

BORDER SHELTER TOOLKIT

Best Practices
in Sheltering
Asylum-Seeking
Families at the U.S.
Southern Border

February 2021

Contributing Organizations to the Border Shelter Toolkit



- American Red Cross
- Annunciation House
- Border Servant Corps
- Casa Alitas
- Christ Ministry Center
- Church World Service
- Colores United
- The Deming Shelter
- La Frontera Shelter
- Galilee Center
- Good Neighbor Settlement House
- Holding Institute Community Center
- Humanitarian Respite Center
- The Inn
- International Rescue Committee and the Welcome Center
- Jewish Family Service of San Diego
- Kino Border Initiative
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest
- Mission: Border Hope
- New Mexico Hospitality Coalition
- Ozanam Center
- La Posada Providencia
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
- Safe Harbors Network
- San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter
- Save the Children
- The United Methodist Committee on Relief
- The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)

On the cover: An asylum seeker from Honduras embraced her 3 year-old daughter at a temporary shelter for asylum seekers in Mexico City, awaiting assistance as they look for safety and a better life. ©UNHCR/Daniel Dreifuss

All photographs of U.S. border shelters were taken with the informed consent of any guests pictured.

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Introduction

For people on the move by necessity, particularly those who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and communities by violence and other harm, finding safe shelter is one of the most immediate and pressing needs. When individuals are forced across international boundaries in search of refuge, the resulting vulnerability and insecurity often are heightened. The provision of shelter not only addresses their need for warmth and temporary security, but it is also an instrumental step in restoring dignity and the path forward to stability. For those who seek safety in the United States of America, finding safe shelter upon arrival and after processing at the border means discovering respite—an opportunity to be welcomed and to take a rest during what is commonly a long and arduous journey.

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A sunny courtyard and kitchen garden are available to guests at Casa Alitas in Tucson, Arizona.

The humanitarian response at the southern border of the United States has evolved greatly in the last decade in response to the growing arrival of **asylum-seekers** to the United States. **Asylum-seekers are people, often entire families, who are requesting sanctuary by lodging a protection claim based on a fear of persecution for reasons related to a protected ground (race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion) and whose own government is unable or unwilling to protect them.** The majority of asylum-seekers crossing the U.S. southern border in the past decade are fleeing the North of Central America but also includes asylum-seekers from elsewhere in the Americas and from across the globe. As insecurity in the Central America region has driven people from their homes and communities at increasing rates, the U.S. government has coordinated with local community-based shelters along the southern border to meet the specific needs of the families and other particularly vulnerable people as they are released from short-term government custody. Release to these shelters not only provides a safe and supportive next step for asylum-seekers, but it also provides a more orderly, reliable process for the federal government authorities and the border communities receiving them.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization with the mandate to protect the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people worldwide. UNHCR works with governments, civil society, and impacted populations to ensure that anyone who fears persecution, conflict or violence at home has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge. Integral to guaranteeing the right to seek asylum is the availability of a safe and orderly system to receive and register individuals as asylum-seekers, provide for their immediate basic needs, and to equip them with information on how to navigate the asylum process. UNHCR recognizes the crucial role the border shelters play for individuals and families seeking asylum in the United States—providing them with safe and dignified services to meet their immediate basic needs, orienting them to where they are and what the next steps are in their asylum process, and

facilitating their onward travel to destination communities in the United States where they live with sponsors while pursuing their claims to protection. The respite services provided by the shelter network tend to be short-term, as asylum-seekers resume their onward travel in a matter of hours or days. Through the publication of the Border Shelter Best Practices Toolkit, UNHCR seeks to highlight and disseminate the good practices of the border shelters, thereby bolstering the border shelter community of practice dedicated to receiving asylum-seekers.

The Border Shelters

The shelters along the United States' southern border receiving families released from immigration custody are rooted in their border communities. In recent years, as the number of asylum-seekers presenting at the border swelled, so too has the response. While some shelters had over four decades of experience to draw upon when responding to hospitality needs, others had never operated a shelter before or worked with asylum-seekers. And yet, when asylum-seekers were released from government custody without a place to go, community members instantly responded with shared motivation to welcome asylum-seekers with solidarity, dignity, and respect.

The community response at the U.S.-Mexico border has resulted in a dynamic network of shelters that spans from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas. Within the network, there are a variety of models and proven good practices that fellow shelters, and those who are looking to begin this work, can draw upon in their area. Some shelters were established independently with the specific mandate to shelter and welcome the asylum-seeking and immigrant community. Other already-established organizations responded to the immediate needs of those seeking asylum by expanding existing shelter services to the asylum-seeking population and others by adding hospitality to their existing immigrant rights and refugee resettlement work. In some communities, public-private partnerships between local nonprofits and government entities developed to meet needs.



Asylum seekers from Venezuela cross the border by a “trocha,” muddy footpaths that cut across the scrubland.

Border Shelters’ Role in the Journey of Asylum-Seekers

The families and individuals released to border shelters are primarily asylum-seekers, meaning that most fled from their home countries due to conflict, violence or persecution and are afraid to be forcibly returned home, back to danger. Immigration officials at the border register individuals in order to identify them and to initiate immigration legal proceedings. Absent any security concerns, the families are released to the shelters which provide for their immediate needs.¹ The immigration legal process, which takes several months or years and generally will take place in the asylum-seekers’ inland destinations, determines if they will be deported or are able to remain in the United States.

Moving through the immigration processing at the border is often a disorienting and stressful experience, particularly for those who have suffered trauma, just have undertaken a harrowing journey, and do not speak English.

Many individuals are detained in government custody for a few days or weeks prior to their release to the shelters. The border shelters receiving these individuals and families play a pivotal role as a safe waystation. There, these asylum-seekers are treated as guests, receiving short-term hospitality (including a safe place to sleep, a hot meal and shower, clean clothes, and any needed medical attention) along with information that orients them as to where they are geographically and within the immigration process as well as assistance in making contact with family or friends in order to arrange for travel to their eventual destination within the United States. Recognizing the particular vulnerabilities of asylum-seekers, including individuals who have suffered the loss or separation from immediate family members or experienced harm as severe as torture, shelters strive to serve the guests in a culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed manner. For more information and context on the populations served by border shelters, please see the chapter [Onboarding and Training Procedures for Staff and Volunteers](#).

Toolkit Purpose

This toolkit draws upon innovative models and practices that have worked well in border shelters located across the U.S. southern border and is rooted in international and domestic standards and guidance. The toolkit seeks to serve as a reference for those providing respite shelter at the border. The content presented in this toolkit reflects analyses taken from shelter site visits and interviews conducted in all four southern border states and showcases a range of shelter models, policies, and procedures. Rather than suggesting a singular formula for creating and running a successful shelter, the resources in this toolkit can be adapted to fit the specific needs of the host community

and the guests they welcome, thus ensuring hospitality at all points along the border. *The contributing organizations and UNHCR do not assume responsibility as to how the best practices are applied and do not endorse officially any of the products or organizations referenced in the toolkit.*

Across the border, each community interpreted “hospitality” in a different and innovative way. Inspirational stories of communities embracing their role as humanitarians abound from every corner of the border. UNHCR’s sincere hope that this toolkit, informed by lessons learned in other communities, can guide those committed to such important work and support the resiliency of all involved.

Navigating the Toolkit

The toolkit is presented in four main sections. The first section situates the work of the border shelters in the principles and international standards of humanitarian work. The second section presents the mechanics of what it takes to maintain shelter operations and provide daily services to guests. The third section focuses on the shelter services for guests, with the chapters ordered to reflect a typical hospitality cycle from the moment asylum-seekers are received at the shelter until their departure. The fourth section outlines considerations for working with vulnerable populations. The appendices present guidance to assist shelters that are just starting the important work of hospitality and additional sheltering resources from a large-scale displacement perspective.

The toolkit is designed so that readers can read the toolkit in its entirety or browse by topic as needed, facilitated by a link back to the Table of Contents on the bottom of each page. Whether a reader is an experienced border shelter provider or new to the field, the experience and tested models of fellow shelters are presented for inspiration and potential adoption. Each chapter provides context, sample procedures and policies, and suggested resources. All resources are designed to ensure baseline safeguards are in place and the needs of asylum-seekers are being met while increasing the efficiency of the mechanics involved in running a shelter. The toolkit links to a [Resource Library](#) hosted on UNHCR’s website where readers may access directly the many documents developed and shared by border shelters.



A colorful banner painted by guests and volunteers hangs in the Deming Shelter in Deming, New Mexico.

Key Humanitarian Principles

Humanitarian action is designed to bolster and complement the protection and assistance governments are responsible for extending to those in their territories affected by disasters, armed conflicts, or violence. The border shelters' place in the humanitarian field is at the intersection of humanitarian response and the U.S. immigration legal framework. They are physically located along a high-volume land border and form part of a collection of vital services that typically grow up around inflows of asylum-seekers. While based on a traditional shelter services model, the shelters incorporate aspects of support for survivors of trauma, persecution, and torture; work with foreign-born and non-English speaking populations; and interact with U.S. policy and practice on the reception of asylum-seekers. The daily work of the shelters is rooted in their local communities but at its core draws from the body of international standards and guidance developed for humanitarian work around the world. The following key humanitarian principles and resources provide useful touchstones and guidance to inform the work of border shelters.

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A mother holds her baby at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.

Humanitarian Principles

The four core humanitarian principles at the foundation of humanitarian work are **humanity**, **impartiality**, **independence**, and **neutrality**. These principles are enshrined in key United Nations General Assembly resolutions establishing the international humanitarian system and underpin the definition of what constitutes a ‘humanitarian’ response. Complementing that foundation is the principle of “do no harm,” which obliges humanitarian actors to prevent and mitigate the potential negative impact of their work on affected populations.

Humanity

Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.

Neutrality

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Impartiality

Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no

distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

Independence

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.²

Commitment to the four humanitarian principles is central to widely-accepted codes of conduct, commitments, and core standards, including the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Sphere standards introduced below.

Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC Movement) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief

The Code of Conduct articulates ten principles of conduct for the RCRC Movement and NGOs operating disaster-response programs. These principles are intended to guide their standards of behavior and are rooted in the four core humanitarian principles. Whether in the context of disaster response or in responding to refugee flows at a border, these principles are the hallmark of a true humanitarian response.

- 1 The humanitarian imperative comes first.
- 2 Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
- 3 Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
- 4 We shall endeavor not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.
- 5 We shall respect culture and custom.
- 6 We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
- 7 Ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
- 8 Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
- 9 We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
- 10 In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

More information on the code of conduct is available at [this link](#).

A mural brightens the space at Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas.



The Sphere Standards

The Sphere Project is the initiative of a group of NGOs involved in disaster response and the RCRC Movement, which came together in 1997 to develop a set of universal minimum standards in humanitarian response. First published in 2000, *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* (“the Sphere Handbook”) is the bedrock resource that has guided humanitarian response work for the past two decades. [The Sphere Handbook](#) is an extensive resource featuring guidelines, technical assistance, and legal principles that support a rights-based approach to humanitarian work. The Sphere movement has evolved to represent both standards and practical applications that improve quality and accountability in the humanitarian field. The Sphere Standards function as a baseline for humanitarian standards in four technical areas of:

- 1 Water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH);
- 2 Food security and nutrition;
- 3 Shelter and settlement;
- 4 Health.

The Sphere Standards elaborate on many of the themes presented in this toolkit while directing readers to additional resources. An introductory video on the Sphere Standards is available at [this link](#).

The foundation of the minimum standards set forth in the *Sphere Handbook* is built from the Humanitarian Charter, the four Protection Principles, and the Core Humanitarian Standard.

The Humanitarian Charter sets forth the ethical and legal backdrop to the Sphere Handbook. It is both a statement of shared belief and a statement of established legal rights

and obligations. Drawing from international humanitarian law, human rights law, and refugee law, the charter summarizes as follows the rights of people affected by disaster or conflict:

- The right to life with dignity;
- The right to receive humanitarian assistance;
- The right to protection and security.³

The four Protection Principles highlighted in the Sphere Handbook apply to all humanitarian action and actors. These principles support the rights from the Humanitarian Charter by articulating the role that all humanitarian actors, regardless of their particular humanitarian role or expertise, can play in helping protect people. The four Protection Principles are:

- 1 Enhance the safety, dignity and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm.
- 2 Ensure people's access to assistance according to need and without discrimination.
- 3 Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation.
- 4 Help people claim their rights.⁴

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) promotes a common approach to a humanitarian response by outlining what “good humanitarian action looks like for communities and people affected by crisis, and the staff and organizations involved in a response.”⁵ The CHS lays out nine commitments which serve as a “framework of quality and accountability good practice.”⁶ It seeks to make impacted people and communities central to the humanitarian response and to make the organizations that



Source: The Core Humanitarian Standard, [available here](#).

have adopted the CHS accountable to the people they seek to serve.⁷

As the hallmarks of a humanitarian response that is rights-based and focused on (and accountable to) the communities and people impacted by crisis, the CHS and its companion Nine Commitments and Quality Criteria (shown above) serve as useful and relevant principles for border shelter operators who have undertaken humanitarian response to support the hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers who have passed through their shelter doors. Throughout this toolkit, each chapter is headlined by the most relevant CHS commitment. For additional guidance on key actions and organizational responsibilities to carry out the Nine Commitments, see *The Sphere Handbook*, Chapter 4.

vi. The Nine Commitments and Quality Criteria



1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.



2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is effective and timely.



3. Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.



4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.



5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.

Quality Criterion: Complaints are welcomed and addressed.



6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.



7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.

Quality Criterion: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.



8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.

Quality Criterion: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.



9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.

Quality Criterion: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

Source: CHS Alliance et. al., Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, 9, [available here](#).

Mechanics of a Shelter Operation

The present section outlines the best practices border shelters employ in the set-up and daily running of their operations. As mentioned in the introduction, there are different models of border shelters, each with their own advantages and challenges. The material presented here is designed to lay out the various aspects of a shelter operation, emphasize essential safeguards to have in place, and share practical examples that can be adapted as needed to meet a shelter's specific context.

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Artwork communicates a message of welcome at Kino Border Initiative's shelter in Nogales, Mexico.

Community Relations

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:

“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 6:

“Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.”

A shelter occupies a distinctive role in each community. Given that shelter visibility fluctuates with news coverage and current events, shelters recommend taking a proactive approach to cultivating positive community relations with a variety of stakeholders and community partners. To help generate and maintain local stakeholders’ and community members’ investment in the work of the shelter, providing access to up-to-date information is critical. Shelter directors have found it helpful to send updates to funders, elected officials, and community members via email, a newsletter, or an in-person briefing. Shelters also have developed their own community education presentations that have been used to successfully educate and recruit new volunteers.

As described below, the most common entities shelter staff will interact with are local government agencies and community stakeholders, federal and local law enforcement, and the media. Shelter directors often prioritize the development of these relationships when operating a shelter.

Community Stakeholders

It is important to identify the community members with a vested or strategic interest in the work of a border shelter on behalf of the guests and the community and to understand the dynamics between these stakeholders and community leaders. This could help in

harnessing partnerships, building coalitions, and overcoming challenges. These stakeholders and leaders could be elected officials (i.e. legislators and local officials), business owners (i.e. transportation companies, catering and food business owners), religious leaders, and other community members. Building relationships with these community leaders will help overcome barriers that impact the asylum-seekers and shelter operations.

Working with Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Border shelters offer an important connection between the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials and the community, in part because shelters typically receive guests directly from ICE, and sometimes from CBP, when they are released from detention. Thus, it is extremely important for the shelter to develop a strong working relationship with the local ICE and CBP offices. Both agencies may drop off asylum-seekers at the shelter, although ICE and CBP are separate agencies and do not necessarily coordinate transfers to the shelter.

Experience has shown that developing clear communication protocols and coordinating planned drop-off times are best practices to accommodate large numbers of guests. For example, some shelters specify a morning

and evening time for ICE/CBP to drop off new guests. If possible, ICE/CBP can inform shelter staff ahead of time of the exact number of new guests they can expect to host. This allows shelter managers to schedule the appropriate number of medical and intake staff or volunteers and to make surge shelters available when needed. Another best practice is to designate a specific shelter staff member and provide a cellular number for the ICE/CBP counterpart to coordinate drop offs. That is the contact number authorities will likely save and share with other officers/agents. Strong coordination with the authorities is critical to early identification of high-need guests and helps ensure an avenue for redress if any issues related to guests' immigration paperwork and processes arise that need ICE or CBP attention. Nevertheless, ICE and CBP may not always be able to adhere to the agreed drop-off schedule, so shelter staff should be flexible in receiving new asylum-seekers.

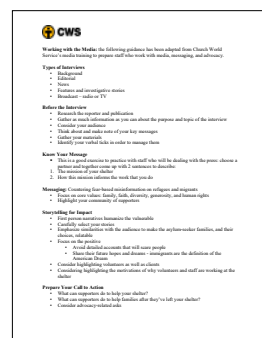
Media

Engaging local, regional, and national media coverage provides a powerful platform for shelter staff to advocate, inform, and update their community. Many shelters harness media coverage to mobilize donations and volunteers while also providing accurate and current information to the general public.

The following practices have been implemented by shelters that regularly work with media to boost the shelter's mission and community support while minimizing the risk of inadvertent harmful exposure:

- Designating certain staff members as the only spokespeople for media interviews and providing them with media training. Instructing other staff and volunteers that they are not authorized to speak with the press.
- Developing a systematic protocol to process and respond to all media requests.

- Engaging with the media on the shelter's terms after thorough preparation. Resist being pressured into speaking to the media without adequate preparation.
- Developing general talking points available for any type of media request, tailoring them as needed depending on the situation.
- Asking the media outlet how and when information will be shared. For example, will it be posted on social media, an online article, a radio piece, or other fora?
- Clearly identifying the press when they are on-site and having an assigned staff member accompany them at all times. An example name tag used by Casa Alitas, located in Tucson, Arizona, is shown in the photo at right.
- Reminding staff and volunteers of the photography and social media policy.
- Obtaining written informed consent if a guest chooses to be interviewed.
- Never sharing the shelter location and, if possible, collecting donations off site.



◀ [Media guidance developed by Church World Service is available in the Resource Library.](#)

Safety and Security

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 5:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.”

Despite the urgency of providing hospitality to asylum-seekers, each shelter first must comply with a variety of regulations, including building inspections, safety and fire codes, and food handling measures. The Border Shelter Toolkit does not constitute legal guidance on operating a shelter in compliance with such state and local laws and ordinances. The safety of staff and guests relies in part on the condition of the premises. To this end, shelters have benefited from establishing a relationship with government contacts early in the process of opening a shelter.

Working closely with the host city’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM), or the local equivalent, will expedite this phase of the process. The OEM is designed to provide mass care assistance for a community during a natural disaster. Therefore, the OEM has the ability to mobilize resources, organize community efforts, and establish a command center to coordinate a variety of actors.



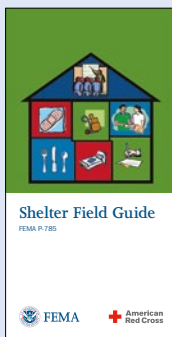
The hybrid model of collaboration between the OEM in Las Cruces, New Mexico and the network of shelters run by the New Mexico Hospitality Coalition (also in Las Cruces) proved effective. The private-public partnership allowed government resources to be utilized alongside nonprofit services. For example, placing representatives of emergency response organizations at the OEM command center ensured efficient communication and rapid mobilization of resources when a need was identified by a community organization.

A volunteer speaks with guests at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.

Safety Checklists

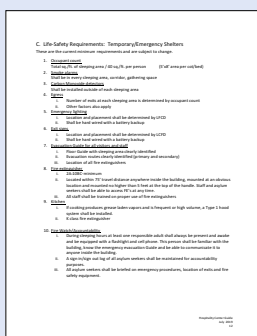
A variety of inspections are needed to get a new facility in working order. Shelters identified the following priority considerations to ensure public safety and public health requirements are met:

- ☑ Zoning compliance.** Cities and counties are divided into land-use zones that are regulated by the type of activity that takes place on a property, such as residential and commercial uses. A shelter must have a permit to be located in the appropriate “zone.” It is recommended that an attorney or government official help shelter staff navigate the permitting process. Shelters such as the Welcome Center run by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Phoenix, Arizona found it helpful to work with an attorney experienced in land use law who was able to offer services *pro bono*.
- ☑ Food safety regulations.** Shelters with a kitchen on site must comply with commercial food safety regulations, similar to a restaurant. Therefore, it is a common practice for shelters to receive meal donations rather than prepare meals on site. Please refer to the [Meal Planning](#) chapter for further information. Given the scope of food services available on the premises, staff may need to complete the “[ServSafe](#)” training to handle food.
- ☑ Legal liability.** It is recommended that an attorney consult with shelter staff to identify any liability exposure and to implement protocols to protect the organization from potential lawsuits. Please refer to the [Intake System](#) chapter and [Onboarding and Training Procedures](#) chapter for sample waiver and release forms.
- ☑ Fire safety.** The local fire marshal should be brought in as soon as possible to assess any fire safety needs and advise on what precautions need to be taken.



◀ *The American Red Cross has developed master checklists that address a range of safety- and security-related considerations when operating shelters. Although designed for a mass care scenario following a natural disaster, there are a variety of [forms](#) available in their resource library, including inspection sheets for opening and closing a shelter.*

In addition, the [Shelter Field Guide](#) published by the American Red Cross and FEMA provides detailed instructions and checklists for operating a shelter. While not all content is directly applicable to a border shelter, many of the same operating procedures still apply.



◀ *This [checklist](#) was developed by the OEM in Las Cruces, New Mexico to provide guidance on required safety procedures. It is an excerpt from the Hospitality Shelter Guide written by the Doña Ana County/City of Las Cruces OEM and based on procedures developed by Peace Lutheran Church in Las Cruces, New Mexico.*

A father and daughter make art together at the International Rescue Committee Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona.



