

2020 Winter Weather Disaster Resource Center/Shelter Participant Packet

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Section 1: Packet Content Guidance & Expectations

Section 2: Position Overview – Intent & Expectations

This single page provides the key information for working in a DRC/shelter position and establishes the overall goal of opening and operating a site. Viewers should use this section as to develop their expectation(s) for upcoming activations, and use the subsequent sections to further ones understanding.

Section 3: DRC/Shelter Informaiton Session Notes – Intent & Expectations

This section provides notes from the information sessions held in November and December 2020 in preparation for the winter season. These sessions included content specific to deploying during the COVID pandemic and builds on the general expectations provided in *Section 2: Position Overview*. **It is highly encouraged for staff to review this content.**

- **Web Links:** There are a number of web links to offer more detailed content and expand on the topics being referenced. The expectation is not to review each web link, rather understand there are additional resources available to you and before, during, and after shifts.
- **[Recorded Session](#):** Individuals can find a recording of the November 2 information session on the Multnomah County DRC webpage.

Section 4: General Staff Position Description (ICS-204 Form) – Intent & Expectations

The position description is a detailed explanation of the DRC/shelter general staff role. Individuals are encouraged to do a quick review of the document to identify any questions or comments regarding the role responsibilities prior to deploying for a shift.

- **Web Links:** There are a number of web links to offer more detailed content and expand on the topics being referenced. The expectation is not to review each web link, rather understand there are additional resources available to you and before, during, and after shifts.

Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Intent & Expectations

The questions found in this section have been collected in recent years of winter weather sheltering. Many of these were covered in the information sessions; however, it is encouraged for individuals to review the FAQs if they are unable to attend the sessions.

Section 6: Guide to Working in Physical Distancing Shelters – Intent & Expectations

This section offers specific content regarding working in a shelter during COVID-19. Individuals that were unable to attend an information session are encouraged to review this section, and can be used as a resource prior to, or during, a deployment.

Section 2: Position Overview

Position Responsibilities

- Establish and maintain overnight dormitory operations to provide guests a safe, dry, and warm place to stay.
- Participate in routine cleaning of the facility to provide the safest environment for guests and staff.

Other Duties May Include

- Greet individuals upon arriving at the Disaster Resource Center (DRC)/shelter, and connect them to the appropriate resource.
- Provide assistance with food and beverage distribution to include, meals, snacks, and warm beverages.
- Engage with guests to share situation updates and address any concerns or needs that may come up.
- Assist with the set-up, re-organizing, or tearing-down a DRC/shelter space.
- *Note: We ask that you be flexible - your duties may change throughout the duration of a shift. DRC/shelter priorities may change with the situation and influence which duties need to be prioritized.*

Safety & Cleaning Guidance

- Physical distancing of six (6) feet is expected at all times possible between all individuals.
- Face coverings are required at all times for staff and guests while working in a DRC/shelter (single-use face coverings are available if you do not own one).
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Staff will clean touch points (doors, chairs, sinks/toilets, etc.) routinely.

Section 3: DRC/Shelter Information Session Notes

A link to the November 2nd Information session can be found on the [Multnomah County Disaster Resource Center \(DRC\) webpage](#).

