

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.

34

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.

38

39 The form captures data and documents issues found within the shelter so that the
40 information can be used in future planning.

41

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.

45

46 Let's look at the assessment tool.

47

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.

51

52 The form is divided into 14 sections. Each section addresses different aspects of
53 shelter health and safety.

54

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

56

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

59

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

62

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

65

66 • Section 2 records the facility name, facility type, and counts of the shelter
67 residents.

68

69 • Section 3 evaluates the physical aspects of the facility.

70

71 • Section 4 evaluates the food supply.

72

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

74

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

76

77 • Section 7 is about sanitation and hygiene.

78

79 • Section 8 deals with waste management.

80

- 81 • Section 9 covers childcare.
- 82
- 83 • Section 10 assesses the adequacy of the sleeping areas.
- 84
- 85 • Section 11 identifies shelter facilities and services for companion animals.
- 86
- 87 • Section 12 covers questions that do not fall into the previous categories.
- 88
- 89 • Section 13 is for general comments about needs and problems identified in
- 90 the shelter, and
- 91
- 92 • Section 14 is an “immediate needs” sheet.

93

94 Now we’re going to return to Section 1 and review the information this assessment

95 tool can provide, to give you a better idea of how it can be used most effectively.

96

97 In Section 1, capture data about the organization assessing the shelter, information

98 about who is completing the assessment, and that person’s contact information, in

99 case follow-up is needed.

100

101 Section 1 contains a shaded box labeled “immediate needs identified.”

102

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

104 completed.

105

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

108

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.

112

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

114

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.

117

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

119

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.

122

123 In Section 4, record information about the safe supply of food and facilities for
124 food preparation, and document safe food handling practices.

125

126 In this section you will also assess the presence of adequate dishwashing facilities
127 and the general cleanliness of the kitchen area.

128

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.

131

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

134

135 Section 6 is the health and medical section.

136

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

139

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

141

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

144

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

147

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

150

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

153

154 In Section 9 you assess the child care area.

155

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

159

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

162

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

164

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

167

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

170

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

172

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

174

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

177

178 Are the areas regularly cleaned and maintained?

179

180 These animals should also have designated relief areas.

181

182 Section 12 covers two unrelated but important topics.

183

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

186

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

189

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

192

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

195

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

198

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

201

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

204

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

207

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

210

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

213

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.

226

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

229

230 Disasters are complex situations that require standardized public health tools that
231 are broad in scope and easy to implement.

232

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.