Volunteer and Staff Vetting

To ensure the safety of guests and everyone who works or volunteers at the shelter, a critical component is the proper vetting of all staff and volunteers. Shelter best practices recommend that all staff and volunteers complete a basic background check before they are allowed on site with asylum-seekers. In regards to volunteers, shelters vary in their approach to who pays the fee associated with the background check (some programs cover the cost while others require volunteer applicants to pay the fees). Irrespective of the vetting process, no volunteer should be left alone with a guest. If volunteers do not pass a background check but still want to support the shelter, they may be assigned off-site to serve with tasks like donation sorting.

When asylum-seeker arrivals increase, shelters may be tempted to curtail regular vetting procedures and to allow new volunteers to assist. It is important to keep in mind, however, that many of the asylum-seekers have suffered trauma in their home countries or on their journey to the United States and may be

particularly vulnerable to re-traumatization.

Thus, if volunteers are not vetted and trained systematically through the appropriate channels, they may pose a risk to guests, staff, and fellow volunteers, and the organization could face serious consequences including a lawsuit, unwanted media attention, and closure of the shelter. One best practice is to keep a list of previously-vetted volunteers who are willing to offer additional hours during a sudden increase in arrivals.

Background Checks

- Shelters have relied on the following programs for background checks:
- [Sterling Volunteers](#), formerly known as Verified Volunteers, is a program commonly used by many shelters. Border Servant Corps in Las Cruces, New Mexico designed a process wherein volunteers complete and pay for their own background check and the results are sent automatically to the volunteer coordinator.
- [Hire Right](#) is used by the IRC Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

Specialized Vetting

- Additional vetting procedures, like fingerprints and confirmation of active car insurance, are recommended for specialized volunteer roles, including volunteers who stay overnight and transport asylum-seekers to the airport and bus station.
- A financial background check is recommended for staff or volunteers handling any financial information (i.e. sponsor's credit card number).

Complaint Mechanism

When engaging in humanitarian work, it is essential that aid organizations, staff, and volunteers are accountable to those they serve. As the fifth core Sphere standard states, complaints should be welcomed and addressed by organizations. Therefore, it is shelter best practice to have a complaint mechanism accessible in several languages for guests as well as staff and volunteers. This helps ensure shelters are responsive to any reported unsafe conditions or actors posing a risk to others and have a means of receiving suggestions for improving services. To promote greater accessibility, complaints can be received through a variety of means, including a designated complaint mailbox, a telephone line, or online complaint form that allows anonymous communication.

◀ A [sample complaint form from Casa Alitas in Tucson, Arizona](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

some shelters have received threats. It is best practice to develop comprehensive safety and security procedures and policies that account for a variety of situations, including scenarios involving medical emergencies, violence, or natural disasters.

In response to media attention, shelters with publicly available telephone numbers may receive a variety of telephone calls. Negative telephone calls can be screened through voicemail or directed to appropriately-trained staff who document and report the calls. Security experts recommend that all threats, including those received on social media, should be documented and immediately reported to both shelter staff and law enforcement.

Many shelters have instituted stringent security protocols. Security experts recommend that risk assessments be done at each new facility location and that active shooter training be made available for staff members. If asylum-seekers are housed in an open room or dormitory, installing interior partitions or half walls will increase the security of the facility by creating a barrier between guests and an active shooter.

Many shelters have employed security guards. Guards can deter the presence of outside individuals who do not support the mission of the shelter and wish to frighten, intimidate, or, in some cases, even do harm to guests, staff, or volunteers. Installing a privacy screen or fence around the shelter building and establishing a discrete and safe drop-off point are ideal ways to deal with trespassers.

While hiring security guards can require significant financial resources, other low-cost options are used by shelters. For example, video doorbell cameras are devices that allow a staff member to see and even speak with a visitor at the shelter door. However, precautions are necessary to mitigate the risk of video doorbells or home security cameras being hacked and thereby creating a privacy and security risk to asylum-seekers, staff, and volunteers.

External Threats

Community members' response to the presence of shelters in their communities has varied across the border. Many communities have welcomed the hospitality efforts with open arms while

Shelter Recommended Safety Procedures for Staff and Volunteers

- **Never sharing the location of shelter.** The address of the shelter should never be given to the press or put online. Volunteers should be instructed that the address is confidential.
- **Dialing 911 for an Emergency.** The American telephone number for emergency services should be displayed, explained, and shared with guests.

- **QR Code.** A QR code is a type of barcode that embeds information in its unique pattern. When scanned, the QR code provides content that has been linked to that unique code. For example, Casa Alitas uses QR codes on all of



their volunteer and staff badges so that the name, contact information, and assigned department of that volunteer is displayed when a badge is scanned. A nametag with the QR code is issued only after the volunteer or staff member has completed both the training and vetting processes. The digital scanning system

also provides a time stamp showing when the volunteer checks in and checks out. A QR code can be scanned with any camera on a smart telephone or using specialized applications such as “QR Scanner” and “QR Reader.” Casa Alitas uses a dedicated scanner that is connected to the computer at the shelter’s reception desk and which automatically enters the volunteer registration information into an Excel spreadsheet. That system also is able to print the ID badges on site with a specialized printer.

- **Uniforms.** Many shelters use some type of uniform to differentiate staff and volunteers. This enables asylum-seekers to identify who can help them while allowing staff to easily identify any unwelcome person. For example, the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen,

Texas uses colored t-shirts for their volunteers. An alternative to t-shirts is to have vests on site that volunteers can wear during their shifts.

- **Name Tags.** Volunteers should wear name tags during their shift that show their first name and identify any languages they may speak with their fluency level.
- **Lanyard colors.** A color-coded lanyard system can be used to identify the types of individuals on site. Specific colors can be allocated to volunteers, press, medical personnel, short-term visitors, and guests with high-medical need or those not supposed to travel until cleared by medical staff. This allows staff to easily identify if someone is in an area not open to them or interacting with guests in an inappropriate manner.

- **Fire drills.** Regular fire drills should be conducted.

- **Disseminating safety information.** Disseminating accurate information about safety procedures is critical. In addition to signs, staff can educate guests through interactive means. For example, during the welcome speech given before each meal, staff at Kino Border Initiative in Sonora (and Nogales, Arizona) ask for an asylum-seeker who has participated already in a welcome session to describe to the others the three services the organization offers and the three responsibilities of the guests, thus better capturing the attention of the new arrivals to the shelter. Another strategy is to employ a simple call-and-response session at each meal that highlights three important reminders, such as never leave children unattended, remember to drink water, and call 911 if there is an emergency.

Additional resources, including examples from Jewish Family Service of San Diego on how to handle [suspicious persons](#), a [hostage situation](#), or [bomb threats](#) are available in the [Resource Library](#).

Onboarding and Training Procedures for Staff and Volunteers

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 9:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.”

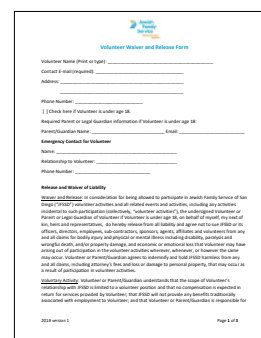
After shelter staff and volunteers have completed a background check successfully (as laid out in the [Safety and Security](#) chapter), they can begin the onboarding process with an orientation and training. For shelters that typically recruit a high volume of prospective volunteers, one suggestion is to set up a recurring training schedule that new volunteers and staff members can attend (i.e. every Monday at 11 am). Utilizing a set training time rather than an ad hoc training schedule allows shelters to efficiently onboard newly-recruited volunteers. The onboarding process and training typically address the shelter’s mission and code of conduct; the overall humanitarian context from which the shelter is providing respite; and the specific role the volunteer or staff member is filling.

Forms: Code of Conduct and Waiver and Release Form

Accountability is an important element of providing a safe shelter environment for staff, volunteers, and guests. Clearly articulating the shelter’s rules and expectations for all staff and volunteers and documenting staff and volunteer agreement to abide by those rules and expectations are essential practices. As such, it is recommended that staff and volunteers sign a code of conduct that delineates the shelter’s rules and ethical principles, along with a waiver and release form, before beginning work at the shelter. The shelter should retain the signed copies and each staff member or volunteer should receive a photocopy. It is also good practice to post the code of conduct in a visible location within the shelter. Visible signs listing staff/volunteer rules will serve to remind and reinforce key regulations over time and will empower supervisors to reference them when enforcement is needed. At its core, any code of conduct should promote the universal principle of “do no harm.”



A poster highlighting the number of guests served hangs at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.



◀ A [sample volunteer waiver and release form](#) from the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in California, operated by Jewish Family Service of San Diego, is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Sample Code of Conduct adapted from Annunciation House, El Paso, Texas:

- Please check in upon arrival. Name tags are required at all times. If you do not have a name tag visible, you will be asked to leave.
- No pictures of guests or the premises should be taken. This is a strict rule. Please honor our guests by keeping their privacy and dignity intact. Imagine if someone wanted to take a photograph of you during the worst time of your life. Please do not take a photograph even if their parent gives you permission to take their children's photograph. Parents have a hard time saying no given the power dynamic.
- No posting photographs or "checking-in" on social media. It is imperative that the shelter address is not revealed. This is for the security of staff and guests.
- Volunteers should never be alone with children. There should never be a moment where you are alone with a child. If you find yourself alone with a child, either locate the parent or request another volunteer to join you while the parents are located.
- If you see a child without an adult, please help them find their parent. All kids, even teenagers, must be with a parent at all times. If a child asks you for something and is not with their parent, please ask the parent before you give the child the requested item.
- Do not lend out your cellular telephones.
- Do not make travel arrangements or let guests make their own travel arrangements. All travel arrangements must go through the office telephones.
- Please treat the guests and your fellow volunteers with respect.
- Smile! Our guests need a friendly face at all times.
- Please honor your commitment. We are depending on you. Please show up for the shifts you have committed to or let us know in advance if you need to reschedule.
- Please dress appropriately. Volunteers should be comfortably but respectfully dressed.

Additional content for a volunteer and staff code of conduct can be based on the "Ethical Do's and Don'ts" section of the [Psychological First Aid Pocket Guide](#), found below:

Do's

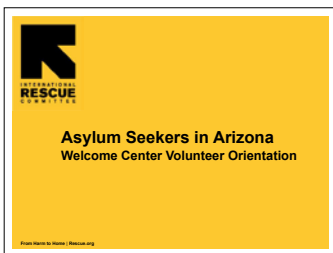
- Be honest and trustworthy.
- Respect people's right to make their own decisions.
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices.
- Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still access help in the future.
- Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, if this is appropriate.
- Behave appropriately by considering the person's culture, age and gender.

Don'ts

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper.
- Don't ask the person for any money or favor for helping them.
- Don't make false promises or give false information.
- Don't exaggerate your skills.
- Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy.
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story.
- Don't share the person's story with others.
- Don't judge the person for their actions or feelings.

Orientation

Many shelters provide an orientation to all new staff and volunteers. Such orientations often include a presentation that offers an overview of who is an asylum-seeker, the asylum process, common country conditions that force asylum-seekers to flee, a summary of the shelter structure, and responsibilities and expectations of staff and volunteers. In particular for volunteers, shelters also may cover the culture of the shelter so the shelter can set the tone for the volunteer experience. For example, the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas promotes a “culture of encounter,” in which the volunteer is encouraged to lean into challenging and perhaps uncomfortable experiences by learning new things and meeting new people.



Sample orientation presentations from the [International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#), based in Phoenix, Arizona, and [Border Servant Corps](#) in Las Cruces, New Mexico are available in the [Resource Library](#).

Overview of Relevant Immigration Law

It is important to explain asylum-seekers' immigration status and the immigration system that they must navigate upon their arrival. Immigration questions undoubtedly will arise as staff and volunteers work with asylum-seekers. Immigration law, however, is complicated and requires significant expertise, even for attorneys. Nevertheless, as part of the onboarding process, an “Immigration 101” presentation can outline the basics of the immigration court and process of applying for asylum. A variety of resources are available that help explain the basics of asylum to a general audience. Note that law, policy, and practice related to asylum-seekers at the border frequently shift and additional resources may be needed to explain the current state of the law and policy.

Sample introductory resources include the following:

- 1 On the topic of the global refugee situation and the root causes of flight in the Americas region:
 - The *UNHCR Global Trends Report* is an annual report documenting the situation of forced displacement around the world; see UNHCR's [website](#) for the latest report.
 - The UNHCR [overview](#) of displacement in Central America includes short videos featuring asylum-seekers.
 - This short [video](#) produced by Emerson Collective in partnership with Show of Force highlights stories of asylum-seekers and their decision to flee Central America.

Legal Advice

Guests sometimes ask shelter staff and volunteers questions regarding their immigration situation and options. Remember, every individual's case is different and only a person authorized to practice immigration law is permitted to offer legal advice.

- *Women on the Run: First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico* is a [report](#) by UNHCR.

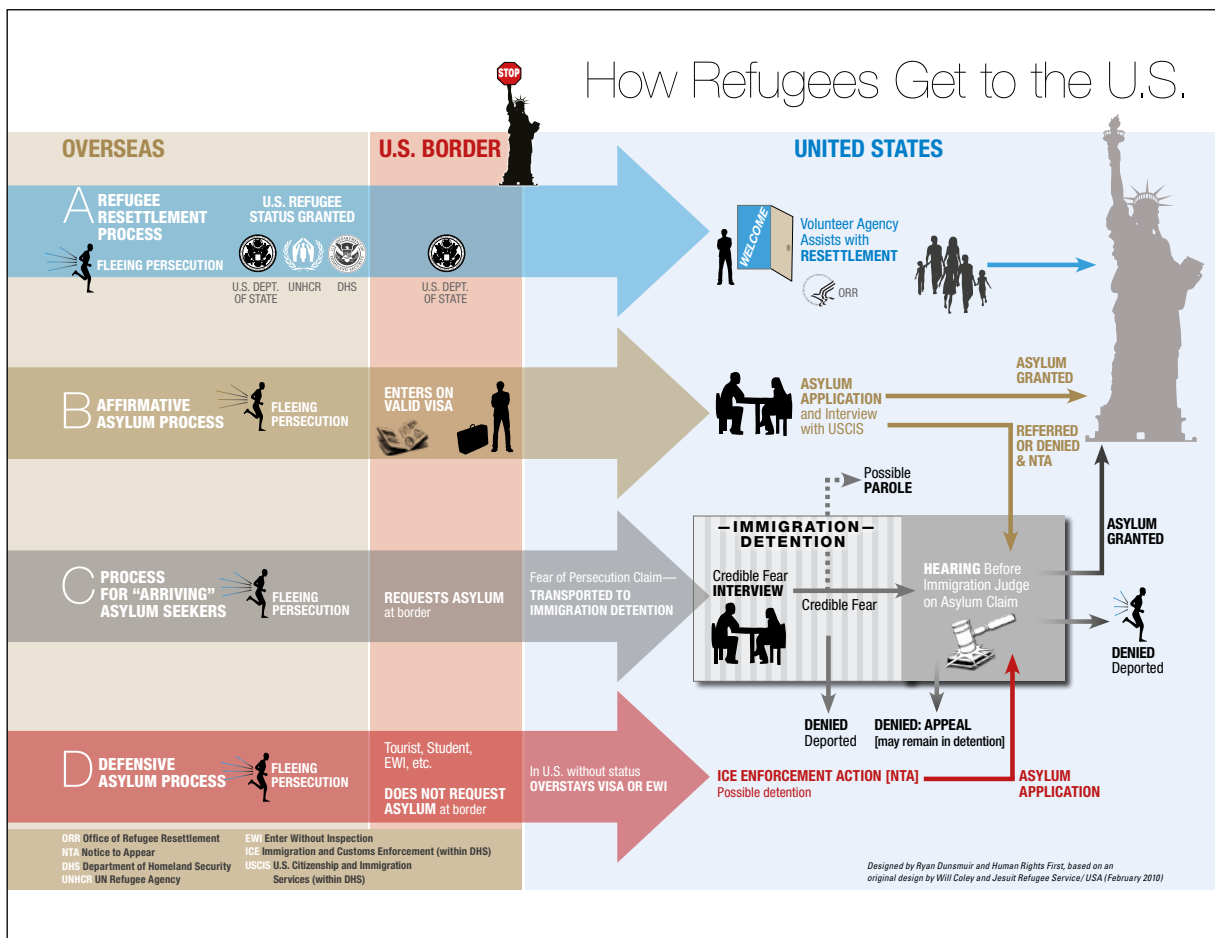
2 On the topic of the U.S. asylum process:

- UNHCR’s [webpage](#) for asylum-seekers includes detailed information and pro se manuals on the asylum process.
- “How Refugees Get to the U.S.” is an [infographic](#) developed by Human Rights First (see below).

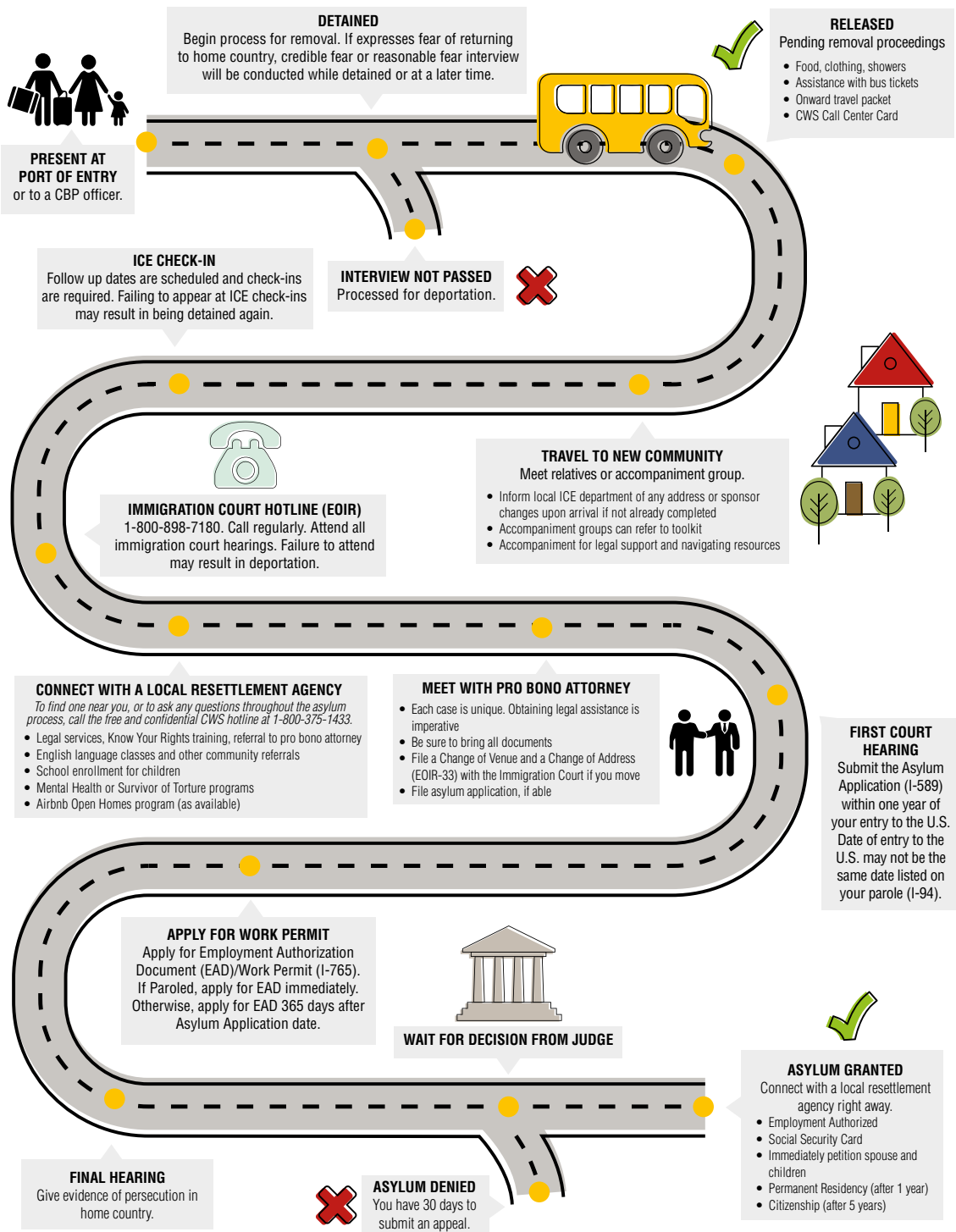
- “Asylum Process Map” is a flowchart developed by Church World Service illustrating the legal process to apply for asylum (next page). It is available in English and Spanish in the [Resource Library](#).

- “Processing of Adults and Family Units Arriving at the Southern Border Without Valid Documents” is a [flowchart](#) by the Congressional Research Service.

- “The Waitlist” is a [video](#) highlighting the experience of asylum-seekers waiting in northern Mexico for their turn to approach the U.S. border and request asylum.



CWS | ASYLUM PROCESS MAP



YOU MAY ALSO BE ELIGIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL SERVICES IN YOUR CITY OR THROUGH A LOCAL RESETTLEMENT AGENCY, INCLUDING:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF Cash Assistance) or Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
- Legal Assistance
- Case Management
- Matching Grant Program— an alternative to public assistance (if eligible, must enroll within 90 days of being granted asylum)
- Employment Assistance
- Interpretation/Translation
- English Language Classes

DISCLAIMER: THIS MAP INDICATES THE IMMIGRATION COURT ASYLUM PROCESS. THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IS GENERAL AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE INDIVIDUALIZED LEGAL ADVICE. INDIVIDUALS SEEKING LEGAL ADVICE SHOULD CONTACT AN IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY.



Children play outside a shelter in Tapachula, southern Mexico.

© UNHCR/Arturo Almiran

Volunteer Roles

Volunteer commitments can range from a single task to a recurring role at the shelter. If possible, volunteer opportunities can be designed to allow community members to donate an hour of their time or work an entire eight-hour shift. A sliding scale of needs allows staff to assign volunteers to discrete roles, such as airport/bus station driver or donation sorter. Other roles, such as intake specialist, are more open-ended and can require a constantly fluctuating amount of time.

Shelters utilize a range of staffing models to run the shelter, from a majority of paid staff to majority volunteers. When possible, shelters try to minimize turnover with certain key roles, like shelter manager, volunteer coordinator, and transportation coordinator. Otherwise, institutional memory is lost and mistakes can be made when these three roles are not stable.