- Health & Safety
 - What to do if you feel sick/sick guidance
 - If you have any COVID symptoms, please do not come in for a shift and inform the contact listed on your registration. If you have been ill, and tested negative for COVID, please wait 48hrs once symptom-free, to work a shift. If you have tested positive for COVID - receive a negative test result, wait 14 days, then be at least 48 hours without symptoms.
 - Mask wearing
 - Masks must cover the mouth and nose and fit snugly. Ear loops or mask straps must be used. Masks must be double-layered – single-layer masks like tube-style gaiters are shown to increase the spread of COVID because they are not thick enough to hold in respiratory droplets. Face shields may protect your eyes from respiratory droplets, but they do not stop the spread of droplets from you or protect you from the droplets of others. Masks will be worn by all guests. They may be removed once guests are in their respective sleeping area, for eating, drinking, or sleeping.
 - Effective face coverings should withstand a candle test ([Link](#)).
 - Physical distancing at the shelter sites
 - Staff are expected to keep six feet distance from each other and from guests. Common areas will be set up to allow for six feet of distance between staff and guests.
 - Hand washing
 - All Staff should wash their hands immediately upon entering the shelter for their shift so as to reduce the number of germs entering a site. Hand washing is the single most effective and least costly way to reduce the spread of infections, including the common cold, hepatitis A, food borne illnesses, and many other viral and bacterial diseases. Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds and dry with a disposable paper towel when:
 - Coming onto shift,
 - When preparing or serving meals to guests,
 - Before and after providing any “hands on” assistance to clients,
 - After handling clients’ unwashed clothing or bedding.
 - Sanitizer is available at all DRC/shelter sites.

*Disaster Resource Center (DRC) and Shelter Worker Overview
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- Cleaning procedures
 - **Gloves:** Staff should wear gloves when handling client belongings to reduce risk of infection from bacteria, viruses, lice or mites, and to reduce risk of infection by needle stick. Try to keep 2 pairs of gloves with you at all times.
 - **General Cleaning:** Hourly cleaning rounds will be completed in all DRC/shelter spaces. Cleaning must include disinfection of high-touch areas like handles, faucets, tabletops, bathroom handles, and stall doors. You are responsible for cleaning your work area and expected to contribute as directed to the cleaning.
- Demonstrating Symptoms (Guests)
 - Screening process - who to alert, what steps to take, referral process ([link](#))
 - Emphasis on notifying a lead during any of these situations.
 - Clarity around “new or worsening”
- Considerations for, and response process to, Shigella.
 - Same screening process to the COVID
 - Gastrointestinal Infections (GI) are spread by a fecal/oral route and are NOT airborne. The best defense is routine hand washing and avoiding touching your mouth. If there is a need to handle belongings of someone who may have a GI illness use impermeable gowns, hair nets, and double gloves. Make certain whoever is handling materials has blood-borne pathogen (BBP) training. All exposed garbage needs to go in a red bio-waste bag and secured with a knot or tape.
 - Similar symptoms for various health concerns:
 - Diarrhea & stomach pain,
 - Norovirus can present with nausea & vomiting, and
 - Shigella can present with fever.
- Considerations for, and response process to, bedbugs.
 - Brief identification understanding – ([Link](#))
 - Bed bug protocol ([Link](#) - page 4)
 - What if you suspect bedbugs? Alert a shift lead or onsite manager immediately.
- What to do in the case of escalation (de-escalation techniques)
 - Each site has a shift leader who can deal with any escalated incidents; the goal is to have behavioral health staff available, either on site or working remotely, who can assess and de-escalate guests who are exhibiting challenging behavior.

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- Expectations
 - How will I know/how much warning?
 - The best way to stay informed is to monitor the weather reports and subscribe to 211 severe weather alerts ([Link to register](#)). Weather is unpredictable and we do our best to get you as much notice as possible.
 - How to sign up for shifts
 - You will receive an email about severe weather shelter activation, this email will include important information about shelter locations, needs and a link to sign up for shifts. Please read all information carefully before signing up.
 - Shifts can be canceled at anytime
 - Because weather conditions can change at any time shifts may be cancelled with little to no notice. If you are flexing time, we encourage you to do it “after” your shift, not before. We tend to build out our schedules a few more extra days to ensure we have coverage.
 - What should I bring/not bring, wear/not wear?
 - Dress warm and comfortable. Leave valuables at home and only bring what you need. Different shelters have different staff storage space; some spaces are more secure than others.
 - How do I cancel? What if it is dangerous to arrive on-site?
 - It is possible to cancel a shift due to emergency or illness, please contact the shelter staffing coordinator as noted on your registration. We know emergencies happen and please try to give us as much notice as possible. Please do not sign up for a shift if you are not comfortable driving in winter weather. Select a shelter location that is close to your house for easy access. Most shelters are on TriMet transportation routes.
 - Multnomah County Employee expectations, supervisors, OT, etc.
 - For trainings and shifts, supervisor permission is required. Please work with your supervisor in advance of severe weather activations to ensure no delays in signing up for shifts. Department HR and your supervisor is a great place for questions around OT versus flextime and other time coding questions.
 - Shelter Staff Roles
 - Our intent is not to “fix” people’s lives, we are here to provide individuals an opportunity to get out of the cold. Period. We should not expect appreciation for the work we are performing.
 - In most shelters there will be a shelter coordinator or shift lead, general staff, behavioral health staff and either onsite or on call medical support. General responsibilities are included on your ICS-204 Form: Position

