast is served from 5:45 am to 6:30 am, **after clients** deposit their used linens in the laundry bags and clean their pads with disinfectant solution.
- Clients must leave the site no later than 7 am.
- Check the site (e.g., restrooms, and other rooms) to make sure everyone has left.
- Volunteers do **not** provide transportation for clients.
- Volunteers are expected to clean the kitchen, sleeping area and bathrooms before leaving the site.

### **GENERAL CLEAN-UP**

All areas used by BEDS Plus including the kitchen and bathrooms, must be kept clean throughout the shelter night and sanitized before exiting the site in the morning.

- Cleaning supplies and rubber gloves are provided at each site.

- Mess kits are available at every site. If there is a need to clean up bodily fluids, follow the instructions on the kits and use protective gloves. Sanitize the infected area after appropriate clean-up.
- All BEDS supplies should be put away in designated storage areas including food and food supplies.
- Clients are not allowed to leave personal items at the site. Any items left behind should be thrown in the garbage.
- **Ensure that clients clean their sleeping mats with the disinfectant solution.**
- Clients should fold and return all blankets and pillows.
- Volunteers place all pads and bins in designated storage areas.
- Any clothing items left behind should be thrown away.
- Laundry is placed in laundry bags and put in the designated area for pick-up. Do not place laundry out in unprotected area.
- Sites to be locked-up according to individual site instructions.

### **SMOKING REGULATIONS**

- **Smoking is never allowed in the shelter sites.**
- *Smoke-breaks* are allowed only in designated areas, for 15 minutes, at the following times: 8:15 pm, 9:15 pm. *Smoke-breaks* must be monitored by a volunteer. A container is provided for cigarette butts. Please make sure the smoking area is cleaned after each break.
- Remind the clients that smoking should occur no closer than 15 feet from the site entrance, especially as they exit the building in the morning.
- A morning smoke break is not part of the BEDS Plus program due to the potential for neighbor disturbance and delay in closing the shelter. However, the decision to have a morning smoke break is based on the discretion of the Site Manager.

### **DE-ESCALATION**

If there is a conflict at the shelter, please defer to the Site Manager or Staff On-Duty. In general, our approach to client conflict is as follows:

- Separate the client from the conflicting party and/or environment.
- Bring another volunteer with you and take the client outside to discuss their options.
- Listen to their concerns completely and affirm their feelings.
- Discuss options. Options often include developing a reasonable way to avoid further conflict or leave the shelter for the evening.
- If clients choose to leave, decide to obtain their items and do not let them back in the shelter.
- Note the interaction on the Volunteer sign-in sheet & Communications log and contact the Site Manager or Staff On-Duty to debrief. You may be required to also complete an Incident Report.
- Inform the local police department through the non-emergency number.

### **WORKING WITH CLIENTS**

- Each client served at the shelter deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Clients come to the shelter based on a wide variety of circumstances. As a volunteer and agent of BEDS Plus, you are required to respect the client's right to privacy and confidentiality. Details shared or observed about a client should not be communicated to individuals outside the organization. Please work with the staff if you would like to assist a client or have concerns about their well-being.
- Our clients need a safe, fair and predictable environment in order to take advantage of the emergency shelter program and focus on their stabilization plan.

- Keep in mind that about half of the clients are suffering from mental health or substance use disorders. These guidelines as well as the leadership structure are designed to meet the needs of a wide variety of clients.
- As part of our HUD funding, volunteers and staff are prohibited from evangelizing to clients directly or mandated clients participate in any religious activity. All conversations should be client-directed
- Consult the BEDS Plus staff for additional training opportunities.