Depending on the size of the shelter, staff and volunteers may be assigned to teams (such as medical, intake, or travel) with training organized by each team. If so, it is recommended that each team have a team leader for each shift who reports to a supervisor.

Volunteers often arrive very excited to lend a helping hand and to bring new ideas. Appropriate guidance helps ensure that volunteers' energy and good intentions are directed to the most needed tasks. As some shelters have discovered, if 15 volunteers are assigned to the shelter's clothing bank, there can be 15 new versions of that same clothing bank by the end of shift. Staff can receive suggestions but avoid frustrations by communicating to volunteers why it is important to receive permission from a supervising staff member before instituting changes to shelter procedures.

Suggested Organizational Structure Overview

After several years of doing this work, Annunciation House suggests that temporary hospitals create unique systems of self-organizing management systems. Currently, it is important for each site to understand the unique needs and characteristics of their site.

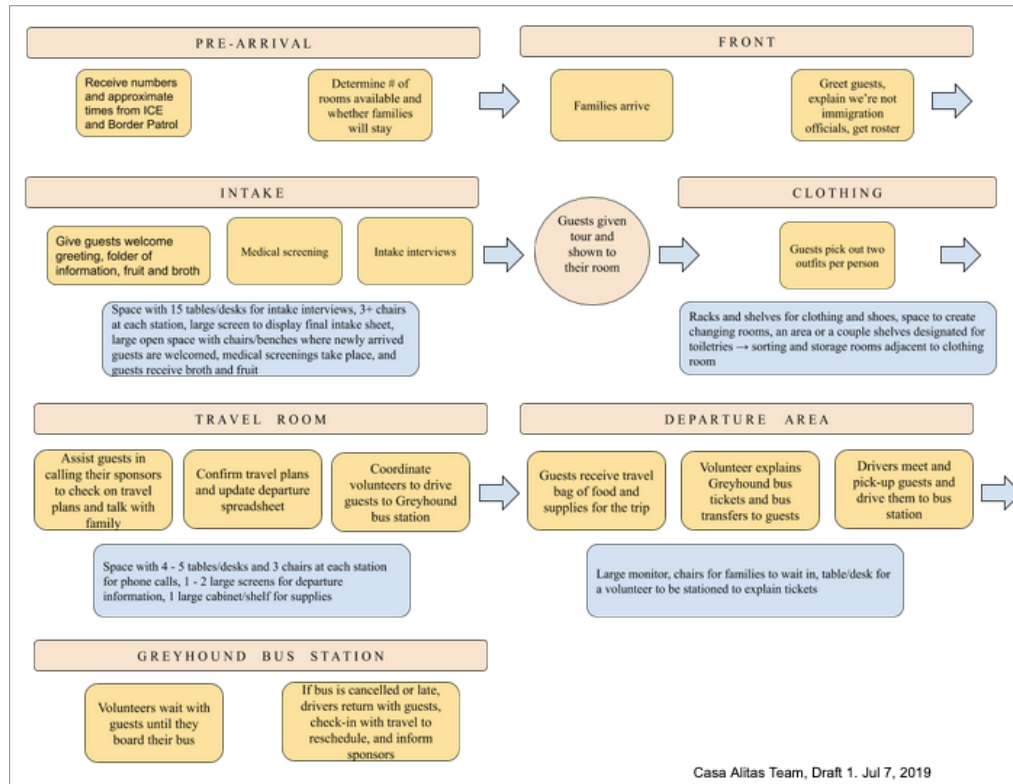
Annunciation House suggests that each site pick one person who is ultimately responsible with the overall management of the site. This role should be assigned to a person who is not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the shelter. This role should be assigned to a person who is not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the shelter. This role should be assigned to a person who is not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the shelter.

Key Roles

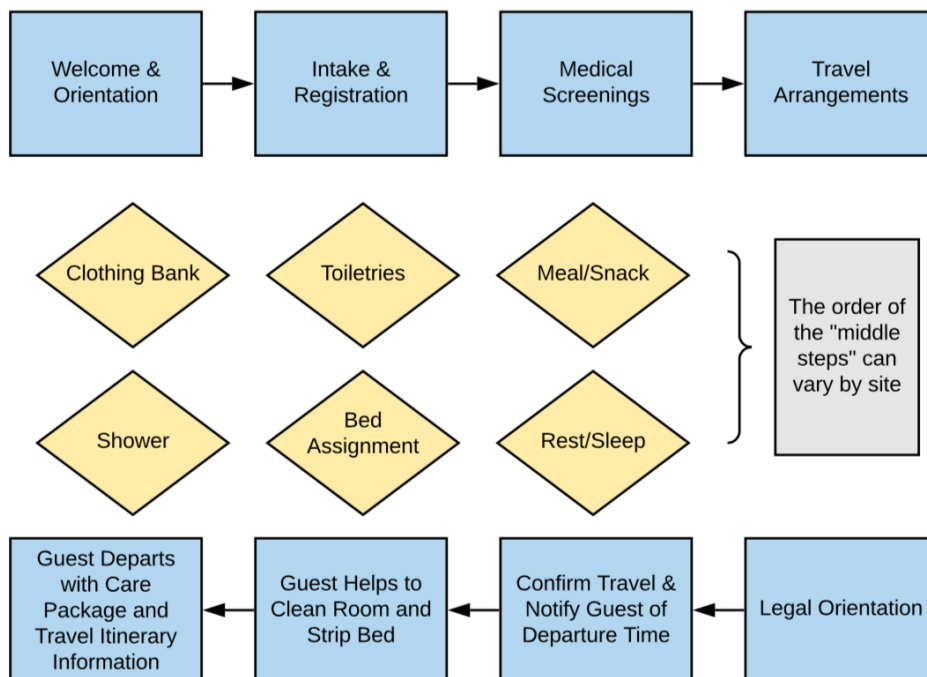
- Shelter Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Transportation Coordinator
- Intake Specialist
- Medical Coordinator
- Food Coordinator
- Sanitation Coordinator
- Security Coordinator
- Construction Coordinator
- Financial Coordinator
- Legal Coordinator
- Public Relations Coordinator
- IT Coordinator
- Facilities Coordinator
- Supply Coordinator
- Transportation Coordinator

◀ *Annunciation House is a longstanding border shelter that operates on a volunteer model. Their [suggested organizational structure and corresponding description of roles](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#). Please note, this guidance is intended for a shelter context that operates multiple buildings across different locations.*

Presenting a flow chart of shelter services can be helpful when orienting volunteers to the functions of the shelter and the various roles they may fill. Sample shelter hospitality flow charts from Casa Alitas and Annunciation House can be found below:



Sample Flowchart, Adapted from the Annunciation House Model



Language Ability

Language needs and ability naturally will vary among guests. While there is some flexibility in the language abilities required by various staff and volunteer positions to meet the guests' needs, certain roles such as intake and travel coordination require language fluency because mistakes during intake or travel coordination can cause costly problems for guests when they embark on the next stage of their journey.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a tool that provides a comprehensive assessment of second languages. For example, someone who speaks Spanish at a B2/C1 level would be recommended for staff assigned to intake or transportation, but an A1-level speaker could be assigned to the clothing bank or assembling hygiene kits. To the extent possible, it is recommended that the shelter assess at what level the prospective volunteer can speak the language in question.

◀ The [self-assessment chart](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Secondary Trauma/ Resiliency Training

Shelter staff and regular volunteers may experience burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary/vicarious trauma as a result of their daily encounters with guests who have experienced suffering and trauma. Bearing witness to difficult stories day after day amid demanding work can wear staff and volunteers down.

TEND Academy, an organization that provides resources and training to address the needs of trauma-exposed workplaces, defines these three reactions as:

- **Compassion Fatigue (CF)** refers to the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when we are unable to refuel and regenerate.
- **Vicarious trauma (VT)** describes the profound shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with individuals who have experienced trauma; helpers notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.
- **Burnout** is a term that has been used to describe the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work. However, burnout does not necessarily mean that our view of the world has been damaged, or that we have lost the ability to feel compassion for others.

According to [TEND](#), people may experience all three conditions simultaneously. They are accumulative over time and evident in people's personal and professional lives, especially for those working in the helping field.

Best practices to deal with the impact on staff and volunteers entail offering training on these conditions and discussing ways to prevent secondary trauma and coping strategies as needed. Some shelters coordinate with a local social worker or psychologist to provide in-person trainings. In other instances, shelters have arranged for non-local organizations to present trainings.

For Additional Resources:

- [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) provides in-person trainings designed to provide opportunities for participants to learn about common signs of stress and compassion fatigue; coping mechanisms; a safe space for respite, rejuvenation and reflection; and developing tools to build resilience and prevent burnout.
- [The Headington Institute](#) provides affordable online trainings specifically designed for humanitarian workers.
- [The TEND Academy](#) offers online courses.

- [The Human Rights Resilience Project](#) offers an array of resources, including training modules, self-assessment tools, and articles.
- For more detailed information on secondary trauma, see [Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others and The Age of Overwhelm: Strategies for the Long Haul](#).

UNICEF's [field guide](#), *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Families at the U.S.-Mexico Border*, describes key principles, appropriate interventions, and resources to guide those who are designing and organizing services and/or providing direct assistance to asylum-seeking families. Topics range from specific strategies for promoting psychosocial well-being for children and supporting the role of parents/caregivers to best practices for staff and volunteer care, including organizational approaches and individual stress management.



[Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Families at the U.S.-Mexico Border \(UNICEF\)](#)

An example of a simple but effective staff-care practice is to schedule regular group meetings and “check-ins” with staff and regular volunteers to discuss the latest challenges and concerns while sharing inspiration and success stories in a safe space. Annunciation House is run almost entirely by a residential volunteer community. There, they hold daily morning reflections, which afford the volunteer staff members dedicated time to prioritize their own wellbeing while working in challenging conditions.



Two young children from Honduras fled with their family to Guatemala in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic to seek asylum.

Volunteer Management

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 8:
“Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.”

Shelters have been fortunate to draw upon a robust volunteer community. In some cases, shelters have had hundreds of volunteers serve asylum-seekers. Therefore, the role of volunteer coordinator is critical. In addition to vetting and training new volunteers, the coordinator manages the volunteers' schedules to meet the needs of the shelter. Online resources such as [Sign Up Genius](#) are popular tools for scheduling volunteers. The program allows volunteers to sign up for shifts online and sends a reminder text to volunteers about their upcoming shifts. The platform also allows site administrators to block certain people who have not passed a background check or other vetting requirements.

Other best practices that have facilitated volunteer management and positioned volunteers for a well-organized volunteer experience include:

- Establishing separate email accounts for each team and role, including volunteer coordinator, donation manager, shelter supervisor, and medical coordinator;
- Using radios, not cellular telephones, to communicate internally while on shift;
- Utilizing programs such as Slack, WhatsApp, Signal, and GroupMe that are more nimble channels for communicating information on the go than email;
- Maintaining a central telephone that is carried at all times by a staff member during a shift to coordinate travel plans with sponsors, or otherwise limiting the number of telephones used to coordinate transportation;
- Transferring a checklist of pending tasks to the next shift supervisor;

- Transferring a list of priority guests with medical conditions who need to be monitored, especially children during the night, to the next shift supervisor;
- Holding regular staff meetings;
- Using Zoom or Skype to host video conference calls;
- Providing a break room for staff and volunteers.

Neutrality of Humanitarian Service

Shelters along the border benefit from volunteers from all different backgrounds. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC Movement) and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief notes that “[a]id will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.” It is important that shelters instruct all volunteers to follow a “no proselytizing” rule and ensure the asylum-seekers' rights and privacy are not endangered by any advocacy the shelter may choose to conduct. The former director of Mission: Border Hope, located in Eagle Pass, Texas, aptly summarizes the balance between a faith-based response and hospitality work as a “ministry of presence, not proselytizing.” Some faith-based shelters, such as Annunciation House and Casa Alitas, maintain a small chapel available for guests to use privately and which can host chaplains for guest services. More information on the RCRC Movement Code of Conduct can be found in the Key Humanitarian Principles chapter.

Hiring Former Guests

Some asylum-seekers may decide to remain permanently in the city where they received shelter hospitality. La Posada Providencia in San Benito, Texas has benefitted from employing

former guests in various capacities. When asylum-seekers see their experience reflected in staff diversity, this engenders greater language access, cultural competency, an increased level of understanding, and, most importantly, trust.

Trainings

Whenever possible, it is recommended that staff and volunteers receive additional training beyond the initial onboarding provided, depending upon their role. These trainings could include:

- Safe operations
 - Food handling ([ServSafe](#));
 - Hygiene and sanitation;
 - Emergency trainings such as fire drills, CPR, and active shooter response.
- Working with asylum-seekers
 - Cultural sensitivity;
 - Working with interpreters (in person and telephonically);
 - Psychological first aid;
 - Vicarious trauma or secondary trauma, also known as “Care for the Caregivers;”
 - Resiliency training, another model of “Care for the Caregivers;”
 - Asylum 101 or Immigration Law 101 trainings (as an introduction to the fundamentals);
 - Human trafficking prevention.
- Meetings children’s needs
 - Child safeguarding;
 - Unique needs of children in emergencies;
 - Child and family-friendly environments;
 - Reporting child abuse.
- Managing operations
 - Nonprofit management;
 - Conflict management;
 - Public speaking;
 - Working with the media and press.

In addition to reaching out to local organizations, such as the American Red Cross chapter for CPR courses or local immigration legal services for immigration-related trainings, shelters can reach out to organizations based outside of their border region for additional training. As mentioned in the chapter [Onboarding and Training Procedures for Staff and Volunteers](#), UNICEF is an important resource on mental health and psychosocial support, including “Care for the Caregiver” and “Basic Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Migrant Children and Families.” Likewise, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has developed a training on secondary trauma and resiliency. Also, Save the Children and UNICEF are expert resources on child-specific topics.

Data Management

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 4:

“Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 9:

“Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.”

Data management – the practice of securely and efficiently collecting, storing, and using data – is a central function of any shelter, and it is critical to have a data management system that serves the needs of the asylum-seekers as well as shelter staff and management. An effective data management infrastructure allows shelters to conduct intake interviews, follow up on guests’ needs, monitor transportation plans, maintain an accurate count of the number of individuals on the premises, manage volunteers, and generate data for the shelter’s advocacy, fundraising, and grants management programs.

Each shelter has developed its own data management system, with some relying exclusively on a digital system and others employing a combination of digital and hard-copy practices. Best practices in data management recommend a digital system to better support data security, accuracy, efficiency, sustainability, and data analytics. Shelters have seen the numbers of asylum-seekers released to them rise and fall over the years, thus it is important to consider what kind of data management system is easiest to scale up and down. As one staff member at the Las Cruces Office of Emergency Management (OEM) advised, long-term thinking, even in an emergency response, is always the best approach: “plan for longer than you think and more people than you think.” Thus, data management may not seem relevant for a one-week response, but it becomes critical when the one-week response stretches into months and even years.

It is important that ethical and accurate data collection practices be prioritized from the outset. [The FEMA and American Red Cross Shelter Field Guide](#) advises staff members to “retain documents in a safe and secure environment.” Documentation may include the following:

- Logs;
- Incident and other reports;
- Agreements and/or contracts;

Data Principles

According to UNHCR policy on data protection, the eight basic principles of managing an individual’s personal data are:

- Legitimate and fair processing;
- Purpose specification;
- Necessity and proportionality;
- Accuracy;
- Respect for individual rights;
- Confidentiality;
- Security;
- Accountability and supervision.

- ☑ Invoices;
- ☑ Shelter registration forms;
- ☑ Volunteer and staff records;
- ☑ Staff time sheet.

The data management system employed should be able to match the pace and demands of the daily guest intakes. The following are considerations for each shelter’s data management system:

- Confidentiality must be maintained at every level. Shelters should ensure that client data (names, A#s (alien number), telephone numbers, etc.) are accessible only to staff and vetted volunteers who need access to this information. Whether kept on paper or digitally, shelters should make appropriate protocols for how they store, send, and share data. Third party disclosures of client data should also be limited.
- An aggregation tool for statistics should be used that can reflect accurately numbers, countries of origin, preferred language, gender, the number of children in each family unit, and other important metrics. With the ability to run reports, shelters are able to better comply with grant requirements, answer board inquiries, and inform fundraising needs. Funding opportunities, such as FEMA’s program to reimburse organizations that provided emergency shelter to asylum-seekers, require precise statistics.
- Shelters with case management capacity often track immigration-related information. For example, some shelters track the date and location of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) check-ins and immigration court appointments (if known). Additionally, tracking the clients’ A#s can help social workers and other staff on case management teams in destination cities get a leg-up on their prospective clients’ legal responsibilities (i.e. being able to call the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) hotline with them, or even prior to meeting them, to be aware of their next court date). For more on this type of support, see the [Case Management](#) chapter.

- Shelters such as Casa Alitas in Tucson, Arizona, the International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona, and the Galilee Center in Mecca, California have periodically tracked the destination cities of their guests. An analysis of the destination cities can reveal trends in migration and also aid in connecting asylum-seekers to community resources in the destination community that meet legal, medical, and other needs.

- Comprehensive data management should also include sponsor information in case human trafficking or another illegal scenario is identified. The ability to flag and locate these cases is critical for law enforcement and shelter staff. For more information on human trafficking, see the chapter on [Protection from Exploitation and Abuse](#).

Informed Consent/ Release of Information

Informed consent should be obtained from each guest at any time data is collected.

◀ A sample form to obtain informed consent for release of personal data, developed by Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) in the [Resource Library](#).

Summative data tracking system

Creating and sharing a daily report is a common way to keep staff and volunteers informed of the exact numbers of arrivals, departures, relevant case notes, and medical cases who need to be monitored. This type of report can be scaled up or down to generate daily, weekly, and monthly data sets.



A [sample template](#) developed by JFS for the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in California is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Data Management Considerations for Intake Models

Conducting a successful intake is the most important phase of the hospitality process. Capturing the correct information ensures that other components, such as medical screenings and transportation arrangements, are all completed accurately. Thus, determining the type of intake model – digital or hard copy (paper-based) – is a key first step to running an efficient intake process and ensuring accurate and safe data management.

Digital Platforms

Various digital platforms for the intake and data management processes are available to shelters. To safeguard the rights of asylum-seekers in compliance with the shelter’s confidentiality agreement with them, a platform must ensure the privacy of the sensitive data it contains. Well-known data management platforms, such as Google Suite and the Google Nonprofit platform, are not recommended to manage sensitive data such as A# (alien number), name, country of origin, and destination city. Rather, shelters

employ several alternative data management platforms, such as [Zendesk](#), used by the IRC Welcome Center to create a customized data management system that meets shelter needs while ensuring data encryption.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) adapted the platform it developed for all the refugee resettlement agencies in the United States to track and manage their refugee clients enrolled in their programs for use by the border shelters. In addition to its case management functions, the Immigration and Refugee Information System (IRIS) can generate reports based on a guest’s status (i.e. if they are still at the shelter or have arrived in their destination city). This helps facilitate referrals to services that will support them across their case, including legal and medical services. For the shelter context, the software captures biographic data (name, date of birth, A#), sponsor information (name, address, telephone numbers), and case notes with attached documents.

[Kobo Toolbox](#) is another tool for data collection and analysis that is available for free and specifically for humanitarian use. Kobo Toolbox can be used on cellular telephones, tablets, and computers and can collect and store data while offline, thus making it a mobile-friendly option.

Customized Software

The Diocese of Las Cruces, New Mexico developed the Oak Tree program for use by the border shelters in Las Cruces and Deming, allowing each shelter to customize its own intake form and user privileges. This specialized platform combines the intake process with travel services into one program. After completion of the intake process, the program automatically contacts the guest’s sponsor via a text message to notify them that their loved one has been registered at a migrant shelter and that they will be contacted shortly to arrange travel. The software allows transportation to be coordinated within the platform so that staff can efficiently assist sponsors in purchasing air and bus tickets. There is an optional \$10 service fee to ensure the sustainability of this software program. The

Oak Tree software is a comprehensive tool that satisfies informational needs for intake, travel arrangements, and statistics for reports. To find out more about Oak Tree, please refer to the [contact](#) information at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces.



◀ [Sample software screenshots from the Oak Tree program are available in the Resource Library.](#)

and used by Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas. The left side of the carbon-copy form is used by shelter staff while the right, vertical side, is detached and given to the asylum-seekers to inform them of their travel information. The intake slips are then placed on large bulletin boards assigned to the different stages of the intake process and can be transferred from board to board to track each asylum-seeker’s progress throughout their stay – from the intake procedure to travel arrangements to their departure. For example, once a sponsor had purchased an airplane or bus ticket for the asylum-seeker, their travel information was recorded and their slip was moved from the intake bulletin board to the transportation board to indicate their upcoming departure. While such a system has the benefit of being easy to start up, it presents a significant challenge to timely data tracking and statistical reporting.

Sample Paper Intake Model

For shelters that choose to employ a paper intake system, the below sample was created

_____ Hospitality Site			Nombre: _____ Hora de Salida de Albergue: _____ Dia de Salida: _____ Cuarto #: _____
_____ Airline or Bus Co.	_____ Departure Date	_____ Time	
_____ Pick-Up Time			
_____ Name	_____ Room/Cot #	_____ Persons Total	
_____ Confirmation #	_____ Driver and Phone #		
_____ Children	_____ Ages	_____ Car Seat ___ Yes ___ No	
_____ Name of Ticket Purchaser			
_____ Destination	_____ Phone Number		
ANNUNCIATION HOUSE HOSPITALITY CENTER FORM			

Sanitation and Hygiene

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, Commitment No. 3:

“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 7:

“Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.”

A clean and hygienic shelter space is an important element of providing safe and dignified respite and services to asylum-seekers. A primary threat to the safety of guests, as well as staff and volunteers, in any congregate setting is the spread of contagious illness, a point made all too clearly by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the threat of foodborne illness is a possibility in any setting where food is prepared and served; this, however, fortunately can be prevented easily by appropriate cleaning and food preparation practices. As such, the need for adherence to rigorous sanitation and hygiene protocols cannot be overemphasized.