Description, and specific roles may be assigned by your shelter coordinator or shift lead.

- Health Expectations
 - Many people including the people that utilize emergency weather shelters live with chronic medical conditions – these can appear alarming, but may actually be the person's normal baseline condition, something they live with every day.
 - Shelter staff should know that they can request a guest be evaluated by the Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) staff on site and the person will allow that – MRC will assist to triage a guest into one of 3 categories
 - 1.) A Medical Emergency and request 911 with an immediate medical response and provide basic first aid,
 - 2.) An acute non-emergent medical condition that should go to the emergency department to be treated, or
 - 3.) A minor or chronic medical condition where they will provide first aid and recommend next day follow up care with a care provider.
 - When the MRC is not there, the threshold for calling 911 for emergency evaluation should be that the person is experiencing something that is new, different, or unusual for that person. Indicative of being something other than a chronic medical issue.
- Talking through problems with leadership
 - We all work to provide the best possible environment for staff and guests. If you have concerns and questions please start by working with your shelter lead before taking the issue outside of the shelter.
- Interacting/Human Aspects
 - Understanding an individual's background
 - Gender identification & pronouns
- Point of Contacts
 - Multnomah County
 - Jennifer Mastoja, DCHS – jennifer.mastoja@multco.us
 - Robert Quinn, MCEM – robert.quinn@multco.us
 - Neighborhood Emergency Teams (NET)
 - net@portlandoregon.gov
 - Transitional Projects (TPI)
 - Seth Grant, seth.grant@tprojects.org

Section 4: General Staff Position Description (ICS-204 Form)

Position: Shelter General Staff	Section: Emergency Support Function (ESF) - #6
Position Supervisor: Shift Lead, Disaster Resource Center/Shelter	
Work Location: <i>[To be Determined]</i>	
Shifts: <i>[To be Determined]</i>	
<p>Unit Overview: The Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6 is responsible for coordinating all mass care and sheltering operations during a Multnomah County emergency response. The ESF-6 fits within the Operations Section of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the section responsible for performing the actions/tasks prioritized by incident command/leadership.</p> <p>Position Responsibilities: <i>[include general position overview]</i></p> <p>Working Environment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical distancing, maintaining six feet of separation from others as much as possible. Physical distancing should be practiced among both guests and staff. 2. If a guest causes you concern for their health or well-being, please contact the Shift Lead or Site Manager. 3. Every attempt is made to ensure shelters are staffed sufficiently to appropriately handle facility capacity. If you feel that staffing levels are not appropriate to maintain operations, please contact your site manager. 4. Shelters are indoors, dry, and have air conditioning/heating. Some roles may require brief periods outside. 5. Assignment may include: bending, sweeping/mopping/emptying trash, walking, standing for extended periods, and carrying less than 20 pounds (groceries/paper goods, sleeping pads, bins, and other needed supplies). 6. Brief periods of being outside; current weather conditions can be found at https://www.weather.gov/pqr/ 7. Guests may have chronic illnesses and/or injuries. 8. Some guests may be experiencing ongoing mental health or substance use challenges. This may be a cause of distress for them. Please read the SAFETY MESSAGE below for guidance in this topic. 9. Pets may be present (potential allergens, fleas). 10. Meals, snacks, and beverages are provided at the shelter. <p>Ethics & Philosophy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be patient, kind, and a good listener. 2. Create welcoming spaces and interrupt oppression. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure the identity of the individual has no effect on the services we provide 3. Person first language <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Respectfully placing the person before the circumstance. People should be referred to as guests. 4. Use compassion, acceptance, and mutual respect. 5. Carry out the Vision, Mission, Values and Goals of Multnomah County - View here 6. Use Assertive Engagement approach in working with guests and other staff - More information here 	