## **SECTION #5 SAFETY INFORMATION**

### **INFECTION CONTROL**

- All sites must have soap, hand sanitizers that contain at least 65% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets, cleaning supplies and masks.
- All shelter participants, volunteers and staff are encouraged to get vaccinated and boosted for COVID19 and the annual Flu.
- Each shelter must have a plan for maintain physical distancing (remaining at least 6 feet apart) for sleeping an eating.
- All shelter participants, staff and volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear appropriate masks at all times.
- Any staff or volunteer that has been exposed to an infectious disease or has any symptoms of an infectious disease should not report to work at the shelter. Every effort will be made by the staff to immediately inform shelter participants, staff and volunteer when an infection risk occurs.
- Informational signs regarding handwashing, cough etiquette, mask-wearing and physical distancing will be posted at each site.
- All sheets and towels are laundered each day.
- Clients are encouraged to sleep head-to toe with at least 6 feet between mats, separate rooms if possible.
- Washrooms and eating area are washed at least every shift or four times during the evening.

### **EMERGENCY NEEDS/MEDICAL CARE**

- Every site has a first aid kit.
- Volunteers are restricted from dispensing medication. However, BEDS provides over the counter pain relievers and cough drops for client use. Clients can self-administer their own prescription medications.
- Sharps containers are available upon request. Needles must be stored and disposed of properly for the safety of all involved in the emergency shelter. If a sharps container is not available, please place needle in an empty, disposable plastic container with a lid, such as a milk jug.
- If emergency medical care is needed, call the local paramedics (911).
- Please note emergency medical information on the *Volunteer Sign-in and Communications Log* and call the Staff on Duty. You may be asked to complete an incident report as well.

### **SHELTER SAFETY**

- A volunteer must always have access to the telephone. Always keep your cell phone with you while at the shelter.
- Volunteers should avoid 1:1 encounter with clients but rather interact with clients in open areas where others can observe and assist.

- If at any time you feel that a situation might be dangerous, call the police. **Always error on the side of caution.**

## **POLICE**

- The local police are aware of BEDS PLUS and will assist when needed. Police emergency number is **911.**
- If a client or potential client is denied entry to the shelter, voluntarily leaves due to a rule violation or is involuntarily dismissed, the Staff-on-Duty or Site Manager must call the non-emergency line of the local police department to provide a report. In the absence of a Site Manager or Staff-on-Duty, if a client is asked to leave the site, please note the incident on the *Volunteer Sign-in and Communications Log* and call the Staff on Duty before the shelter is closed for the morning. Follow-up action will be determined by the BEDS PLUS staff.
- If an officer comes to the shelter to drop off a client, call the Site Manager and Staff on Duty to the door. If neither is available, the **volunteer should handle the situation based on the information given.** However, our procedure:
  - Check to DNA list to make sure the client is permitted to enter to site.
  - Take a photo of the client's driver's license and text it to the Staff on Duty and/or Site Manager.
  - Note the officer's name and badge number on the *Volunteer Sign-in and Communications Log* along with the actions taken. Call the Staff on Duty if there are any additional questions.
  - If a client is brought to the site after midnight, they are not permitted to enter but should be encouraged to come to the daytime support center for registration the next business day or come to the shelter at 7pm the next evening.

## **FIRE/DISASTER PLANNING**

In the event of an emergency or fire, volunteers should call 911 immediately. When evacuating the building the Site Manager must grab the shelter paperwork and oversee the evacuation of all persons on site. After evacuation, all shelter paperwork should be provided to the battalion chief or a police officer present to assist with any rescue efforts.

- Shelter paperwork may help account for anyone present in the event of an evacuation.
- Remember to stay calm and focus on assisting the most vulnerable individuals at the shelter.
- Familiarize yourself with the posted fire exit plan and location of fire extinguishers at the site. If a fire occurs, please follow the instructions on the fire extinguishers. Generally, when using a fire extinguisher remember to: Pull the pin; aim at the base of the fire; squeeze the handle.
- Exercise caution when using kitchen equipment and industrial stoves. Please do not leave flammable materials near the stove.
- Be sure shelter supplies and sleeping mats are properly stored away from light fixtures and electrical wires.
- If carbon monoxide alarms are triggered in the building, call 911 immediately.

In the event of a tornado or natural disaster, all persons on site will be instructed by the Staff-on-Duty or Site Manager to shelter in place in the most appropriate internal room of the building until the threat is cleared. A disaster and evaluation plan should be posted in each site.

Thank you for your partnership in serving the homeless.