Contracting with professional janitorial or custodian services can help greatly in maintaining clean premises. However, if such contracts are cost-prohibitive, developing and monitoring adherence to standardized sanitation and food-handling protocols will help mitigate the spread of illness among guests, staff, and volunteers.

Hygiene

Good hygiene practices are behaviors that help prevent infection and the spread of disease by keeping people and their surroundings clean. To promote basic hygiene practices and etiquette, signs posted around the shelter displaying rules serve to remind guests, volunteers, and staff about the following:

- Washing their hands in the mobile hand-washing station;

- Using hand sanitizer (to be made available in multiple locations around the shelter for staff, volunteers, and guests to utilize);
- Etiquette when coughing and sneezing;
- Flushing toilet paper down the toilet (as opposed to throwing it in a trash can, as many guests do in their home country due to fragile plumbing infrastructure);
- Appropriate trash disposal.

Informational posters and short videos are available in many languages to inform guests about COVID-19 and how to prevent its spread.

- Refugee Council USA has compiled an extensive [list](#) of print and audio/visual resources from various sources on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in approximately a dozen languages.
- Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras, in collaboration with the Indigenous Language Office at Casa Alitas (located in Tucson, Arizona) and the International Mayan League, has made available [videos](#) on COVID-19 in nearly 40 Mayan languages.
- The Guatemalan Ministry of Education has prepared print and video materials in a number of indigenous languages, available on their [website](#) by clicking on the tab “Plan de Prevención.”

Sanitation Procedures

Robust sanitation procedures are essential to maintain hygienic shelter conditions, safeguard against common and novel illnesses, and ensure compliance with relevant safety codes, including food safety. Guidance for setting up shelter space and protocols to prevent and manage contagious illnesses (such as the flu and COVID-19) have been developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other public health authorities, and shelter operators.

Congregate settings, such as shelters, present sanitation challenges due to the frequent turnover of guests. The CDC has published [specific guidance](#) for congregate settings. Instructions on how to clean and disinfect shared housing facilities, including scenarios in which someone in the building is sick, is available through this [link](#). Additional considerations regarding how to maintain common rooms, including kitchens and bathrooms, are available [here](#).

Drawing on public health guidance, some shelters have developed their own operational instructions. Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) produced a detailed guide on infection control and response protocols for the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in California, available in the [Resource Library](#) and referenced in the [Medical Screenings](#) chapter. Included in the JFS' *Shelter Infection Control* guide is a sanitation procedure with daily sanitation schedule.



Galilee Center in Mecca, California.

© Ali Boyd

All spaces in a shelter are to be kept clean, but certain parts (such as the sleeping areas) present an added challenge. Most shelters utilize donated cots or air mattresses, as both can be set up easily and moved as needed. Shelters have found that it is easy to sanitize cots daily by wiping them down with a bleach solution. As an added measure, shelters have used a power washer to clean cots also. Shelters often invite guests to help with the cleaning process by stripping and wiping down their own cots.

◀ [The JFS guide on infection control and response protocols is available in the Resource Library](#)

Food Safety

As mentioned in the chapter on [Meal Planning](#), some shelters prepare food on site while others have meals delivered. Regardless of the shelter's system, following food safety guidelines for the preparation, serving, and storing of food is key to preventing foodborne illness. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service publishes food safety resources, including the following guidance, [Cleanliness Helps Prevent Foodborne Illness](#). Additional USDA resources are available at this [link](#).



The “ropa room” at The Inn in Tucson, Arizona provides guests with the opportunity to pick out a fresh set of clothes.

© All Boyd

Laundry

Given the volume of guests, keeping up with daily laundry is a large task for most shelters. Shelters often use off-site laundry services that require significant time, travel, and monetary investment. Many shelters have switched to on-site laundry through donations or grants from organizations. If operating an on-site laundry, shelters should post guidance in laundry rooms

or otherwise inform staff, volunteers, and guests about safe practices to avoid the spread of illnesses (such as COVID-19), like those outlined in these simple [guidelines](#) from the CDC. Others have made adjustments in order to reduce the amount of laundry to be done. For example, at Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas, sheets are not given to short-term guests so that laundry is limited to blankets and towels only.

Meal Planning

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Sharing food is an integral part of hospitality in cultures around the world. When offering a hot meal to guests, shelters communicate that the shelter is a friendly and safe place where guests are welcome and where their immediate needs will be met. The journey prior to arrival at a shelter is often arduous, and guests may have experienced food insecurity. Providing ready access to food will help alleviate guests’ anxiety in the short term and bolster their energy for the remaining journey to their destination communities.

When planning food for guests, shelters prepare for meals, snacks, and care packages for guests’ onward travel. Knowing that guests may arrive

at all times of the day, shelters typically ensure that water and snacks always are on hand. Many shelters immediately provide a broth-based soup designed to soothe upset stomachs. Given that most guests leave the shelters within 24 to 48 hours after their arrival, menus can be repeated frequently. As guests depart, many shelters provide a travel bag or care package containing food and a water bottle for the airplane or bus trip since most guests do not have extra spending money and may be traveling for several hours or even days.

Familiar food from home can be a powerful comfort after time spent in border officials’ custody. When feasible, shelters should seek to



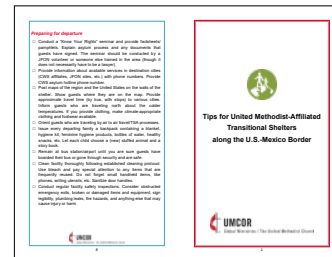
A family enjoys a meal together at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.

accommodate the general food preferences of their guests and respect their dietary, cultural, and religious requirements. For example, Central Americans are not accustomed to eating spicy foods typical to Mexico. Asylum-seekers from India often do not eat meat, but Brazilians are accustomed to high-meat diets. To navigate varying dietary preferences, the Galilee Center in Mecca, California at times offers two meal options to accommodate their diverse guest populations.

When serving meals, shelters find it a helpful practice to provide small signs with a description of each item, particularly if dishes that are prepared are not familiar to the guests. For the safety of the guests with allergies (known or unknown) as well as to serve those with dietary restrictions, it is important to note a dish's ingredients and spiciness level.

Some shelters equipped with a kitchen prefer to prepare food on site. To operate a commercial kitchen that meets food health standards, staff may be required to pass a basic [ServSafe](#) certification. The United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR) guide, *Tips for United Methodist-Affiliated Transitional Shelters*, advises shelter managers to "Prioritize food safety. Practice food safety basics. Regularly

inspect food items for expiration dates, leaks and mold, especially those that are donated. Do not recycle leftovers with questionable shelf-life or temperature compliance." More information on food safety resources can be found [here](#).



◀ [UMCOR's guide is available in the Resource Library.](#)

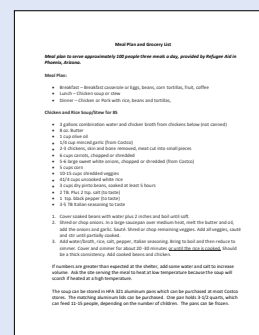
Some shelters do not prepare food on site. Meals prepared off-site and delivered to the shelters are frequently provided by local groups, such as the Salvation Army, soup kitchens, and churches. A rotating meal schedule is designed to facilitate a volunteer group to prepare, serve, and clean up one meal each week. To safely transport food, some shelters recommend using food storage products known as "[cambros](#)." It is important that a shelter understand the local government regulations about food preparation.

Sample menus and shopping lists

The Galilee Center's meal planner provides a sample menu for one week, while Phoenix, Arizona's Refugee Aid and Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest's meal plan, complete with recipes and shopping list to feed 100 guests, is a sample menu for one day. Both are available in the [Resource Library](#).

Meal Planner						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Breakfast: Cereal, Fruit, Yogurt	Breakfast: Pancakes, Fruit, Yogurt	Breakfast: Pancakes, Fruit, Yogurt	Breakfast: Pancakes, Fruit, Yogurt	Breakfast: Pancakes, Fruit, Yogurt	Breakfast: Pancakes, Fruit, Yogurt	Breakfast: Pancakes, Fruit, Yogurt
Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt	Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt	Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt	Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt	Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt	Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt	Lunch: Sandwich, Fruit, Yogurt
Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables	Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables	Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables	Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables	Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables	Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables	Dinner: Pasta, Meat, Vegetables

◀ [The Galilee Center's meal planner.](#)



◀ [This meal plan and shopping list was designed to serve approximately 100 people three meals a day. It was provided by Refugee Aid and Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest in Phoenix, Arizona.](#)

Care Packages

Travel bags, also called “care packages,” aim to provide enough food for each family member for the total number of days they will be traveling from the shelter to their destination address. When traveling by bus, the trip to certain parts of the United States can take up to five days. When traveling by air, each item in the care package should be in compliance with

TSA regulations. Volunteers who put together the care packages often add a small note of encouragement for the guests.

The sample care package guidelines below from Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas lists the amount of food recommended to include in a care package. Guests are provided with refillable water bottles.

Air	Bus		
<i>Less than 1 day</i>	<i>Less than 1 day</i>	<i>1 day (per person)</i>	<i>2 days (per person)</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 sandwich	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 sandwiches	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 sandwiches	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 sandwiches
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 snacks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 snack (granola bar, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 snacks (granola bar, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 snacks (granola bar, etc.)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 note/card of encouragement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 fruit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 fruit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 fruit
<i>No liquids</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 juice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 juice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 juice
<i>No fruit</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 water bottle/bag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 water bottle/bag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 water bottle/bag
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 note/card of encouragement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 note/card of encouragement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 note/card of encouragement
<p>For each additional day, add two more sandwiches and one snack to the care package (i.e. a three-day trip should be 8 sandwiches and 5 snacks).</p>			

Donation Management

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 9:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.”

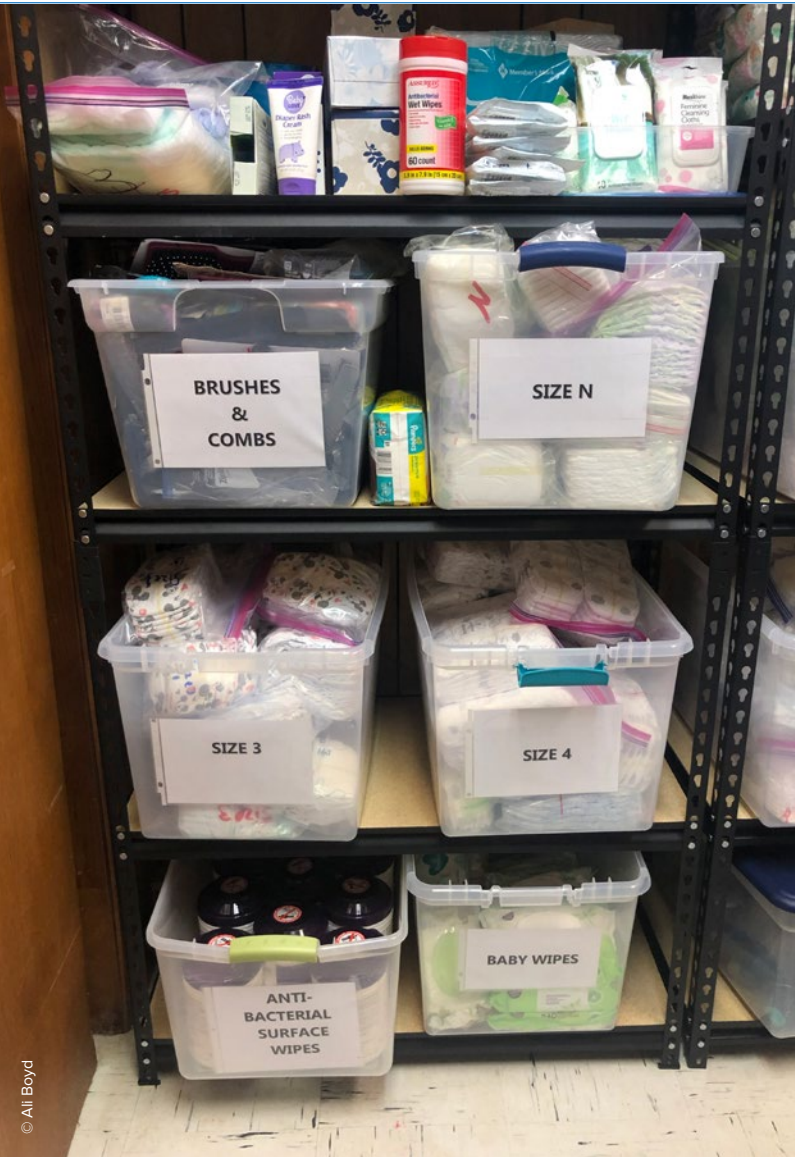
Most shelters are able to serve guests in part through the generosity of community members. Donations to shelters typically are either monetary or are in-kind items, such as clothing, shoes, hygiene supplies, toys, and other necessities. However, the volume of donations, particularly in times of unusually high arrivals, necessitates a management system to sort, track, and distribute items. Tracking inventory, including donations, can facilitate grant compliance and help identify when additional supplies are needed.

For in-kind items, many shelters utilize a donation inventory. The American Red Cross provides a sample [inventory log](#). Border Servant Corps, based in Las Cruces, New Mexico, created an inventory spreadsheet specifically for items received by border shelters. This spreadsheet includes a classification for each of the following items: clothing, hygiene, travel, medical, hospitality, and a sorting rack guide.

To ensure the guests’ needs are best met and the shelter is not overwhelmed by unnecessary donation inventory, shelters can update and inform the general public of their current needs. Communication channels, such as Amazon wish lists, biweekly newsletters, media interviews, and social media posts, all help to notify supporters of donation needs. Free software such as [NeedsList](#) can help secure and manage in-kind material needs. Monetary donations can be collected through platforms such as [GoFundMe](#) and/or social media fundraisers on Facebook and Instagram. Successful pitches for funding and in-kind donations are specific to what is most needed and creative. For example, feel-good items such as stuffed animals often are not a practical donation item because they can spread germs and may not fit into luggage. However, cellular telephone SIM cards and minutes are constantly needed for guests to communicate with family members and sponsors.

◀ A [sample of the spreadsheet](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

◀ An [example supply list](#) from the *Hospitality Shelter Guide* written by the Las Cruces Office of Emergency Management (OEM) illustrates the range of items that can be supplied via donations, available in the [Resource Library](#).



Supplies for guests at Good Neighbor Settlement House in Brownsville, Texas.

The following non-exhaustive list of organizations have provided in-kind donations for a mass care context, such as hygiene kits, cots, and blankets, and may be able to provide donations to border shelters. Please note, each organization varies in what kind of material donations they can donate as well as the criteria for providing such donations.

- The American Red Cross;
- Save the Children;
- Salvation Army;
- FEMA;
- Church World Service;
- The United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Furthermore, the following humanitarian organizations have supported shelters through monetary grants in the past and can be contacted to inquire about relevant grant programs and application criteria for future grants:

- Church World Service;
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance;
- Save the Children;
- The United Methodist Committee on Relief.

When acquiring donations, it is important to note if the donor/funder has placed any specific restrictions on any of the items (i.e. must be utilized within a particular location). This information is needed if a shelter transitions services or closes and the items need to be reallocated elsewhere.

Distributing Donations

The main types of items shelters typically distribute are hygiene kits and clothing. Because large bottles of shampoo and soap are more cost effective than mini bottles, it is more efficient for guests to first shower using shared toiletries provided by the shelter. That way, the hygiene kits with travel-size products can be reserved for future use and distributed after a guest has initially showered. Shelters have learned from guests that useful products to include in the hygiene kits include basic toiletries, hair ties, feminine products, lip balm, shoelaces, and a comb.

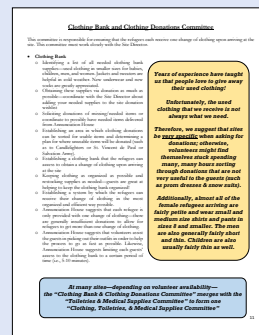
The process of distributing donated goods to guests benefits from organization and planning. Ensuring that these goods are accessible and distributed equally among all guests will promote fairness and decrease opportunities for conflict. For example, a “first come, first served” policy may preclude access for those with disabilities or mobility limitations. Shelters should utilize signage to clearly indicate what guests are allowed to use. For example, having bottled water sitting out does not necessarily communicate that guests can take water when they need it.

Clothing Banks

A well-run clothing bank allows guests to receive a new set of clothing in a timely manner. The following best practices have been developed for clothing banks:

- When time permits, guests can “shop” in the “ropa room” or clothing bank and browse clothing options. Shelters have observed that displaying clothes such as they would be displayed in a store is more effective than storing them in bins or boxes. For example, The Inn, located in Tucson, Arizona, has transformed its clothing bank into a layout that resembles a retail store and allows guests to “shop” for clothing.
- To expedite clothing distributions when numbers are high, staff at shelters like the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas will provide guests with a preassembled clothing “bundle” containing a shirt, underwear, and socks. The guest then selects a pair of shoes and pants. This practice balances efficiency and a measure of personal dignity by giving the guests the opportunity to choose some of the items they will wear that are most specific to size.
- Donation sorting requires a large time investment and functions better in a separate location from the clothing bank. Clothes should be brought into the clothing bank once ready to be used by guests.
- Excess clothing storage should be stored in a location that complies with fire safety codes.
- Items that cannot be used at the shelter can be donated to thrift stores or recycled.
- Utilizing a uniform sizing system is better than relying on the clothes’ affixed labels, which may vary significantly across items and brands.

- Post signs for volunteers to remind them of what and how items should be sorted and selected for the clothing bank. For example, the Phoenix, Arizona, International Rescue Committee (IRC) Welcome Center instructs volunteers tasked with donation sorting to:
 - Wear gloves when sorting shoes;
 - Spray all shoes with Lysol;
 - Inspect the collar and underarm areas for stains;
 - Inspect for any holes around stomach or crotch areas;
 - Ensure bottoms have no urine stains;
 - Check zippers on all pants;
 - Check soles of shoes;
 - Separate clothes by gender, size, and item;
 - Fold clothes and store them in their appropriate boxes;
 - When boxes are full, take them to clothing storage area;
 - Label boxes with size, item, gender, and date;
 - Separate clothing/items that are not useable into thrift store donation piles or clothing recycle piles;
 - Unusable items include formal attire, heels, slippers, bathing suits, costumes, and bathrobes.



◀ *Further advice from Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas on running a clothing bank is available in the [Resource Library](#).*

Overflow/Surge Capacity Contingency Plans

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 2:

“Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 6:

“Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 7:

“Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.”

For every shelter space, there is an incredible network of community support that animates hospitality work. This often translates into an extended network of community centers and faith-based organizations that open their buildings when called upon to provide extra space for asylum-seekers. When guest arrivals exceed the capacity at a central shelter, a “hub and spoke” system can be activated whereby the central shelter is the hub wherein intake and other important functions (such as wellness checks, contact with family members, and Know Your Rights presentations) are provided, while the extended network of community groups are the spokes that provide lodging. When implementing the hub and spoke model, it is important that volunteers in standby spaces be trained and equipped to receive guests before they are added to the standby list. Also, the use of “spokes” – additional community centers, churches, and individual homes – carries a different set of selection considerations and requires specialized vetting processes for the host families/organizations.

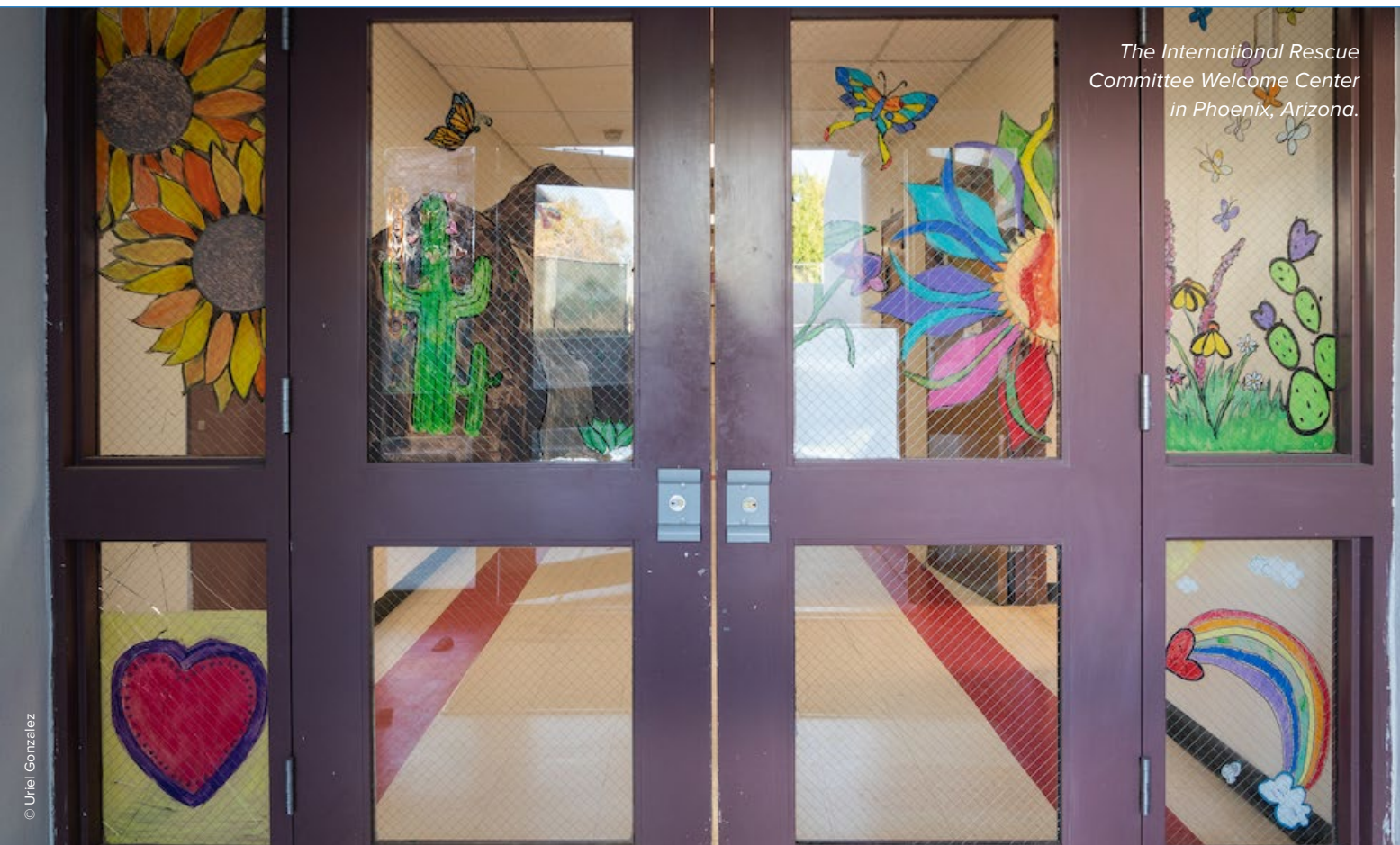
Church Network Model

Every border shelter has stories of their community opening its doors in creative ways

when increased arrivals of asylum-seekers exceed the capacity of the shelter infrastructure.