7. Utilize ‘A Home for Everyone’s Racial Equity Lens’ when planning, developing or evaluating a policy, program or decision - More information [here](#)
8. Deliver services in a Culturally Responsive and/or Culturally Specific manner - Multnomah County guidance found [here](#)

Qualifications

1. Recommend staff be under 65 and without medical conditions that cause increased vulnerability for severe COVID-19 disease per the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
2. The capability to arrive safely at the facility.
3. Donning warm clothing, closed toed and sturdy shoes
4. Emotional and Psychological First Aid
5. Familiarity with Street Roots ([resource guide](#)) and 2-1-1 (211 [website here](#))
6. Experience working in sheltering environments
7. Training in de-escalation, conflict management, mediation, and basic first aid

Safety Message

1. Review and familiarize with the current Incident Action Plan, specifically the Medical Plan (ICS-208 Form).
2. Review current [Multnomah County COVID guidelines](#) prior to arrival
3. Practice good physical distancing and best practices like frequent hand washing, disinfecting, not touching one's face, and ensure guests with worsening coughs are transported to hotel shelter space for testing.
4. Ensure that guests and fellow staff follow physical distancing guidance. Extended contact should be conducted at a six feet distance, or farther, if possible.
5. Events that may lead to conflict:
 - a. Any loud or escalating noise inside or around the shelter
 - b. Touching a guest or a guest’s items without permission - NEVER attempt to restrain or physically engage with a guest
 - c. Surprising a guest from behind
 - d. Waking a guest abruptly
6. Do not accept or serve home-prepared foods.
7. Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and wash your hands frequently.
8. During general clean-up be mindful of sharp objects:
 - a. Wear nitrile gloves underneath puncture resistant gloves when emptying trash.
 - b. Empty trash frequently so that bags are not completely full and difficult to pick up.
 - c. If an incident occurs with a sharp object, follow the Sharps Protocol found [here](#).
9. If any emergency occurs, contact 911 as appropriate, and notify the Shift Lead.
10. Document incident observations and your role related to the incident here.

Social Distancing Shelter (SDS) Duties

1. Arrive on time and stay for the duration of your shift.
2. Check in with your Shift Lead or Site Manager.
3. Sign in and out (check in with your Shift Lead prior to leaving the shelter, even for brief periods of time)
4. Obtain and use your personal protective equipment (PPE):

- a. Face coverings should be utilized when in the presence of others. Extras are available on site for staff who need them.
- b. Masks should be utilized when interacting with guests who are showing symptoms. Masks will be available for staff onsite.
- c. Please keep at least one pair of nitrile gloves with you in case they are needed.
5. Problem solve as issues arise and elevate issues to the Site Manager as needed.
6. Activate medical response as needed:
 - a. Call 911 if needed, and follow Incident Reporting and Protocol - Found [here](#)
 - b. If you have a medical question, please call Medical staff [*insert medical contact information*] If you are in need of further support call the Public Health Advisor at (503) 988-0274.
7. Track all incidents in the shift log.
8. Attend a shift briefing during Shift Change led by Shift Lead or Site Manager. This briefing is important and will include:
 - a. Introductions and additions to special instructions
 - b. Schedule (transport time, meal times, etc.)
 - c. An opportunity to ask questions
 - d. Shift Lead will provide daily assignments and tasks
9. Familiarize yourself with the facility. This will help you provide directions to guests and assist with any cleanup or other tasks that may come up during your shift.
10. Maintain situational awareness. Notify the Shift Lead or Site Manager of any concerns as soon as they are discovered.
11. Use supportive, person first language and body language - be mindful of how your behavior can escalate or de-escalate a situation.
12. Support the cleaning and/or sanitizing of common areas and other general cleaning.
13. Welcome and orient new guests:
 - a. Ensure guests have a place to lay down and a space for themselves
 - b. Ensure new guests receive a Welcome Packet
14. Notify the Shift Lead if you observe any low supply inventory.
15. Support the equitable distribution of supplies for guests.
16. Practice active listening with guests and provide resources when needed.
17. Inform Shift Leads or Site Managers if any property damage is observed.
18. Work in a team environment with other staff and a variety of outreach workers, first responders, volunteers, and others who may come to the shelter to provide assistance.
19. Incorporate [MultCo COVID-19 guidance for shelter settings](#) when making decisions in relation to shelter operations, activities, and maneuvering around the shelter (example: think about the way the least number of people will touch an object).
20. Familiarize yourself with, and refer to, the [Motel Shelter Referral Protocol](#) sections: Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3 for guidance on coming into contact with a symptomatic guest and determining the need to relocate the guest.

Social Distancing Shelter (SDS) General Staff Assignments

1. Reception

- a. Familiarize yourself with the facility in order to provide directions for guests.
- b. Find help for guests that need assistance
- c. Ensure Reception table is staffed at all times
- d. Identify new guests and provide Welcome Packet

- e. Ensure guests are maintaining physical distancing in the Reception area.
- f. Monitor for safety in the Reception area

2. Food and Beverage

- a. Maintain regular supply of available hot and cold beverages.
- b. Distribute creamer, sugar, stirrers, and cups as needed.
- c. Display snacks and distribute meals at appropriate times.
 - i. Display snack descriptions and ingredients on snack table
- d. Ensure that guests are maintaining physical distancing while eating and accessing meals and snacks.
- e. Setup distribution of food and other items in the dining area to ensure that guests are taking what they touch.
- f. Guests should be served meals before staff. If additional food is needed for guests or staff, inform the Shift Lead or Site Manager.
- g. Staff in the dining area should follow proper food safety guidance. Document the following times to ensure proper food safety guidance is followed:
 - i. Time of Delivery of Meals
 - ii. Time that all guests have received their meals for mealtime
- h. Within three hours of food delivery, work with Logistics Liaison to ensure food is either:
 - i. Delivered to another site or
 - ii. Refrigerated.
- i. Monitor for safety in the dining area

3. Sleeping Area

- a. Receive guests from reception and help them find a sleeping area
- b. Give guests two blankets
- c. Welcome guests and chat with them while maintaining good social distancing practices
- d. Remind guests about the area rules (some spaces are for women or quiet, etc.)
- e. Remain vigilant and whenever possible address situations before they escalate (consider re-assigning beds if necessary).
- f. Monitor for safety in the sleeping area

4. Safety Monitoring:

- a. Work with fellow staff members, Shift Lead and Site Manager throughout each shift to provide friendly reminders that they should either take a break to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- b. Work with fellow staff members, Shift Lead and Site Manager throughout each shift to ensure there are enough COVID-19 specific supplies - hand sanitizer or soap at handwashing stations, Anti-Bacterial wipes or Cleaning Spray with paper towels available at each station, Nitrile Gloves
- c. If there is a shortage of supplies, report to Shift Lead
- d. Help monitor areas in the shelter where people may gather and provide friendly reminders about social distancing.
- e. Work with fellow staff members, Shift Lead and Site Manager throughout each shift to provide friendly reminders that surfaces and frequently touched items/areas are cleaned regularly.