- In 2016, when Haitian asylum-seekers began arriving in increased numbers at the border near San Diego, California, the local Haitian diaspora responded by welcoming the newly arrived asylum-seekers into their churches and at Christ Ministry Center. While these churches originally provided short-term respite shelter, over time they evolved to provide longer-term care for those who, by necessity, remained in the San Diego area. This type of response provided culturally-competent hospitality and catalyzed what is now known as the Safe Harbors Network, a network of churches and homes in the greater San Diego area that host families while case management, medical, and other services are provided through partnerships.
- In 2018, when the numbers of Central American asylum-seeking families arriving in Phoenix, Arizona grew, a group of Hispanic churches there formed the initial hospitality network that has since grown into dozens of shelters coordinated by Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest. With the subsequent opening of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) Welcome Center, the church shelters and IRC

*The International Rescue
Committee Welcome Center
in Phoenix, Arizona.*



share hospitality based on assigned days of the week.

- In El Paso, Texas, Annunciation House has been a long-standing shelter in the community. When the number of asylum-seeking families exceeded its capacity beginning in 2018, Annunciation House reached out to area churches (along with motels, as explained below) to open their doors as shelters; together, the network met the increased need.

Motel Model

Some shelters have utilized local hotels/motels to provide additional shelter capacity in response to increased asylum-seeker arrivals. When overflow space was urgently needed, Annunciation House was able to receive over 800 asylum-seekers in one day by activating a network of hospitality sites comprising traditional shelter spaces, motels, and churches. The Annunciation House experience shows that if no advance notice is given, motels can be activated quickly as overflow hospitality sites. However, the hospitality services at each motel location

should be staffed at all times by shelter staff and volunteers. Motel rooms offer a comfortable space that ensures privacy, a personal bathroom and shower, and a TV to entertain the kids. If the motel has a common room, this can serve as space to conduct intake, serve meals, and manage other services (such as travel arrangements). For motels without a common room to rent, a large tent can be used as a kitchen space to prepare and serve meals and to perform other services. Border Servant Corps in Las Cruces, New Mexico also used hotel rooms to meet hospitality needs, and used additional rooms for specific functions, such as medical screenings, a clothing bank, an overnight room for a staff member, and a transportation office. For a sample welcome speech from the Border Servant Corps tailored to a motel setting, see the [Welcome Script](#) chapter.

First Time Shelters

For groups looking to begin sheltering asylum-seeking families in response to an urgent need, further information is available in the appendix entitled [New shelter? Start Here.](#)

Transitioning Shelter Functions

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 2:
“Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.”

During down times, when few asylum-seeking families are released to shelters, some shelters have responded to shifting community needs by transitioning their building to serve as a community center while others have decided to close their shelter altogether. When possible, the former is one way that allows the shelter to maintain critical elements of staffing and infrastructure in the event that the number of asylum-seekers in need of respite shelter services at their location increases again at a future date.

In addition to assessing the timeline of the transition process, it is important to keep the following considerations in mind when planning the transitioning of a shelter:

- How long is needed to maintain a space?
- How will staffing occur?
- How long is needed to maintain material items (i.e. donations, infrastructure)? How much will be kept? Where will it be stored?
- How will records (guest files, copies of guest paperwork) be retained and for how long? How will they be properly destroyed?
- How will the distribution of supplies occur in alignment with donor intent (see below)? Is communication required with specific donors about re-allocation of items?
- How will the shelter communicate with volunteers, donors, and the community about the changes?
- How will the shelter preserve the volunteer roster and email database?

Standby (contingency) mode

Even if a physical shelter closes, it is good practice to maintain a hospitality plan. For example, while the Las Cruces Armory closed its building when no longer called upon to receive guests, it maintains its network of surge/overflow shelters available to respond as needed. There is also an agreement that if hospitality is needed for large numbers, nonprofit organizations will respond initially to immediate needs, after which the local city government will be prepared to assist within 72 hours.

Donations

When acquiring donations, it is important to note if there are specific restrictions placed on any of the items (i.e. items that must be utilized within a particular location or for a particular purpose). This information is needed if and when a shelter transitions its services and items are reallocated elsewhere. A shelter may also communicate with donors that some items received will be utilized and distributed as the organization sees fit.

Staffing Models

Planning and retaining the appropriate number of staff is one of the most challenging parts of transitioning a shelter. Each shelter will assess how to scale essential staff to meet the changing needs of the community.

Guest Services

The present section outlines best practices border shelters employ when providing essential services to guests. While there are many variations on how to deliver these services, the material presented herein is designed to lay out the core considerations, emphasize essential safeguards, and share practical examples that can be adapted as needed to meet a shelter’s specific context. The use of the term “guests” by many shelters helps convey the spirit of welcome that is imbued in all aspects of the services provided.

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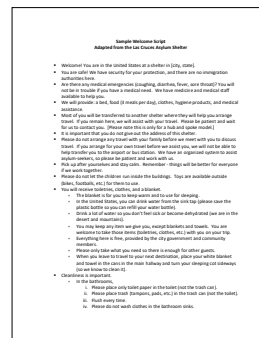


A hot meal is served to young guests at the International Rescue Committee Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

Welcome Script

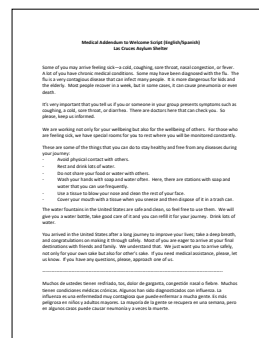
Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 4:
“Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.”

When asylum-seekers first arrive to a shelter, shelter representatives have an important opportunity to set the tone and to project welcome. Staff and volunteers at the McAllen, Texas Humanitarian Respite Center show solidarity with arriving asylum-seekers by greeting them with applause when they enter the shelter for the first time. After entering, the first communication is typically through a “welcome speech” that orients the asylum-seekers to where they are and what to expect. It is important to communicate that they are safe, no longer in the custody of the immigration authorities, free to leave at any time, and will receive services like food, clothing, and communication with family members unless they choose to decline such services. The welcome speech is an opportunity to advise the asylum-seekers of the shelter’s rules and to provide some cultural orientation as needed. See the following [chapter](#) on Language Access for best practices to ensure all asylum-seekers can communicate and receive information in their own language.



◀ A [sample welcome script outline adapted from the Las Cruces Asylum Shelter](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

In addition to the general welcome, it is important to identify and address any immediate health needs.



◀ A [sample script medical professionals at the Las Cruces Asylum Shelter](#) added to their welcome speech is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Cultural Orientation

Some shelters find it helpful to include a brief cultural orientation in the welcome speech. An excerpt from “Tips for United Methodist-Affiliated Transitional Shelters along the U.S.-Mexico Border” suggests that staff “orient guests to U.S. cultural customs that may be different from their own, including but not limited to: bathroom

use (toilet paper disposal and toilet use), child supervision, cleanliness norms, and anything else that may be causing misunderstandings or tension.” Some shelters also address potential differences in cultural norms around punishment of children and what the consequences may be of corporal punishment in the United States.

Shelter Rules

In order to maintain a safe and orderly environment, a shelter’s rules should be communicated clearly from the outset and can be included in the welcome speech. Suggested rules and explanations from Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas include the following:

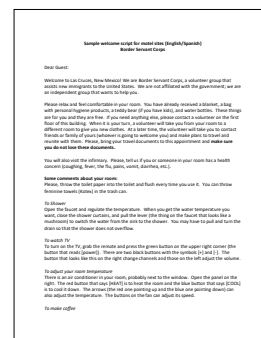
- Parents must be with their children at all times, even when their children are sleeping, and even if their children are teenagers.
This rule is in place to ensure the safety of all of the children in the house and is explained to account for practices that are perhaps culturally different from what guests are used to.
- Everyone must wear their shoes at all times, even small children and babies.
This rule is in place to ensure that no one hurts themselves by stepping on something sharp and also in order to comply with Health Department regulations.
- No food is allowed in the bedrooms; food may only be eaten outside or in the dining room.
This rule is to help keep the sleeping and common areas as clean as possible and to avoid cockroaches and other sanitation issues.
- Toilets are different in the United States—please throw your used toilet paper in the toilet, not in the trashcan. However, please throw diapers and sanitary napkins in the trashcans.
This rule is self-explanatory, but is necessary because of cultural differences.
- Everyone must be in bed and quiet between the hours of 10pm and 7am.
This rule is to ensure that everyone is able to get a good night’s sleep, both guests and volunteers!

Some sites also ask that guests not leave the premises without first notifying a volunteer so that they can be easily found in case a family member calls regarding travel arrangements. Include any other rules unique to your site location, such as information about what areas are restricted for access, etc.

As noted in the chapter on [Safety and Security](#), it is important that a shelter put in place a system for receiving complaints and feedback from guests. This helps ensure the safety of everyone in the shelter, promotes shelter accountability, and identifies areas for improvement. Communicating the shelter’s complaint process up front helps ensure that guests feel empowered to use it, if needed.

Orientation in the context of motel shelter sites

At times, shelters have relied on motels and hotels to serve a high volume of guests. Border Servant Corps in Las Cruces, New Mexico, developed a welcome script specifically for guests in such a setting. In addition to welcoming guests in person, a copy of this form was placed in each hotel room so guests could consult the information provided when they had a quiet moment alone.



◀ A [sample welcome script](#) for guests staying at a m/hotel is available in English and Spanish in the [Resource Library](#).

Language Access

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 4:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.”

Language access is paramount to ensure effective communication with guests, accurate information collection, and service delivery. Shelters have employed a variety of models and tools to ensure they can communicate with guests in their native languages to the fullest extent practicable.

To best serve the guests, shelters have benefitted from hiring staff and recruiting volunteers who are fluent or proficient in languages commonly spoken by the asylum-seekers staying at the shelters. While the majority of asylum-seekers served by border shelters are Spanish-speaking, border shelters also have received asylum-seekers from non-Spanish-speaking countries who speak a multitude of languages. Within the Central American and Mexican populations, it is very common for an asylum-seeker to speak an indigenous language, especially if they are from a country with large indigenous communities, like Guatemala. Some asylum-seekers may be hesitant to self-identify as indigenous-language speakers, therefore it is good practice to reassure new arrivals that they will not be penalized for the language they speak or their preference to communicate in it.

When shelter staff and volunteers cannot communicate directly with a guest, best practices recommend making a formal arrangement with a professional interpretation and translation service or with a local institution that can provide interpretation and translation services as needed. Some companies offer special non-

profit rates for their services. Shelters have engaged with local university and community-college programs to recruit interpreters and translators for the shelter’s needs. Shelters have recommended the following:

- [Language Line](#);
- [Luna Language Services](#);
- [LTC Language Solutions](#);
- [Maya Interpreters](#).

In addition to the above traditional services, there are other tools available to facilitate interpretation and translation. These include:

- [Translators without Borders](#) is specifically designed to meet language needs in a humanitarian context.
- [Tarjimly](#) is a free interpretation application designed to assist refugees and aid workers with interpretation and translation requests around the world.
- [Google Translate](#) is commonly used as a quick solution; however, the application’s functionality is limited and often makes literal translations, not idiomatic ones that capture the correct meaning of a word or phrase.

Even with the above services, it still may be difficult to accommodate all of the individual indigenous languages presented at a shelter. Casa Alitas, in Tucson, Arizona, has taken an innovative approach by drawing upon their own



A staff member meets with a guest and her newborn baby at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.

guest population, but without risking asylum-seeker confidentiality. If bilingual indigenous speakers pass through the shelter and are willing to assist, they will make an audio recording of the welcome speech and any other standard messages that routinely are communicated in their indigenous language, thereby creating a library of recordings that can be played for future guests as needed. Also, signage can be helpful in overcoming both language and literacy barriers. Signs with easy-to-read graphics can be used to indicate the bathroom, showers, dining hall, dormitory, medical facilities, and fire exits.

If professional interpretation services are not available, other workarounds should be used only with caution, due to the potential violations of guest confidentiality, and should be based on prior consent of the individual. It is best to avoid discussing sensitive information, including the reasons for fleeing, unless the asylum-seeker initiates such discussion. While relying on fellow asylum-seekers or local community

groups that have the needed language skills may seem an easy solution, it comes with risks to the asylum-seekers' safety, as it may turn out that the individual interpreting has knowledge of or a connection to the asylum-seekers, their community, or the persecutory situation in question.

It is also best practice to avoid the use of children as interpreters for adults. Too often, children are used as interpreters in situations that are inappropriate or beyond their skill level, often times in conversations that violate confidentiality or require technical terms related to medical care or legal matters. In an asylum-seeking context, parents may wish to communicate information about trauma experienced in their home country or during their journey that they do not want their child to hear. In addition to the potential for inaccurate or incomplete interpretation, placing such responsibility on a child can lead to stress for the child and contribute to a role-reversal between parent and child.

Intake System

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
“Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

An intake interview is designed, in general, to capture essential information from each guest for the shelter’s records, address any immediate needs, and facilitate travel to the guest’s destination city. Recognizing that guests just have been released from a detention facility and would like to eat and shower, the interview should be as efficient as possible. It is best practice to avoid soliciting any unnecessary information and to avoid re-traumatizing the guest by limiting questions to only the essential information needed to identify the individual’s immediate needs and to safely provide the services offered at the shelter. For instance, inquiring about details surrounding their asylum claim should be avoided. Native or fluent speakers should conduct the intake interview with the guests when possible; utilize professional interpretation services, as outlined in the previous section, when needed.

It is crucial that information be as accurate as possible so that subsequent services can utilize up-to-date and reliable information. For example, a child’s birth date is used both to buy an airplane ticket and to determine what size car seat will be used on the drive to the airport. For more information on how to best utilize software in the intake process, please consult the [Data Management](#) chapter.

When large groups of asylum-seekers arrive at the shelter simultaneously, waiting times for intake interviews can be quite lengthy. Thus, shelters have implemented the following measures to make guests as comfortable as possible:

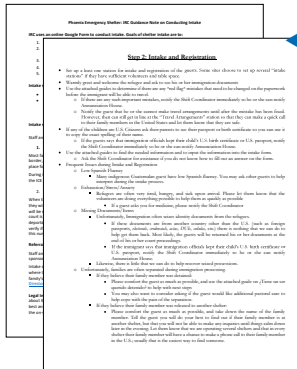
- Provide a snack and water table.
- Display signs that clearly explain (in words and photos) that the water can be used directly

from the faucet and that food is available for guests at all times.

- Provide belts, hair ties, lip balm, and shoelaces to replace items taken from asylum-seekers while in detention.
- Provide a broth-based soup for guests to soothe upset stomachs.
- Provide diapers, wipes, and a changing station for infants’ needs.
- Provide toys for children.
- Give each guest a folder to store immigration paperwork, intake forms, travel information, and referral resources.
- Set up a charging station with extra outlets for cellular telephones and GPS ankle monitor battery packs.
- Display large wall maps of the United States.
- Conduct an initial medical screening to flag any high-priority cases for immediate medical attention.
- Display both 12- and 24-hour clocks on various walls to help orient guests to their location. Most guests are used to 24-hour clocks, not 12-hour clocks.
- Provide WIFI information for guests.
- Invite guests to make free telephone calls to their loved ones with the Restoring Family Links telephones provided by the American Red Cross (more information on this program can be found at the end of this chapter).

With a high volume of asylum-seekers and complications arranging travel, it is common for an individual to stay longer than expected. To ensure each guest is en route to a final destination,

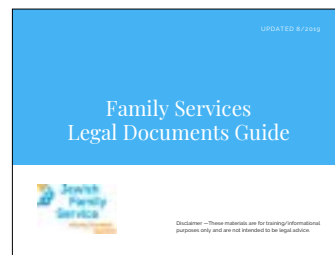
the daily cycle of arrivals. For example, La Frontera shelter in Laredo, Texas uses a different color-coded wristband for each day. As an example, if on a Saturday a staff member notices a guest's blue wristband, that conveys the guest completed intake on Monday. This immediate, visual cue alerts staff members to a potential problem with that guest finalizing travel arrangements.



Sample intake guidance notes from the Phoenix, Arizona, International Rescue Committee (IRC) Welcome Center and Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas are available in the Resource Library.

Red Flags

It is advisable that staff members and volunteers conducting intakes be trained on how to review the guest's immigration documents. Certain "red flags" may arise that could require the attention of other staff members or an attorney. The following guidelines from Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) identify potential red flags with various immigration paperwork, including the Notice to Appear (NTA) and Order of Release. JFS developed a legal document guide for staff at the San Diego Rapid Response Network (SDRRN) Migrant Shelter in California, available in the Resource Library. The above-referenced guidance from Annunciation House also advises volunteers to be on the lookout, for additional follow-up, for guests who may speak an indigenous language and guests who are suffering from extreme exhaustion and/or anxiety.

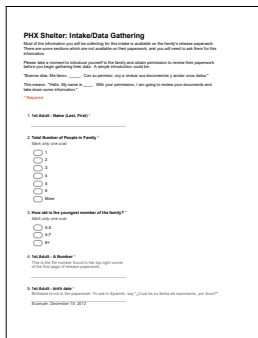


JFS legal document guide for staff, available in the Resource Library



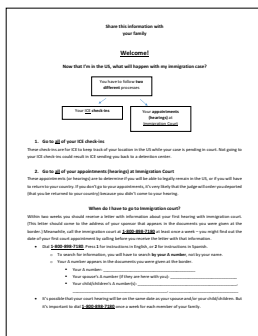
A courtyard play space at Casa Aitas in Tucson, Arizona.

Sample intake questionnaire and handouts



◀ A [sample intake questionnaire](#) provided by the IRC Welcome Center is available in the [Resource Library](#).

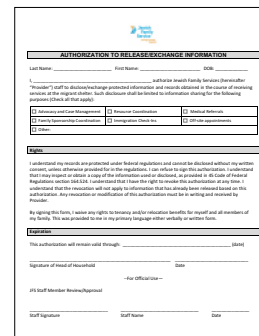
As part of the welcome packet provided to guests during the intake process, the IRC Welcome Center includes a handout to orient guests and their family or sponsors on the immediate next steps in the immigration process. The handout is available in the [Resource Library](#) and more information on the immigration process can be found in the [Legal Resources and Orientation](#) chapter.



◀ [IRC Welcome Center orientation handout](#) is available in various languages in the [Resource Library](#).

Release of Information

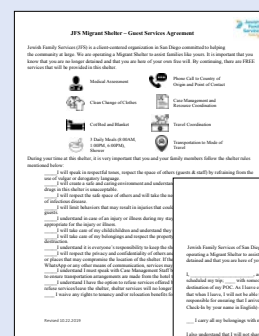
Sensitive information is collected during the intake process and must be managed in accordance with the guest's wishes, as their right to confidentiality is paramount (see the [Data Management](#) chapter for further detail). The aggregate data collected is a powerful indicator of migratory trends, and it highlights the guest population's needs while revealing gaps in resources. To balance the need for accurate data with respect for the privacy of the asylum-seeker, consenting guests can sign a release of information form. In addition, if a guest agrees to have photographs or video footage taken, a separate form may be used to document that consent. The latter form can be used on an as-needed basis as an exception to the no-photography policies of shelters (for example, if an approved news crew or reporter visited the shelter).



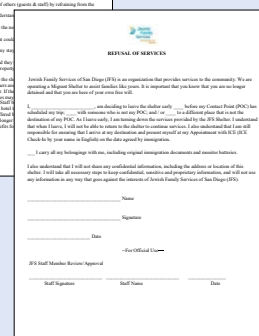
◀ A sample form by JFS is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) in the [Resource Library](#).

Guest Services Agreement and Refusal of Services

Guests are free to utilize shelter services or leave a shelter at any time. As noted in the [Welcome Script](#) chapter, all guests should be informed during the welcome speech of the rules of the shelter, the services that will be offered, and their right to refuse shelter services. For the SDRRN Migrant Shelter, JFS developed a ["Guest Services" form](#) and a ["Refusal of Services" form](#) for when a guest decides to stay at the shelter or refuse services.



◀ The forms are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) in the [Resource Library](#).



Contacting Family Members via the Restoring Family Links Program

Contacting loved ones in their home country and in the United States is naturally a priority for guests after their release from immigration custody and can be incorporated into the shelter intake process. If guests have their own cellular telephones, shelters recommend making available the Wi-Fi information so that the guests can use WhatsApp and other applications to communicate with family members. For guests who do not have the means of communicating with family members back home, the American Red Cross provides free telephone calls to shelter guests through a program called



◀ Red Cross flyers are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) the [Resource Library](#).

“Restoring Family Links.” This service allows asylum-seekers to notify loved ones of their safe arrival. For more information, please see the flyers available in the [Resource Library](#) and visit the American Red Cross [website](#).

Portrait of a family making their way to Colombia after crossing the Tachira river.



Medical Screenings

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 6:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.”