Special Instructions

1. Bring your cell phone and charger (headset recommended) - keep on your person

2. Bring snacks and drink plenty of fluids.
3. Remain calm, use supportive language and non-threatening body language. Remember you have a team and support – reach out to your Shift Lead if needed.
4. It is important to talk to someone regarding any response related stress. The following are tips to limit stress:
 - a. Discuss your specific role/assignment with a Site Manager and obtain clarity.
 - b. Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing through healthy eating, rest, exercise, and relaxation.
 - c. Talk with someone about your feelings (anger, sorrow, etc.) even though it may be difficult.
 - d. Call the Multnomah County Crisis Line 503-988-4888
5. Do not offer to help guests outside of the shelter setting (personal gifts, rides in your car, stays on your couch, etc.)
6. If a media source contacts you, please direct them to your Shift Lead
7. Photos are not allowed in the shelter unless coordinated through the EOC Public Information Officers, and approved by your Site Manager
8. Intimate (sexual) relationships with guests are not allowed
9. Keep what you see and hear private. Do not share personal stories, gossip, or other details that you may see or hear - **unless** - it is a safety issue, and then report it immediately to your Site Manager as appropriate.
10. If you need to call off your shift, please call the Shift Leader 24 hour line.

Equipment and Supplies Needed

- Face covering
- Personal go-kit

Software Required

- No software is required in this position.

Training Requirements

1. Watch the Multnomah County [Disaster Resource Center Staff training videos](#).
 - a. These 18 videos cover topics such as “Trauma Informed Care”, “Cultural Considerations” and “Behavioral Health”.
2. Refer to the [Emergency Operations Center Worker Information](#) as someone working in an emergency operation.
3. Food Handlers Permit
 - a. Please inform the Recruitment staff and/or your Shift Lead if you have obtained a Food Handlers Permit. A [study guide](#) can be found using the link.
 - b. [Website to take test](#) and pay fee (\$10, valid for three years).

Demobilization Questions

The following questions will be asked of you following your demobilization from the Disaster Resource Center/Shelter Team. Your comments/feedback will help identify aspects of this work that are working well and should continue, and aspects that can be improved to make this Unit more effective in the future.

Questions include:

- Describe your onboarding experience into a shelter general staff role.

- What aspects of the onboarding process helped you be successful in the shelter general staff role?
- What aspects of the onboarding process could be improved or adjusted to assist future general staff be successful in their role?
- Describe your experience performing the reception role at the DRC/shelter.
 - What aspects of the reception role were effective in welcoming and recording the current guest population?
 - What aspects of the reception role could be improved or adjusted to better meet the needs of incoming/outgoing guests?
- Describe your experience performing the Food & Beverage role at the DRC/shelter.
 - What aspects of the food and beverage role were successful in providing meals/snacks to guests?
 - What aspects of the food and beverage role could be improved or adjusted to better meet the needs of DRC/shelter guests?
- Describe your experience performing the dormitory role at the DRC/shelter.
 - What aspects of the dormitory role were effective in providing guests a safe and comfortable environment at the DRC/shelter?
 - What aspects of the dormitory role could be improved or adjusted in the future to better meet the needs of DRC/shelter guests?
- [*other components of shelter operations we would like regular feedback on?*]

Prepared By: [*Insert individual updating form*]

Date: [*Insert date the document is updated*]

Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Who do we contact if there are questions about billing, time coding, approvals or other time/schedule related issues?
 - Start with your supervisor, then your Department Finance Lead/Director for billing questions, and your Department Human Resources Unit for time coding, approvals, or other time/schedule related issues.
- How should we code our time for attending this training?
 - Contact your supervisor or HR Department Human Resources Unit for the WBS code.
- How are we notified about available shifts or need for workers?
 - An email will be sent to all county staff with a link to sign up for shifts.
- What if I want to work but don't have transportation?
 - Transportation will not be provided and is the responsibility of the worker. Often shifts are available during wintery conditions when public transit is limited. Please prepare in advance of inclement weather to ensure you have access to reliable transportation (traction devices, and/or 4-wheel or all wheel drive).
- Can I bring my child or other dependant to the shelter?
 - No. Working at the shelter carries the same rules as a regular work shift. No children, visitors, or pets are allowed.
- What do I do if I can't make my shift?
 - Please only sign up for shifts that you are confident that you are able to make. That said, we realize things happen. If for some reason you are unable to make your shift, canceling your Signup Genius is just the first step. A phone call is required to notify us that we need to provide coverage. Please call the number listed on the Signup Genius as soon as possible.
- Will I be paid to work in the shelter?
 - Yes. Prior to signing up for a shift, you must obtain permission from your supervisor. Your supervisor (or Department Finance Lead/Director) can provide you with the correct WBS code for your time.
- Where will the shelters be located?
 - Shelters locations will be opened based on need and are located across the county. When the sign ups are released, the address for each shelter will be listed. Please only sign up for shelters that you are confident that you will be able to get to during adverse weather. Generally the closer to your home the better.
- How will I know what to do and bring to the shelter?
 - Once you sign up for a shift, you will be given a packet of information that includes an ICS-204 Form, which is a job description. Job descriptions contain information about staffing, duties, what to bring, and other important information.