The early identification of medical conditions is critical to the health and well-being of guests, volunteers, and staff, more so now in the context of COVID-19. Some medical needs may require prompt treatment, quarantine, isolation, or other action to protect those at the shelter and prevent a severe disruption in services. Accordingly, this section sets forth key principles to guide medical screenings, response, and management at shelters serving asylum-seekers.

Physical ailments can range from dehydration and the common cold to the flu, COVID-19, and other potentially severe medical problems. Often, these are an effect of spending weeks traversing one or more countries to reach the U.S.-Mexico border. Many asylum-seekers have spent the previous few days sharing a cell with dozens of other people in border authorities' custody. Therefore, understanding that guests have experienced prolonged travel, days in detention, and potential exposure to large numbers of people should inform practices of both medical professionals and shelter staff.

Physical ailments are compounded further by the mental distress asylum-seekers experience. Fleeing persecution in another country leads to varying levels of shock and trauma, which can require psychological support. It is common for asylum-seekers to be survivors of, threatened with, or witnesses to torture, domestic violence, gang violence, and cartel violence. Thus, it is imperative that best practices are implemented in all shelter services to avoid the risk of re-

traumatizing guests. [Please refer to the [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support](#) chapter for more information and best practices].

In some cases, border authorities will have identified an individual's health-related issues while that person was in custody and may communicate this information to the receiving shelter. However, in many other cases, shelters do not receive any medical information prior to an individual's arrival. In either situation, best practices dictate that shelters coordinate with border authorities to the best of their ability to obtain health information in advance of a guest's arrival so that shelters can prepare to receive the individual and protect others at its facility.

Types of Medical Screening

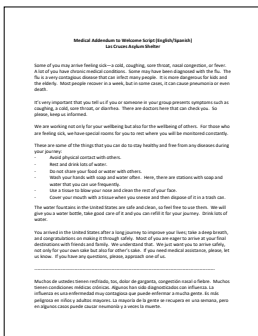
Three types of medical screenings commonly occur in a shelter context: the initial screening for emergencies, wellness checks, and specialized programs.

Initial Screening for Emergencies

Because asylum-seekers are brought to the shelter immediately after they are released from custody, an initial welfare check should be completed right after the welcome speech, while guests await intake. Guests may not be used to constant air conditioning and may find these conditions very uncomfortable. Water, rehydration drinks, and baby formula should be made available upon arrival for adults, children, and infants respectively. A list of additional

suggested comfort items is available in the [Intake System](#) chapter.

Below is sample speech given by medical professionals at the Las Cruces Asylum Shelter when guests first arrive. The script explains that staff should be notified if a guest is not feeling well and outlines ways to keep other guests healthy. As mentioned in the [Welcome Script](#) chapter, this speech can be incorporated into a general welcome speech.



◀ For the [sample script in English and Spanish](#), see the [Resource Library](#).

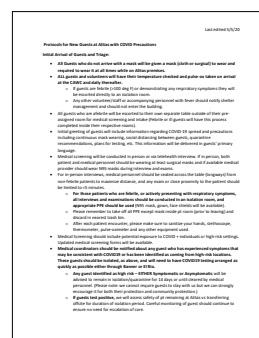
With respect to infectious disease outbreaks, like the COVID-19 pandemic, shelters should be prepared to implement special measures when guests arrive and to perform targeted screenings for particular symptoms or conditions. In the context of COVID-19, for example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends providing clean masks to new guests upon arrival, keeping them isolated initially, and screening for symptoms at entry, per their guidance [here](#). The CDC has developed a screening tool that can be used to identify people with possible symptoms of COVID-19, available through this [link](#). Understanding that not every person who has symptoms will have COVID-19 and that not every person with COVID-19 will experience symptoms, per the CDC, conducting daily screenings after the initial one that consist of a series of simple questions can help identify people who may need medical care or isolation.

Wellness Checks

In light of their prolonged travel from a home country, detention, and likely exposure to large numbers of people along the way, guests may have medical needs that require attention from shelter staff or health professionals. To ensure that guests are well enough to travel from the shelter to their final destinations – trips that frequently take days by bus – shelters aim to conduct “wellness checks” on each guest ahead of departure, and preferably prior to purchasing travel tickets, in order to triage their medical needs and prepare them for the trip.

For guidance on integrating COVID-19 screening into wellness-check protocols, the CDC has published a sample questionnaire that can be employed to screen for medical issues, including COVID-19, and to gather relevant information, available [here](#). It offers a decision algorithm that provides guidance on how to respond to a variety of issues that may arise during screening.

In addition, some shelters have updated their triage protocols to reflect the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. Tucson, Arizona’s Casa Alitas, for example, has implemented procedures for triage during guests’ initial arrival that incorporates safety precautions and thorough screening measures for COVID-19.



◀ A copy of [Casa Alitas’ protocol](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Specialized programs

Through partnerships with public and private healthcare institutions, various shelters have established specialized programs for their guests. Partnering with their Departments of Public Health have enabled shelters to establish flu vaccination programs for guests

Supplies at the Las Cruces Asylum Shelter in Las Cruces, New Mexico.



during flu season. In addition, some shelters have incorporated programs at the shelter that facilitate guests' integration into their destination communities. For example, Casa Alitas is developing a vaccination program for school-age children in order to avoid delays in the school enrollment process once they arrive in their destination city.

HIPAA and privacy rights

When addressing guests' medical needs, medical volunteers and shelter staff are responsible for complying with federal standards on the management of medical information to ensure guests' right to privacy is respected. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 is a federal law requiring national standards to protect against the disclosure of sensitive health information without the patient's consent. Ensuring compliance with HIPAA is a primary consideration as each shelter designs and operates its model for serving guests' immediate health needs.

For example, identifying which programs (such as the Medical Reserve Corps) require and document healthcare volunteers' training on HIPAA is an important factor as shelters evaluate available medical partnerships to serve guests. When planning the layout and use of shelter space, it is important to provide for guests' privacy when conducting medical screenings and to mitigate the risk of stigmatizing guests as ill or disabled. This may include taking care to dispense medication out of view of other guests. Particular care should be taken when addressing medical situations that may be highly sensitive, such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and mental illness. In addition, the system in place for documenting the results of the medical screening and for any referrals for additional medical services must be in line with HIPAA's privacy and security rules.

For more information on HIPAA, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [website](#).

Response Strategies

By and large, shelters work to meet the medical needs of arriving asylum-seekers through a volunteer medical community of doctors, nurses, other medical professionals, retired practitioners, and students. As with other shelter volunteers, it is important that the medical volunteers undergo the same onboarding and training procedures so that they are oriented to the asylum-seeking populations served by the shelter, their particular needs, and the context within which the medical volunteers' services are needed. Each community has different medical resources available and therefore a variety of medical response strategies have been employed. These include:

- **Medical Reserve Corps (MRS).** Created in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001, this national medical response program mobilizes hundreds of volunteers in the wake of an emergency. The program also helps resolve any obstacles with licensure and expedites the licensure process to allow practitioners to practice out-of-state. Shelters interested in the Medical Reserve Corps should [contact](#) the state and regional coordinators. **Border Servant Corps and the New Mexico Hospitality Coalition shelters in Las Cruces were able to increase their available medical volunteers from 700 to over 3,000 using MRS.**
- **In-shelter health clinics** are staffed by volunteer medical personnel who are able to conduct screenings and medical exams on site.
- **On-site pharmacy.** If a shelter is expected to operate long term, staff may consider applying for a pharmacy license.
- **Hub and spoke model** is one in which the central shelter is a hub wherein all guests complete an intake and wellness check. The main shelter is responsible for conducting all medical screenings and prescribing all necessary medicine before guests are sent to a secondary location for lodging.
- **Department of Health.** Local government partners often can facilitate shelter access to Department of Public Health services, including flu shots and other vaccinations.
- **Vaccine clinic.** Flu vaccines are administered on site for any guests who request one.
- **Well Child Clinic.** An initiative of Casa Alitas, the program was developed to ensure school-age children passing through the shelter receive the necessary vaccinations to enroll in school at their destination communities.
- **Mobile Medical Unit** is a traveling medical van that can visit shelters to conduct examinations in a clean, safe environment. The van can also stock and administer over-the-counter medicines.
- **Partnership with a local hospital** has helped shelters operate clinics on-site, staffed with residents and other medical students while also providing medical equipment.
- **Partnerships with a local university** may provide nursing students to present information sessions for shelter staff on common illnesses, such as lice and scabies, so that staff can identify outbreaks and react appropriately when and if such outbreaks occur.
- **Prescription Donations.** In order to cover the costs of prescription medicines, shelters have been able to fundraise using [GoFundMe](#) campaigns or otherwise reduce costs through programs such as [AmeriCares](#) and [GoodRx](#), which subsidize pharmacy and drug costs.
- **Ambulances.** To reduce emergency medical costs, the Las Cruces Asylum Shelter negotiated with a local fire station to transport guests to the hospital in their ambulance free of cost.
- **Volunteer Reference Guide.** For treating common colds, diarrhea, and constipation, the Good Neighbor Settlement House in Brownsville, Texas, created medical reference manuals to assist staff and volunteers in handling routine, non-emergency needs.
- **Multifunctional isolation rooms.** Whether it be to contain the spread of chicken pox, the flu, or COVID-19, each shelter should designate space to isolate guests with contagious symptoms. It is critical these guests are not around other vulnerable guests, such as pregnant women and others with suppressed immune systems.

Basic Medical Supplies

In preparation for the typical medical needs guests may have, it is common best practice for shelters to maintain a supply of basic medicines and supplies on hand. An example inventory list from Border Servant Corps lists the over-the-counter medicines and supplies that are typically needed at each shelter location.

◀ The [sample inventory list](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

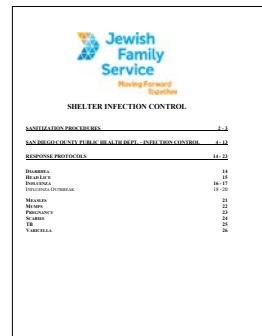
Policies for Infection Control

In a congregate setting, it is a best practice for shelters to develop public health policies proactively in consultation with medical staff and local public health authorities. Standardized procedures allow staff to respond appropriately to situations that involve influenza, COVID-19, chickenpox, and other infectious diseases along with infestations, such as lice. As Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) states in their Infection Control Handbook for the San Diego Rapid Response Network (SDRRN) Migrant Shelter in California,

[t]emporary shelters are not expected to administer health care services in the traditional sense... However, screening and infection prevention and control strategies are critical to identify potentially infectious or acutely ill individuals and prevent the spread of disease within a shelter. Preventing and controlling outbreaks in a shelter setting can be challenging. The risk for person-to-person transmission may be higher due to community dining, shared bathroom facilities and sleeping quarters.

Medical Records

Medicine, identification documents, and medical paperwork are routinely taken from asylum-seekers while they are in immigration custody. Many guests arrive without medical documentation from their time in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, and obtaining records from these authorities during the guests' relatively short period of stay in the shelter is often not possible. Thus, full documentation of any medical issue should be provided to the guest for any future medical appointments and referrals.



◀ The [JFS Infection Control Handbook](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

◀ A [sample form](#) developed by Casa Alitas is available in the [Resource Library](#).

As described in the [Sanitation and Hygiene](#) chapter, the CDC has developed extensive guidance on COVID-19 infection control policies and procedures for a variety of congregate settings. In addition, guidance on infection control for healthcare professionals working in the context of COVID-19 is available at this [link](#), including how to manage persons with and without COVID-19 symptoms and confirmed or suspected cases of the virus. The CDC recommends consulting their guidelines regularly for updates.

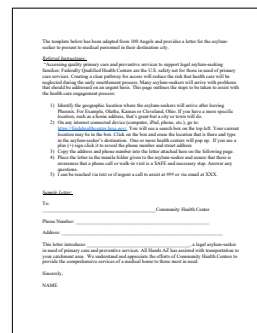
Adapting Service Models to COVID-19

Shelters are adapting to the COVID-19 outbreak by collaborating with local public health authorities to protect the health of guests and staff. For example, JFS and the SDRRN Migrant Shelter have worked with the San Diego County Department of Public Health so that it may continue to offer services safely to asylum-seeking families. Once families are released from Department of Homeland Security custody, the county arranges their transport from the detention facility or border custody to county-sponsored lodging at a hotel, where they spend 14 days. JFS typically has minimal contact with families during their time in county lodging; however, they are able to correspond via telephone, text, or WhatsApp, and JFS staff advocates with county and hotel personnel to meet any needs that arise. JFS case managers screen families by telephone for immediate medical needs and coordinate with the University of California San Diego to support families who experience pressing medical needs.

Once families complete quarantine, JFS helps them with the logistical arrangements of traveling to their final destinations. JFS provides individuals with personal protective equipment and other items (such as snacks and hand sanitizer) for their journeys. In addition, JFS offers families referral resources available in their respective destinations so that they may access additional support upon arrival. For those who will fly, JFS staff accompanies them to the airport and all the way to their departure gate when permitted. For additional information on travel preparations, see the chapter [Preparing for Connecting Flights/Buses](#).

Referral System

Referring guests to an appropriate medical provider in their destination cities can help ensure timely follow-up that addresses pending health issues and that starts the process of documenting the guest's health history, which is often lost or incomplete.



◀ Adapted from *100 Angels in Phoenix, Arizona*, a [sample referral template and instructions](#) to support guests' access to primary care and preventive services is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Legal Resources and Orientation

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 4:
“Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.”

Once asylum-seekers arrive at the United States’ southern border, the Department of Homeland Security initiates immigration legal proceedings, during which asylum-seekers can apply for asylum. **Asylum** is the legal term for a status that protects people from deportation back to a country where they experienced persecution or fear future persecution. The right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right that is enshrined in both international and domestic law. While everyone has a right to seek asylum, the grant of asylum is not guaranteed. Asylum-seekers should be supported with legal information or assistance upon arrival to help them navigate the highly-complex immigration and asylum system.

Due to the temporary nature of a guest’s stay, the legal empowerment that border shelters offer generally focuses on information provision and referrals to legal services in the guest’s destination, where their asylum case will be heard. The legal resources presented in this chapter are divided into three categories: an immigration law orientation, “Know Your Rights” materials, and referrals for legal services. An asylum case has many moving parts and can be incredibly complex to navigate — one misstep can have serious consequences. For example, individuals can be penalized if they miss a check-in appointment with their Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation officer or a hearing date before the immigration court in the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR); fail to change their address (with both ICE and EOIR) after a move; or do not file their asylum application within the one-year deadline. In some circumstances, these penalties ultimately may lead to deportation.

Therefore, access to at least one form of legal resource during a shelter stay is a critical early intervention for anyone entering the complex immigration system. Border shelters are an important touch point to ensure asylum-seekers are equipped with basic legal information that orients them and informs them of their rights and responsibilities as well as gives guests a referral to a trusted legal-service provider in their destination city.

Border shelters face significant challenges in ensuring all guests have access to legal resources. A nationwide dearth in affordable or *pro bono* legal services sufficient to meet demand directly impacts the number of attorneys and other legal professionals able to assist shelters with their legal programming. Nevertheless, creative solutions continue to emerge, including formal and informal partnerships between shelters and legal service providers. For example,

- Kino Border Initiative — a bi-national organization that operates in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, serving deported Mexican individuals as well as asylum-seekers trying to access protection in the United States — has partnered with the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project in Arizona to co-host an immigration attorney employed by the Florence Project. This dynamic arrangement is one model that has proven effective in providing empowering information to guests, identifying cases in which immediate legal intervention might improve outcomes or interrupt a trafficking scenario, and better connecting guests to legal services at their destination.

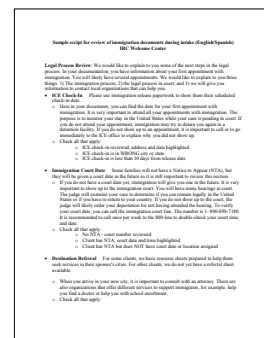
- Other organizations have established legal programs that are able to serve shelter guests. This type of arrangement allows organizations like Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) to embed staff from its legal team into its shelter team operating the San Diego Rapid Response Network (SDRRN) Migrant Shelter. The daily presence of legal staff in the shelter provides a tighter safety net for guests through easy access to professional immigration expertise, quick intervention to address issues that might otherwise cause complications in an individual’s case, and in-house training support for shelter staff and volunteers.
- Where local immigration nonprofits do exist, shelters can reach out to them to schedule “Know Your Rights” trainings or a legal orientation for shelter guests during their stay. The Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas has provided daily legal orientations to guests through partnerships with area legal providers, including Texas RioGrande Legal Aid and the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBar).

Asylum-seekers typically arrive at the shelter exhausted and often traumatized from their journey, and many logistical decisions need to be made during a shelter stay. Guests’ capacity to receive and process complex legal information is limited during their brief stays in shelters. Therefore, shelters and legal-service providers prioritize information and materials that guests need immediately and/or can use once they arrive at their destination, rather than risk overwhelming them with highly-technical

information during a time of transition. Many shelters have found it best to provide a concise “Know Your Rights” presentation and minimal legal orientation that is limited to information on navigating the immediate logistics of the immigration process, including upcoming court dates, GPS ankle monitors, and ICE check-ins. Best practices in presenting “Know Your Rights” indicate that providing people with an accessible amount of information *and* a way to follow up at a later point can be particularly helpful.

Including Basic Legal Information in the Intake Process

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Phoenix, Arizona has taken the innovative approach of including critical legal information in the intake process. This ensures that asylum-seekers receive at least some information regarding the asylum system in the event that they are not able to receive legal orientation or a “Know Your Rights” presentation from an attorney prior to departing the shelter. For more guidance on the intake process, please refer to the [Intake System](#) chapter.



◀ The IRC Welcome Center [sample script](#) is available in English and Spanish in the [Resource Library](#).

Legal Information v. Legal Advice

Any shelter staff and volunteer who is not a legal professional must be instructed *not to provide legal advice*. Giving legal advice generally means applying law to facts, or telling someone how the law works in their specific case. Legal advice provided by anyone other than a licensed attorney or other legal professional is considered “unauthorized practice of the law” and is illegal. For example, IRC informs its Welcome Center staff and volunteers who conduct intake that their function is to “provide *basic information* about the legal process outlined [... in IRC’s intake form], but *not legal advice*. When families ask questions about their case, the best answer is to encourage them to call the organizations listed on their referral sheet after they arrive. Or, ask the on-site shelter supervisor for assistance.”

Trouble Shooting Common Legal Issues

GPS Ankle Monitor

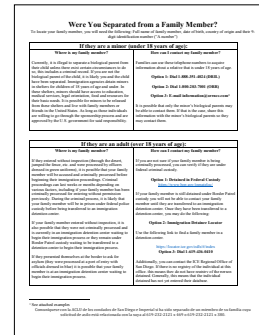
Many asylum-seekers released from ICE custody are placed into the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP) that ICE uses to monitor their location while immigration proceedings are pending. Therefore, many guests arrive with GPS ankle monitors and/or paperwork informing them of the date and time of their in-person or telephonic check-in appointment. Observing that many guests are fearful of the GPS monitor, Border Servant Corps in Las Cruces, New Mexico incorporated into their intake process an explanation of how the GPS monitor works and how to correctly charge the battery pack. They also labeled each battery pack and backup battery with the guest's initials to avoid a mix-up at departure time. See below for ISAP "Know Your Rights" materials.

Family Separation

Family members may be separated from one another during the journey to the United States or while in U.S. border custody. In the case of the latter, some may be released while others may be detained. Border shelter staff and volunteers may be the first to identify that a family has been separated either by immigration officials or during the journey and can support the guest in taking steps to locate and reconnect with separated family members.

If a member of the family is being detained in a long-term immigration detention facility, that person can be located via the ICE [Detainee Locator System](#). Note that unaccompanied minor children are not held in the same facilities as adults, and therefore only individuals 18-years-old and older will be visible in the ICE locator system. Additionally, the ICE system does not include information about those currently in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody or those held by the Bureau of Prisons during any criminal prosecution for irregular border

crossing. A federal inmate can be located via the Federal Bureau of Prisons [Inmate Locator System](#).



◀ *JFS developed a simple handout for the SDRRN Migrant Shelter that provides guidance on how to locate a separated family member, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) in the [Resource Library](#).*

Shelter staff may need to contact an attorney or legal-service provider to ensure that appropriate advocacy and support is offered.

Change of Address

It is critical that both the EOIR immigration court and ICE have the accurate address for a guest's eventual destination on record. Not having the correct address on file could have serious consequences for an individual's immigration case, particularly for asylum-seekers for whom deportation can mean a return to imminent danger. Thus, it is important to check guests' immigration paperwork to verify that it lists the shelter address or another address that is not their final destination. If so, the intake file should be marked with a "red flag" for follow-up action. For further information on common "red flags," see the [Intake System](#) chapter above.

It is a shelter best practice to support guests in submitting the requisite paperwork to EOIR and ICE to correct an address error before the guest departs the shelter, whenever appropriate support to do so is available. Guests should be informed that if they change addresses while their removal proceedings are pending, they are required to update their address with EOIR and ICE within five days of the relocation. Self-help guidance in English and Spanish and access to Change of Address forms are available on EOIR's [website](#).

EOIR's instructions also include guidance on the Change of Venue procedure, which is used

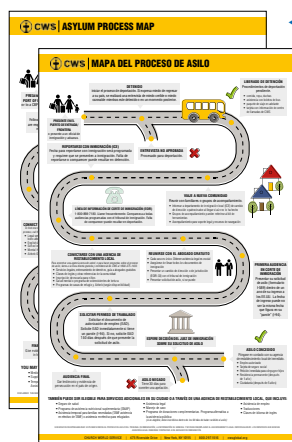
to request a change in immigration court if the individual’s new address is under a different jurisdiction. For information on the Change of Venue procedure, see the [Toolkit: Pro Se Motions to Change Venue](#) produced by the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project.

When filing the “Alien Change of Address Form” or the “Motion to Change Venue,” the forms must be filed with EOIR and ICE. It is an essential best practice for shelters to consult with a local legal-service provider on the general process and any specific local practices to ensure that the support the shelter provides to guests is accurate, informed, and appropriate.

Videos illustrating how to change an address with the court can be found below in the *Collection of “Know Your Rights” and Educational Resources* section of this chapter.

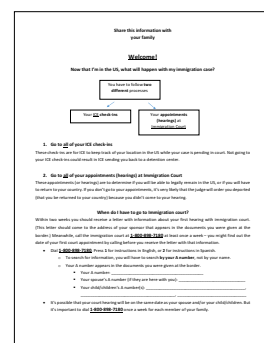
Navigating the Asylum Process

To assist asylum-seekers in understanding the path to obtaining asylum, Church World Service’s infographic presents a visual illustration of the asylum process. This infographic could be posted on shelter walls as a reference for asylum-seekers and provided as a handout during the intake or legal orientation processes.

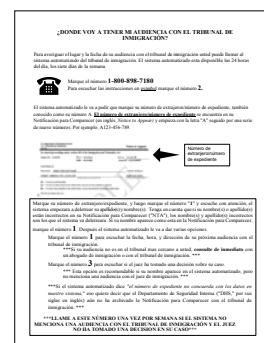


◀ The Church World Service infographic in [English and Spanish](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

For specific information on the EOIR immigration court process, the IRC Welcome Center developed a brief overview that is included in their “Welcome Packet” given out during the intake process. The handout is available in eleven languages in the [Resource Library](#). For the SDRRN Migrant Shelter, JFS also developed easy-to-follow instructions for calling EOIR to find out the date and location of an upcoming immigration court hearing, available in English and Spanish in the [Resource Library](#). EOIR also operates the online [Automated Case Information](#) system to find out about upcoming court hearings.



◀ The [IRC handout](#) with information on the EOIR immigration court process is available in eleven languages in the [Resource Library](#).



◀ Handout, developed by JFS, with [Instructions for calling EOIR](#) to find out the date and location of an upcoming immigration court hearing, available in English and Spanish in the [Resource Library](#).

Collection of Know Your Rights and Educational Resources

Although the asylum process is very complicated, asylum-seekers have certain basic rights and protections that exist as part of that process. For instance, the following is an explanation of an individual's rights while in immigration proceedings, adapted from resources developed by Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, based in Phoenix, Arizona.

It is important to know your rights so you can be prepared and protected during your immigration process.

- **You have the right to a lawyer.**
Immigration law is one of the most complicated laws in the United States. A lawyer is the best way to make sure your rights are protected and you are well informed.
- **You have the right to an interpreter** while appearing in court. Whenever you go to court, you have the right to know what is going on. The court must provide an interpreter.
- **You have the right to a defense against the immigration law violation** for which you are accused. You have the right to make your case for why you should be allowed to stay in the United States.
- **You have the right to be heard in court** before the judge decides on whether you should be deported.
- If you are being harassed, threatened, or physically hurt, **you have the right to call 911 and ask for police assistance.** The police have the duty to serve and protect you as well.

There are numerous “Know Your Rights” and other educational resources from which shelters can draw when informing guests of their rights and orienting them to the asylum and immigration processes. With information sharing taking place across various digital platforms in addition to traditional in-person or handout methods, shelters have an opportunity to learn which format works best within their operations and for their guests.

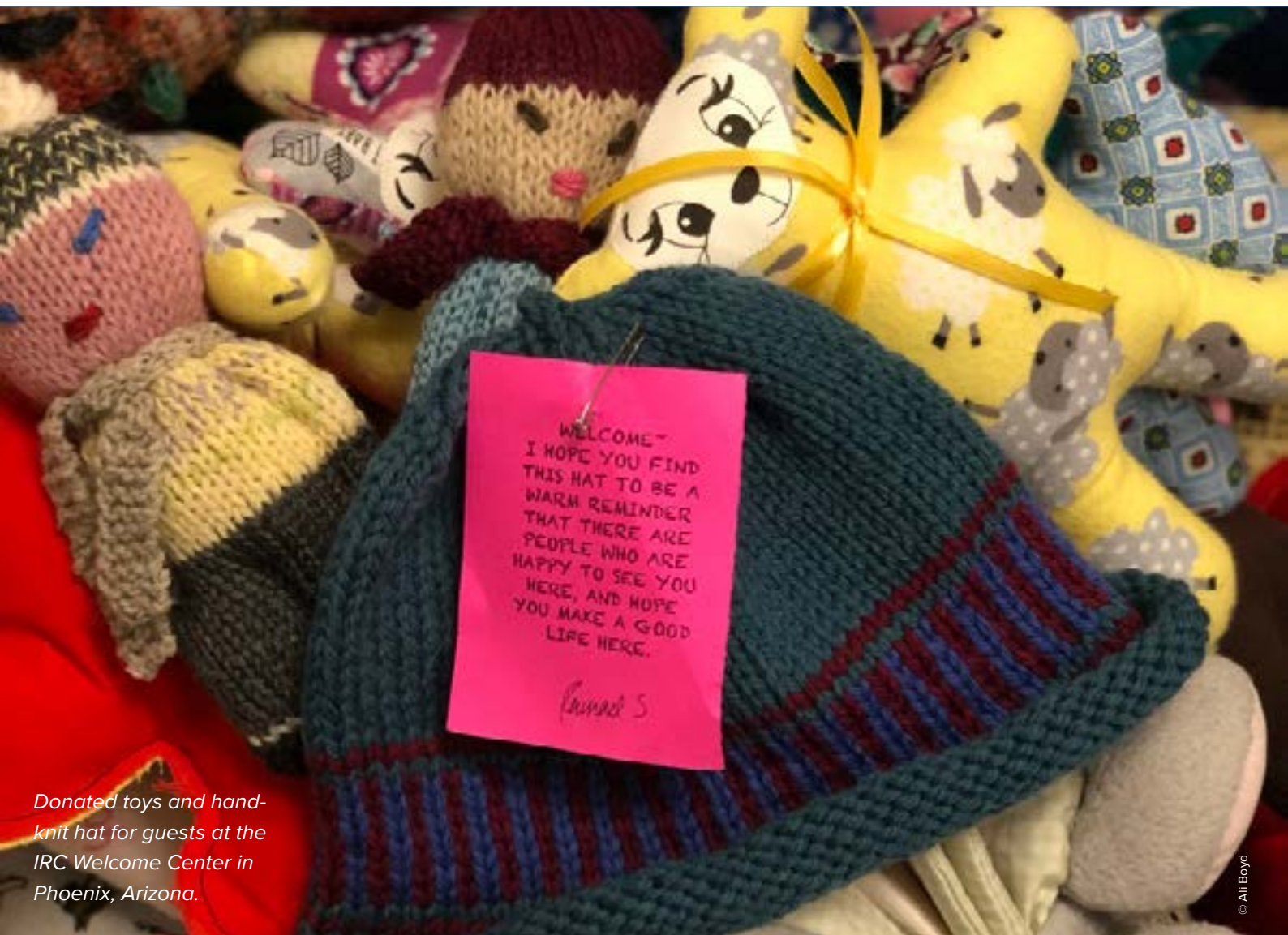
“Know Your Rights” On the Go

- Wallet-sized business cards with “Know Your Rights” information can be ordered or printed directly from a template via the [National Immigrant Law Center](#). They are available in nine languages, including Spanish.
- An audio version of the “Know Your Rights” in Maya Mam available [here](#). Additional resources in Maya Mam are available via the [Mayan League](#).

Videos

In the absence of a regular legal partner or in-house legal staff, the videos below are available resources that may help orient guests to the immigration process and to answer many common questions guests may have.

- The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project (the Florence Project) created a [video](#) that is relevant for guests in a shelter context. Shelters are advised to check the Florence Project’s website for updates to the content as policy changes take effect.
- The American Bar Association Commission on Immigration and partners produced a “Know Your Rights” [video](#) on navigating the court system for individuals in immigration detention.
- The New Mexico Hospitality Coalition in Las Cruces created a [YouTube playlist](#) that aggregates six videos from various legal nonprofits, including the Asylum-seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) and the Women’s Refugee Commission. The videos are in Spanish and cover several immigration topics,



Donated toys and hand-knit hat for guests at the IRC Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

© All Boyd

such as how to change your address with the court, how to call about your next court date, and what happens when an asylum-seeker goes to court.

- ASAP has published a multipart video series on what asylum-seekers should expect in immigration court proceedings. The Spanish-language video series can be viewed via this [link](#).
- Many asylum-seekers will need to change their address on their immigration paperwork and will need to notify the court. This Innovation Law Lab [video](#) explains how to change an address with the court.
- “Su Caso Está en Sus Manos,” created by Innovation Law Lab, is a Spanish-language [video](#) that explains the concept of asylum by using a hand to illustrate the five central questions of an asylum claim: “who, what, why, police, and another place?”
- Many other videos that cover specific immigration questions and themes are available on the Asylum-seeker Advocacy Project [website](#), including links to other organizations.

Referrals for Legal and Other Community Services

Analyses of immigration proceedings show that asylum-seekers represented by an attorney are much more likely to be successful in making their asylum claim than those who are not. Consequently, one of the most important resources that border shelters can provide to asylum-seekers is information on how to obtain trusted legal representation. Asylum-seekers have the right to be represented in their asylum claim, but not at government expense. Referrals can be made to private immigration attorneys who charge fees, private attorneys who take asylum cases *pro bono* (at no charge), or public interest attorneys at nonprofit legal service providers who often charge fees on a sliding scale. In addition to legal services, wraparound social services to support asylum-seekers' needs while they navigate the asylum process improve outcomes for asylum-seeking families in the immediate and long term.

The following resources connect asylum-seekers to trusted immigration legal professionals in their destination cities. Some of the resources also connect asylum-seekers to other community services and/or provide information about the asylum process. Please note, legal representation is not guaranteed and there is not

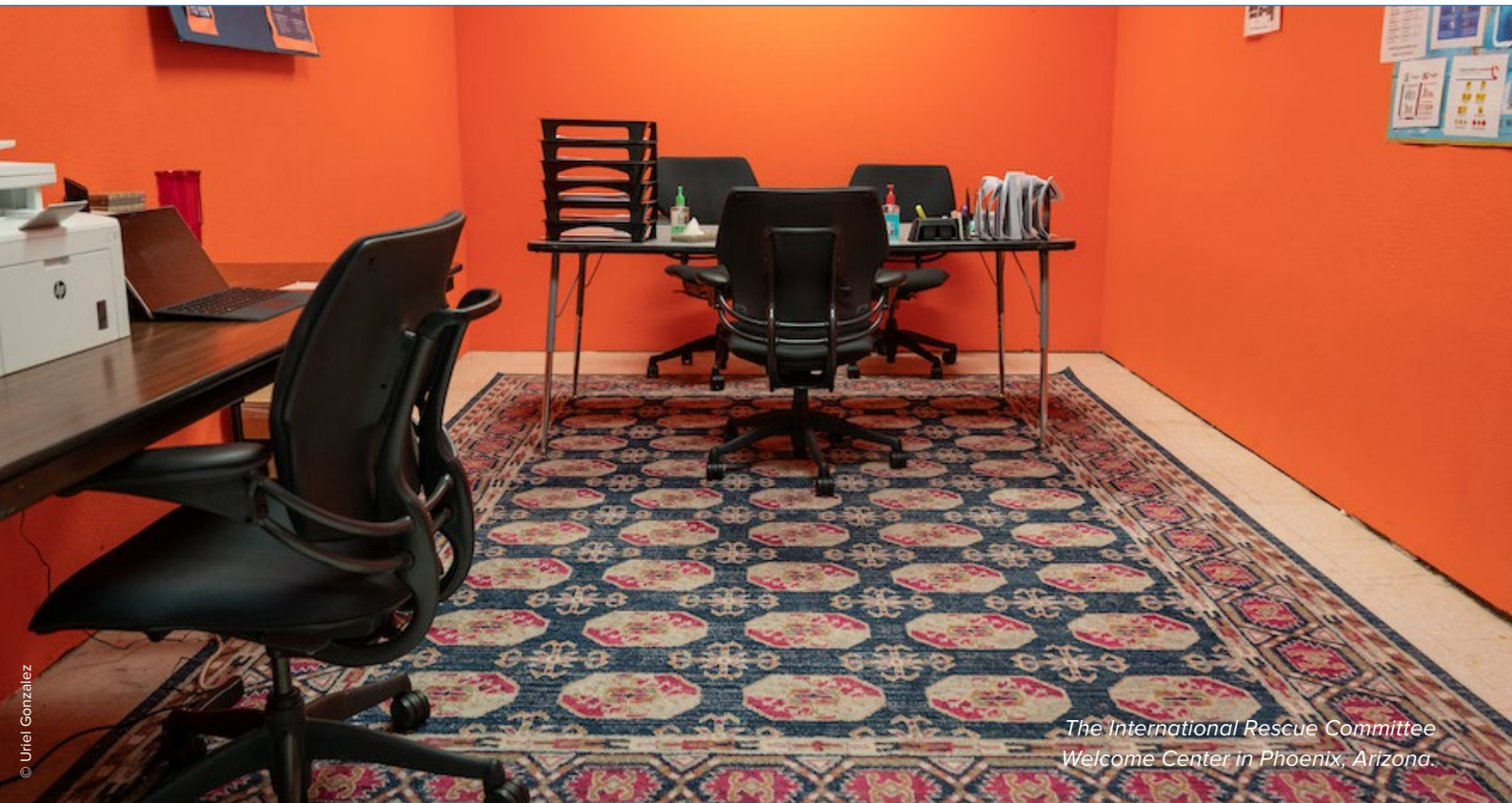
sufficient *pro bono* or *low bono* representation to meet the need in most communities. Therefore, asylum-seekers should be advised to start looking for an attorney as soon as possible.

Online Resources and Companion Applications

- EOIR maintains a [List of Pro Bono Legal Service Providers](#) by state and provides the list to all individuals in immigration proceedings.
- [ImmigrationLawHelp.org](#) is a popular directory to locate free and low-cost legal services in a destination city. The user can search in multiple languages to locate a legal organization by zip code. It is also available as an application called [Immigo](#).
- If an organization is not able to provide legal services for free, ASAP has shared a [list of private attorneys](#) recommended by immigration nonprofits around the country.
- The American Immigration Lawyers Association maintains [a database of immigration attorneys](#) that is searchable by area of expertise (such as asylum), language, and location. The database is not limited to low-cost representation.
- [FindHello](#), a web-based and mobile application resource created by [USAHello](#), connects asylum-seekers to legal-service providers and other community resources, including housing, healthcare, education, and employment services. It is available in English, Spanish, and Arabic.
- [Immi](#), a resource created by the Immigration Advocates Network and Pro Bono Net, helps inform immigrants and asylum-seekers about their rights, stay up-to-date on changes to immigration law, understand their legal options, and connect to legal help.

“Notario” fraud

In many Spanish-speaking countries, a “notario publico” describes a qualified legal professional, but when translated literally into English means a notary public. Notario scams seek to deceive immigrants and asylum-seekers into hiring notary publics, believing they are consulting a qualified legal practitioner. Victims of notario fraud may face significant financial loss and immigration consequences as severe as deportation as a result of the unqualified services. For more information, visit the American Bar Association’s Fight Notario Fraud project [here](#).



The International Rescue Committee
Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

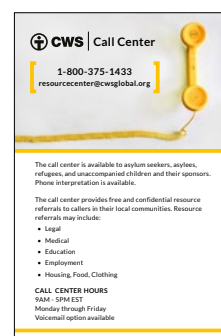
Hotline Referrals

Another important resource for asylum-seekers once they reach their destinations is a referral hotline to connect asylum-seekers with services in their community. These hotlines can complement any referral lists and other printed materials given by the shelters to guests, and they can serve as a “back up” in case the paperwork is lost along the journey.

- Church World Service (CWS) operates the CWS Resource Call Center, a free hotline for asylum-seekers in English and Spanish (with additional interpretation available). Asylum-seekers can call the hotline at 1-800-375-1433 to be connected to legal and social services in their community. More information about the hotline can be found [here](#). CWS can send wallet-sized cards with the Resource Call Center information and a flyer is available in the [Resource Library](#).
- Advocates for Human Rights operates the [National Asylum Help Line](#) to connect asylum-seekers to free legal services in their area and to provide information about the legal process. The hotline telephone number is 1-612-746-4674.

- RAICES operates the “[Canopy Hotline](#),” a free service to connect migrants to social services in their area and provide assistance with common challenges, such as school enrollment and local transportation. Users can call or text the hotline at 1-800-437-3071.
- The Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative operates the Immigrant Rights Hotline, providing up-to-date information about immigration policies and referrals to legal service providers, as well as receiving reports of discrimination. The hotline number is 1-833-HOU-IMMI (468-4664). Hotline posters are available in nine languages [here](#).

For specialized referrals for LGBTQI guests, see the [LGBTQI Guests](#) chapter.



◀ A flyer about the [CWS Resource Call Center](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Sponsor Contact and Travel Arrangements

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 6:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.”

Often, a guest’s priority is to reach their friends or family as soon as possible. One of the most important functions of a shelter is to arrange guests’ travel to their final destinations. Ultimately, shelters have a shared goal: to confirm ticket purchases so that the guests can depart for their destinations as soon as possible. In practice, this involves a great deal of coordination, both in terms of communication and logistics. The process of making travel arrangements involves a number of factors, such as sponsor contact and communication, ticket purchases, travel logistics, layovers, and language-access issues. The travel arrangement process must fit the needs of the guest population and staff capacity. For example, if an organization has the funding, shelters often prefer the travel coordinator be a paid position to ensure continuity and institutional memory.

Note that developing relationships early on with bus and airline companies will help resolve any obstacles that may arise. However, staff and volunteers should be vigilant in advocating for the rights of their guests. Many shelters noted discriminatory practices by some transportation companies that required staff advocacy on behalf of the guests.

Sponsor Contact and Management

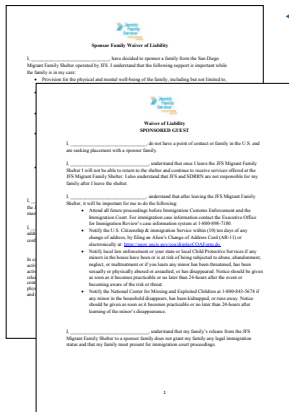
The majority of asylum-seekers served by shelters have a family member or friend who agrees to serve as a sponsor during their time in the United

States, thereby ensuring the asylum-seeker has a place to live pending the outcome of the immigration proceedings. The sponsor’s address is typically the asylum-seeker’s destination address. Frequently, the sponsor’s name and contact information are listed on the asylum-seeker’s immigration paperwork to indicate that the sponsor is responsible for the asylum-seeker. In the event that an asylum-seeker does not have a family member or a friend to serve as a sponsor, a community member can fill that role.

Most commonly, shelters initiate communication with an asylum-seeker’s sponsor via telephone, whether it be a designated shelter telephone used exclusively for making travel arrangements or a telephone provided through the Restoring Family Links program, a free service of the American Red Cross. It is not recommended that shelter staff or volunteers use personal cellular telephones for making travel arrangements.

It is common that asylum-seekers may be reconnecting with a family member or with a friend whom they have not seen in some time or with whom they only had a distant connection. However, the lack of a relationship may be a potential indicator of a human-trafficking situation, and shelter staff and volunteers may be in a position to identify such. If there is a trafficking concern, it is best practice to quickly raise the issue with a designated shelter staff member who can follow the shelter’s protocol for handling such situations. Please see the chapter on [Protection from Exploitation and Abuse](#) for more information on human trafficking.

The transition from the shelter to a sponsor's household is an important step in the asylum-seeker's journey. It is important to manage expectations regarding the role of the sponsor and the conclusion of the shelter's role vis-à-vis the asylum-seeker. Shelter best practices include utilizing a waiver and release-of-liability form for both the asylum-seeker and the sponsor.



◀ For use at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in California, Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) developed [guest and sponsor waiver and release of liability forms](#), available in the [Resource Library](#).

- The Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas operates a model that reduces the burden on shelter staff and volunteers by hosting representatives from the bus and airline companies in the shelter. After guests complete the intake process, the travel representatives work directly with them and their sponsors to book travel.
- Employing the Oak Tree Software developed by the Diocese of Las Cruces, New Mexico, the shelters in Las Cruces and Deming have booked the tickets themselves to minimize mistakes and then were reimbursed by the guests or sponsors.
- La Posada Providencia in San Benito, Texas employs a model that also reduces the burden on staff by delegating all travel arrangements to a travel agent. This model is more easily employed by shelters with a smaller guest population.

Travel Arrangements

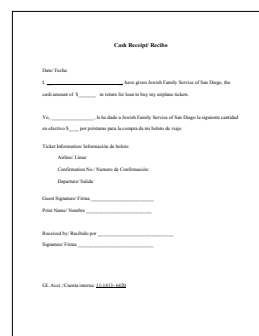
The design of a travel arrangement system depends on a number of factors, including the number of guests served on a daily basis and the shelter's proximity to bus stations and airports. Consequently, there are a wide variety of models.

- The most common model, used by the International Rescue Center (IRC) Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona entails the sponsor purchasing the ticket and then sending a photograph of the confirmation number to shelter staff. The photograph method minimizes mistakes in transcribing the confirmation number for the guest's record.

Documenting Travel Payments

As a general rule, most shelters recommend that the sponsor purchase the travel ticket directly from the provider (i.e. an airline or bus line) rather than exchange money with shelter staff or volunteers. However, in certain scenarios in which it may be necessary for shelter staff to take a primary role in purchasing a guest's travel ticket, documenting that purchase is imperative. As noted above, some shelters have employed this as their preferred model, facilitated by software that manages the reimbursement process. For other shelters employing this practice on an ad hoc basis, a sample receipt documenting the transaction developed by the JFS is available in the [Resource Library](#).

If a family is unable to afford the price of an airline ticket, a guest can apply to receive donated sky miles from the [Miles4Migrants Program](#). Securing an airline ticket through this program typically takes a few days, thus adding to the length of a guest's stay at the shelter.