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- Are there supplies at the shelter?
 - Yes, there are will be supply boxes at each shelter.
- Do the shelters accept donations?
 - Shelters do not directly accept donations. Multnomah County does accept donations for shelter distribution. The [following webpage](#) provides specific donations currently being accepted.
 - Please refer to the [Transitional Projects \(TPI\) webpage](#) for their accepted donations.
 - Homemade food should never be accepted at shelter sites.

Section 6: Guide to Working in Physical Distancing Shelters

This is up to date as of: 11/02/20. The content may shift rapidly and some changes may not be reflected here.

“Crisis exposes the character of a community. At Multnomah County, we will not stop looking out for each other.”

- Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a need for social distancing. This means that shelters for people experiencing houselessness need more room to maintain capacity, as the spaces are not set up to accommodate people sleeping six feet apart. To help with this issue, emergency temporary shelter spaces are being used.

This is a snapshot of information gathered from people who have been working in Multnomah County's temporary shelter sites. It is available so that DRC/shelter staff have a sense of what to expect if they sign up for shifts and to help you decide if this is a role you think you can do. Things can change rapidly, and there is a chance that what you encounter when you arrive may be different from what is written here.

What to Know Before you go

Health and Safety

The Central Medical Motel (located at the Jupiter Hotel) is currently hosting a separate program where medically vulnerable people in shelters who exhibit respiratory symptoms are referred. Other shelter hotel sites are opened, as needed.

Medical staff are available at shelter sites. Any guests who develop symptoms should be assessed, and if necessary, moved to a motel-based program where they will be able to self-isolate.

Each location has a site manager who can deal with escalated incidents; the goal is to have behavioral health staff available at all locations, either on site or working remotely, who can assess and de-escalate guests who are exhibiting challenging behavior.

Social distancing

Measures are in place at each shelter (and the hotels). Staff are expected to keep six feet away from each other and from guests. Tables are set up to allow for six feet of distance between staff and guests.

Keeping safe on the way to and from your shift

If you are taking public transportation, remember that there are fewer people using transit during the pandemic and schedules have been modified. Plan in advance to keep yourself safe during a commute.

Challenging Assignment

“You will find that many of the guests are pleasant. Some are looking for someone to talk to, or to share a joke with...”

Trauma

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Living through the COVID-19 pandemic without a stable place to live is traumatic, and some (or many) of the guests at the shelter will exhibit signs of trauma.

Some of your coworkers may also be having a very hard time; this pandemic is unlike anything many of us have experienced. We all may be scared, tired, anxious and stressed.

Not every guest or every staff member will react to these circumstances in the same way. It is important to take every interaction as it comes. Many guests will be very resilient — they may have a lot of experience adapting to thrive during stressful and ambiguous situations. Honor that experience by taking their lead.

Before you go to the shelter, [learn more about trauma](#), and ways to interact with people to avoid retraumatization. This includes listening, being strength-based and respecting an individual's autonomy.

Flexibility

This is a rapidly changing situation. Shelters, during some shifts, might sometimes be down one or two staff members, and processes may change from day to day. Coordinators and team leads may change during your assignment. You may be asked to take on a different task at the shelter to fill a need. Being flexible will help make the experience better for you and for those with whom you are working.

Working in the shelters

"[This work]...does require a lot of compassion, patience, a willingness to serve. One should be comfortable around people experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, and/or addiction."

Tips from staff who have worked in the shelters:

- Wear comfortable shoes and clothing.
- There will be people who think it is a drop-in shelter who have to be turned away.
- Be flexible.
- Food is provided for shelter guests. There may be enough leftover food for staff, but plan to bring your own, especially if you have dietary restrictions.
- There is no secure area for staff to store belongings.

What you might be doing:

- The task you are assigned may depend on your County role; managers may be asked to serve as shift leaders or Persons In Charge.
- Jobs for general shifts may include general cleanup, setting up meals, and checking people in. All tasks will include cleaning and sanitizing.
- You may be answering questions from guests about the news, shelter policies, meal ingredients and other general information.

Reference Materials

- [Disaster Resource Center training videos](#)
- [Multnomah County COVID-19 guidance](#)

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- [Preparing for a Disaster Assignment](#): General resource for disaster response workers. This document includes information about self-awareness check-ins, link to supervisor acknowledgement form, and tips for families.
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) - Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks
- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) – How to properly put on and take off a disposable respirator

All staff working in shelters are asked to view these videos and read the COVID-19 guidance. These videos are a total of about 2.5 hours of viewing. While all the videos are relevant and should be viewed if you are working in a shelter, you may find that videos about [Trauma Informed Care](#), [Safety and Security](#), [Cultural Considerations](#), [Behavioral Health](#), [Homeless Services](#), and [Communicable Disease](#) can help you decide if the work is right for you.

[Community-created list of programming changes in the wake of COVID-19](#)

This information relies on providers submitting timely notices and is typically updated once a day as notices come in. Because it relies on community submissions, some information may become out of date and should be double-checked. Includes information from more than 50 service providers.

General Location information

Orientation/Check-In

There is a 30-minute “shift-change” meeting at the beginning of each shift. During this time, you will get an introduction to the shelter, you will receive updates, and you will get a detailed description of tasks and an overview of available job aids.

Suppliers/Contractors

We rely on suppliers to provide many of the services needed to operate a shelter, these may include food delivery, laundry services, transportation, janitorial or facilities related tasks. Suppliers are there to perform specific tasks and may not be allowed to interact with guests or provide services other than ones assigned to them. Shelter managers should be consulted with any issues or additional requests of suppliers.

Tasks

Duties at the shelter include activities that involve low interaction with guests, like setting up meal service; and activities with lots of interaction with guests, like checking in guests. You will have the opportunity to discuss the assigned duties with your team.

Self-Awareness Check-In

Working in temporary shelters or public health sites is rewarding, but challenging work. It may help you to consider these factors as you decide whether this is the right time for you to engage in this work:

- Consider your own health, personal and/or family issues, and timing.
- Make an honest assessment/decision about whether you are in a place physically and mentally to help in this particular disaster situation and at this particular time.

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- Assess your own bias related to working with individuals experiencing houselessness, addictions and/or mental health struggles
- Check in with yourself, ask:
 - How is my energy level?
 - How is my stress level? Am I feeling well rested and healthy?
 - Do I have a personal connection to this incident that may bring up painful memories?
 - What is going on with my family, am I needed at home?
 - What is going on with work?
 - Have I read the job assignment (ICS 204) or job aid or am I familiar enough with the role that I am confident I have the skillset to deploy in this position?
 - What makes me feel like I could perform these duties?
 - What makes me feel like I would be unable to perform the duties?
 - Have I taken a trauma informed care, or Emotional/Psychological First Aid class?
- What conversations will you have with your family about being deployed?
- How will you manage:
 - Child care
 - Pet care
 - Family health care
 - Family transportation needs
 - Overnight deployment
- How might this affect your day job?
- Work with your supervisor and HR to ensure expectations and the commitment are clear.