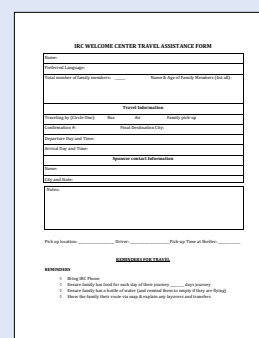
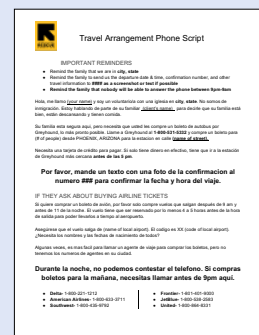
◀ A [sample receipt](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

The Travel Arrangements Process

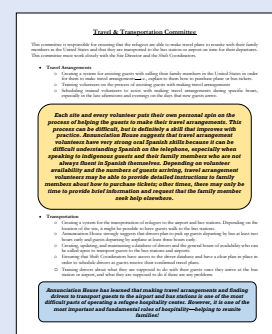
Procuring travel arrangements can be the most complex service the shelter provides. The following general outline is an aggregate of instructions on how to make travel arrangements, taken from shelters which have experience coordinating travel for tens of thousands of asylum-seekers:

- 1 An initial call is made to the guest's sponsor. Guests should be given a moment to communicate with their sponsor if they have not had a prior chance. Please refer to the [Intake System](#) chapter for more information on the Restoring Family Links program.
 - o A sponsor can be a family member, a friend, or a community member. Some guests may be reticent to provide details if the sponsor is undocumented, although it is not a requirement that sponsors have a certain immigration status. However, staff should be vigilant if it seems like the guest is connecting with a person they do not know well. This could be a red flag for a possible human-trafficking scenario, a delicate situation that should be navigated with caution. Shelter staff should be consulted to determine if they need to contact law enforcement. (Please see the chapter on [Protection from Exploitation and Abuse](#) for more information on human trafficking.)
 - o The process of buying an airplane or bus ticket is explained and contact information for the shelter is given. Staff members' personal cellular telephone numbers never should be given out. To ensure a call is not missed, only provide the number of the dedicated shelter transportation telephone.
 - o Ask the family to buy bus or airplane tickets with departure hours between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. This makes it easier to recruit volunteers to drive guests to the airport and bus station.
 - o Give the appropriate airport code. Example: departure is from El Paso, Texas (airport code: ELP).

- o Inform the family they should NOT print the ticket and should not buy open bus tickets ("boletos abiertos" in Spanish).
- 2 A ticket is purchased.
 - o Confirm that the departure and arrival cities are correct.
 - o Confirm enough time is provided during layovers.
 - 3 Receive a photograph of the confirmation number for the airline flight or bus (a photograph sent via text minimizes errors and helps avoid costly mistakes).
 - 4 Schedule the departure of the guest.
 - 5 Explain to the guest how to change flights or buses (see the chapter on [Preparing for Connecting Flights/Buses](#)).
 - 6 Dispense care packages to everyone in the family.
 - 7 Connect the guests with the driver taking them to the airport or bus station.



◀ The [Resource Library](#) includes a [sample telephone script](#) used to arrange travel and a [sample family travel information sheet](#) developed by the IRC Welcome Center, as well as [sample guidance](#) from El Paso's Annunciation House on making travel arrangements.



Onward Movement to Destinations in the United States

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:

“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 4:

“Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.”

Border shelters are a critical early touch point along an asylum-seeker’s journey in the United States, during which shelter staff and volunteers can provide guests with information to help prepare them for the transition to their destination locations. Guests are empowered when they understand the rights and responsibilities that accompany immigration proceedings and the asylum process and when they know how to find and access assistance at their destination. While the guests’ time at a shelter may be limited, best practices in presenting “Know Your Rights” information indicate that providing people with an accessible amount of information *and* a way to follow up at a later point can be particularly helpful. Therefore, many shelters provide each guest with a resource packet of materials upon departure that guests can read during the next leg of their travel and reference as needed when questions arise later.

UNHCR created a template “onward movement packet” available for shelters to adopt and adapt to suit their guests’ needs. The packet is designed to be a general guide for guests as they navigate the immigration process and search out needed services in their destination community. The information presented is basic and, ideally, can be complemented with referral lists for legal and social services in the guest’s destination community (see the [Case Management](#) chapter

for more information on wraparound support for asylum-seekers). This “onward movement packet” template has been updated and translated by Church World Service (CWS) into eight languages.



◀ The “onward movement packet” is available in the [Resource Library](#). Information about the U.S. asylum process is current as of January 2020 and does not reflect the most recent changes. Please check back for an updated version.

For additional resources to supplement the “onward movement packet,” see the [Legal Resources and Orientation](#) chapter. Included there are various options to assist guests who are searching for legal and other services in their destination communities. The following examples are user-friendly and accessible in multiple languages.

- [FindHello](#), a web-based and mobile application resource created by [USAHello](#), connects asylum-seekers to legal-service providers and other community resources, including housing, healthcare, education,

and employment services. It is available in English, Spanish, and Arabic.

- The Church World Service (CWS) Resource Call Center is a free hotline for asylum-seekers in English and Spanish (with additional interpretation available). Asylum-seekers can call the hotline at 1-800-375-1433 to be connected to legal and social services in their community. Flyer available in the [Resource Library](#).
- The [Canopy Hotline](#) is a free service operated by the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) to connect migrants to social services in their area and provide assistance with common challenges, such as school enrollment and local transportation. Users can call or text the hotline at 1-800-437-3071.

In the context of COVID-19, it is also important to provide guests with information about COVID-19-related resources in their destination community,

including contacts with local public health authorities. The following organizations have collected COVID-19 resources for immigrant and refugee populations:

- [USAHello](#) has developed and collected extensive information on staying healthy and how to access healthcare, Know Your Rights during the pandemic, and other COVID-19-related information, available in many languages.
- The Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) has compiled [information for asylum-seekers](#), including community support and health resources, and updates from immigration authorities on changes in response to COVID-19.
- Refugee Council USA has compiled a [list](#) of print and audio/visual resources from various sources on health as well as relief and legal resources related to COVID-19.



The view departing southern California.

Preparing for Connecting Flights/Buses

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:
“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

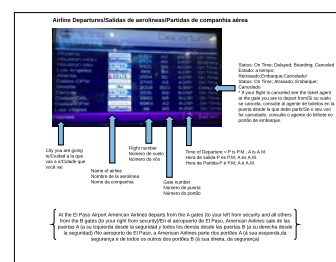
One of the biggest challenges shelter guests face during the next leg of their trip (i.e. from the shelter to their destination) is navigating an airport or bus station for their connecting flight or bus. While many asylum-seekers travel great distances to seek safety in the United States, the experience of navigating busy airport or bus terminals in another language can be intimidating, particularly for those guests who have never flown on an airplane before or even used an escalator. To prepare guests for the journey ahead and to try to ease their apprehensions, many shelters provide information on what to expect during their onward travel. Many shelters provide guests with clear instructions on their travel itinerary and explain how travelers can ask for help.

Orientation on Navigating Airport and Bus Terminals

In order to familiarize guests with the spaces and practices they will navigate during their onward movement to destination locations, some shelters have made use of video guides and have developed their own information sheets to use with guests at the shelter. The topics addressed typically include how to read an airplane or bus ticket, where/how connecting travel information is displayed, and the process

of passing through security checkpoints. Explaining the security process to guests, including that their bags and person will be searched, is critical to avoiding confusion and to mitigating the anxiety that asylum-seekers may experience. Resources used by shelters include the following:

- A [playlist](#) of Spanish language videos that orient individuals traveling by airplane and by bus, created by New Mexico Hospitality, based in Las Cruces, New Mexico;
- A [presentation on bus tickets](#), which are often difficult to understand due to the many legs of a journey, created by Casa Alitas in Tucson, Arizona;
- A handout (below) describing the departures board at an airport, developed by Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas.



◀ This [handout describing the departures board](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Tools During Travel

In addition to an orientation on what to expect during the trip, common practices the shelters employ to ensure guests are able to make their connections include:

- Giving each guest a folder to safeguard their immigration and travel documents;
- Providing a handout with transfer information in the guest’s native language so that it is easily referenced during transit;
- Attaching a simple note in English to the outside of the folder that asks for assistance and provides the connecting flight/bus information;
- Supplying the guests with a letter to airport or bus station staff requesting assistance, in case needed;
- Requesting airline assistance ahead of time with finding a connecting gate or the baggage claim area (this can be done when booking the flight and the request is marked on the ticket);
- Requesting an escort pass at the ticket counter so that shelter staff or volunteers can accompany guests through the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) security checkpoint all the way to the departure gate;
- Establishing contact with local TSA representatives and liaising to develop practices for handling guests’ immigration identification documents.

Sample forms and letters are available in the [Resource Library](#):

Itinerary de Viaje / Travel Schedule

Este es el momento de llenar sus datos de identificación. Identifique sus datos a fin de tener un itinerario correcto.

Fecha de Salida Date of Departure	Horario de Salida Departure Time	Horario de Retorno Return Time	Horario de Retorno Return Date

This is my first time traveling on a bus / plane.
 Esto es la primera vez que viajo en un bus / avión

Could you please help me find my next gate?
 ¿Podría por favor ayudarme a encontrar mi próxima puerta?

Thank you!
 ¡Gracias!

◀ A [travel itinerary](#) developed by Border Servant Corps in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE CARD

The following passengers **NEED TRAVEL ASSISTANCE GETTING TO THEIR DESTINATION.** They may have a language barrier and/or may be unable to find their way through the airport. Requesting escort and/or other information are included below. For further assistance contact the Pilot or Pilot-in-Command before or after take-off.

MY NAME IS: _____

PREPARE TO ASSIST WITH ME:

POINT OF CONTACT'S INFORMATION (ONLY):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

TRAVEL INFORMATION (Please print clearly)

TRAVEL INFORMATION (Please print clearly)

TRAVEL INFORMATION (Please print clearly)

◀ A [travel assistance form](#) developed by Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) for the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in California.

Jewish Family Service

The following information is for use if you have recently been identified from a U.S. immigration detention facility and need to be escorted to the airport to present themselves for an ICE check-in. Approximately two weeks from now.

They are currently allowing you all of their identification in their possession, which should be placed in the folder to be used for the check-in process. Please be sure to include flight and other identification if desired.

There may be an American citizen accompanying this person (or persons) that would like to take them to the gate, in this case be their first stop in airport. If this is possible, please allow it.

Thank you.

Border 247 Care: 858-562-8822 | Immigration Legal Services: 858-447-1300

◀ A [sample letter to TSA officials](#), developed by JFS.

Transport to Airport and Bus Stations

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:
“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

When regularly receiving asylum-seekers, shelters spend a significant amount of time each day facilitating their guests’ departures as they journey on toward their destinations across the United States. Shelters have developed a variety of practices to manage guest departures that are tailored to their specific contexts, taking into account the guests’ needs, the shelter’s resources, and the shelter’s proximity to airports and bus stations.

The primary task, of course, is the guests’ actual transport to the airport or bus station from which they will depart. Shelters have employed a range of methods, including the use of a shelter-owned passenger van, volunteer drivers (see the chapter on [Onboarding and Training Procedures for Staff and Volunteers](#) regarding background checks), a private shuttle service, ride share services, and public transportation. Any transportation plan must account for the safe transportation of children, including the use of age- and weight-appropriate car or booster seats in private and shelter-owned vehicles.

To manage guests’ questions as they await their departure from the shelter, many shelters have used monitors or whiteboards to display the upcoming departure times, which help reduce guests’ anxiety about missing a flight or bus. Coupling the departure board with clocks positioned around the shelter helps guests feel a degree of control during the transit process. Depending on the mode of transportation to the airport or bus station, it is important that the departing guests are introduced to the driver and are informed as to where they are being driven and how long the trip to the airport or bus station is expected to take. To ensure children are safely transported, shelters maintain a supply

of car and booster seats that can be borrowed for use in private vehicles.

To ensure that guests are prepared and equipped for the travel ahead, shelters typically:

- Provide a folder containing their immigration paperwork and travel documents.
- Include a resource folder, including an “onward movement packet” (see the [Onward Movement](#) chapter), legal referrals, and any other applicable community service referrals.
- Give the guests a care package with enough food for the duration of the trip (see the [Meal Planning](#) chapter). When supplies are available, a small blanket, coloring books with crayons or other children’s activities, and homemade English vocabulary flashcards may be included.
- Ensure the guests have all of their personal belongings, having been advised of the luggage weight restrictions and costs for checked luggage. Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) developed a basic guide to each airline’s luggage restrictions and fees, available in various languages in the [Resource Library](#).



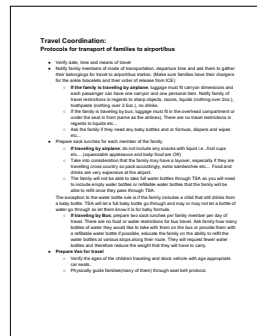
◀ A [luggage guide](#) developed by JFS is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Shelters have employed various approaches to ensure the check-in and security processes run smoothly once a guest arrives at the airport or bus station. When guest numbers are particularly high, the Las Cruces, New Mexico Border Servant Corps stations a volunteer at the airport or bus terminal to receive traveling shelter guests and to help them check-in. Various shelters have requested Transportation Security Agency (TSA) provide escort passes that allow shelter volunteers to accompany guests through the airport security process and all the way to their gates. As a standard precaution, shelters arrange travel to the airport or bus station so that guests have ample time to check-in and go through the security checkpoints, knowing that the process may be unfamiliar for the guests and also take longer than usual due to the guest’s immigration paperwork.

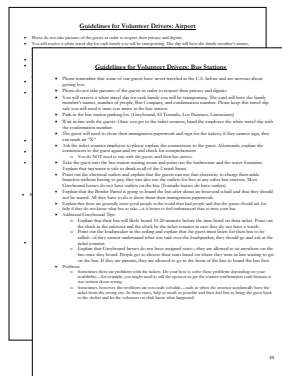
If a shelter runs into consistent challenges with a travel company or staff at a bus station or airport, shelter staff have found success in improving services through the corporate administration for the company. For example, some shelters were able to secure a travel company’s agreement to designate its regional manager as “on-call” to address repeated challenges and liaise with its headquarters. Also, some shelters, working through their U.S. Congressional Representatives, communicated with the “Governmental Liaisons” for each airline to obtain escort passes for their volunteers. It is important to note that whenever concerns arise, documenting as much information as possible about the incident (i.e. date, time, location(s), names and titles of all involved, and as detailed a description of the event as possible) is essential to their resolution.

Two examples of guidance for volunteer drivers accompanying guests to the airport or bus station are available in the [Resource Library](#), developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona and Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas.

◀ [Guidance for volunteer drivers developed by the IRC Welcome Center.](#)



◀ [Guidance for volunteer drivers to the airport or the bus station developed by the Annunciation House.](#)



A “helping hand” wall displaying supportive messages from volunteers at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.



Working with Vulnerable Populations

The present section outlines key considerations when working with vulnerable populations. Whether due to the underlying harm experienced that led to an asylum-seeker's flight from their home country, the perilousness of the journey, the uncertainty and fear while in immigration custody, or the mere fact of displacement, the guests served by shelters have endured much prior to their arrival and come to the shelter without the protection and familiarity of extended family and community. Tailoring shelter operations and services to the needs of the guests helps ensure a safe and welcoming environment for those in need of respite.

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A Nicaraguan asylum seeker stands in temporary lodgings in a border community in Costa Rica.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
“Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:
“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 8:
“Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.”

When working with vulnerable populations such as asylum-seekers, shelters play an important, albeit brief, role in attending to the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs of their guests. Embedding a MHPSS perspective throughout a shelter operation works to promote guests’ wellbeing and bolsters the work shelters do to meet the guests’ immediate physical needs, orient and inform them of their rights, and connect them with their families.

UNICEF’s field guide, [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Families at the U.S.-Mexico Border](#), speaks to the particular context of shelters along the U.S. southern border, the populations they receive, and how the guests’

mental health and psychosocial responses may manifest:

Migrants and refugees often faced extreme hardships and danger in their countries of origin and during their journeys. Disruption to familiar ways of life, lack of information, uncertainty about immigration status, potential hostility, changing policies, undignified and protracted detention all add to migrants’ already heavy burden of stress.

Forced migration erodes pre-migration protective support, such as those provided by extended family, and may challenge cultural, religious and gender identities. Forced migration requires multiple adaptations in short periods of time. People, especially but not only children, become more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Pre-existing psychosocial and mental health problems can be exacerbated. Importantly, the ways in which people are received and how protection and assistance is provided may induce or aggravate problems. [...]

Migrants and refugees can experience a range of mental health and psychosocial responses to their situation. They may feel overwhelmed, confused or distressed, and experience extreme fear and worries, outbursts



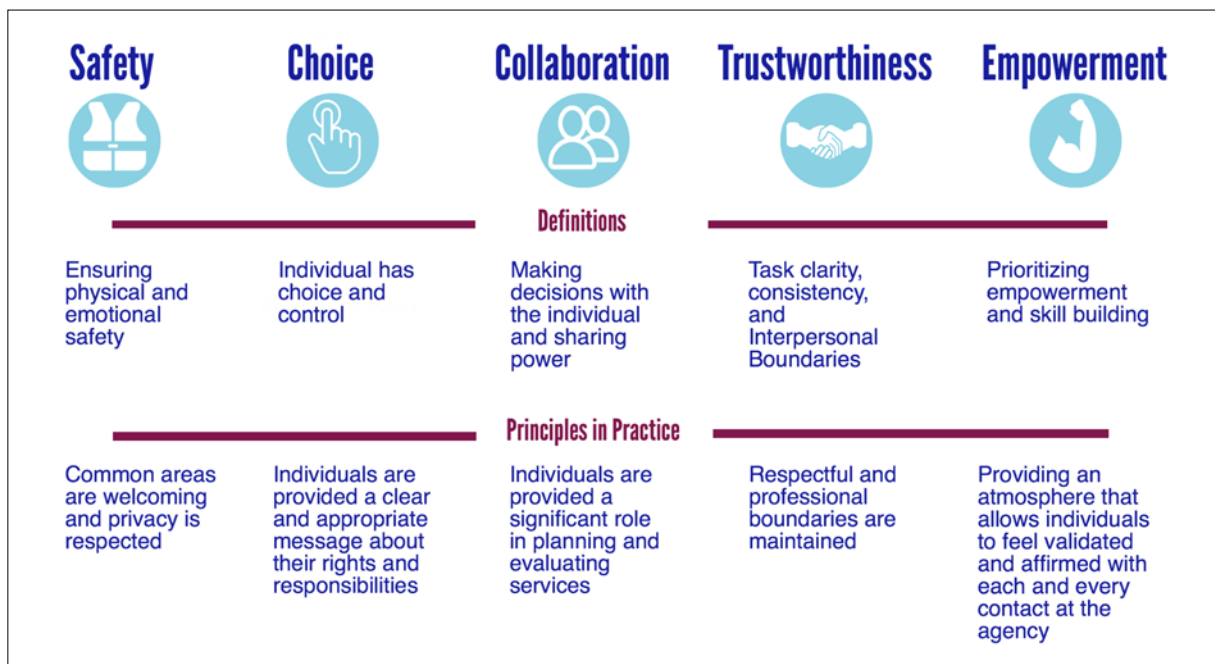
of strong emotions such as anger and sadness, nightmares and other sleep problems. Initially, on immediate arrival to their destinations, some may experience joy and elation. Many are affected by multiple losses and are grieving for places and life left behind.

Refugees and migrants may feel fearful, anxious, numb or detached. Some may have reactions that affect their functioning and thinking capacities, thereby undermining their ability to care for themselves and their families. It is important to realize that many stress responses are natural ways in which the body and mind react to stressors and should not be considered abnormal.

The effects of stress can be buffered by basic services, safety, and social support. Most emotional suffering is directly related to current stresses, worries and uncertainty about the future. Being a migrant does not, therefore, by itself, make one significantly more vulnerable to mental disorders. Rather, migrants can be exposed to various stress factors that influence their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. These are normal responses to abnormal situations.⁹

The full field guide contains information on the general principles of MHPSS for asylum-seeking families, resources for training and supporting staff and volunteers in their role supporting families, and best practices shelter organizations, staff, and volunteers can employ to maintain their own wellbeing. For more information on staff and volunteer self-care, please refer to the Secondary Trauma/Resiliency Training sub-section of the [Onboarding and Training Procedures](#) chapter.

One component of MHPSS in a shelter is a trauma-informed care approach to engaging with guests. Such an approach recognizes the potential presence of trauma symptoms among the shelter’s guests (or even staff and volunteers) and requires appropriate adaptation of shelter practices to avoid re-traumatization and to ensure services are accessible. The following chart from the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care at the University of Buffalo lays out five guiding principles of trauma-informed care.¹⁰



Another important component of MHPSS in a shelter context is the use of Psychological First Aid (PFA), which provides a framework for a compassionate and practical response to individuals who recently have experienced an extremely distressing event. The World Health Organization's [publication](#), *Psychological first aid: Guide to field workers*, states that PFA seeks to support individuals in a way that respects their dignity, culture, and abilities. The guide lays out the principles behind PFA, how to deliver PFA responsibly, how to care for oneself, and case scenarios to practice. For a quick reference material, the pocket guide is available [here](#). For additional information on building cultural competence into programming, see the report commissioned by the Center for Mental Health Services within the Department of Health and Human Services, *Developing Cultural Competence in Disaster Mental Health Programs: Guiding Principles and Recommendations*, available [here](#).

While PFA is designed as an immediate, safe response to an individual who has recently experienced a distressing event, a more direct intervention at the shelter is generally not advisable when follow-up counseling is not available or guaranteed on site or at their destination location. Intrusive questions asked without the time or expert services in place to support the guest as they work through their emotional response may violate the humanitarian imperative to “do no harm.” See the [Protection from Exploitation and Abuse](#) chapter for additional information.

There are many ways that shelters have designed their spaces, established rules, and delivered services with the guests' perspectives and needs as the guiding principle. The following examples illustrate steps shelters have taken to make their space feel more inviting, provide information so that guests are informed and feel a measure of control, and establish rules with guest safety in mind:

- Provide signage (with both words and pictures) so guests can navigate the building easily and without being dependent upon others.
- Post daily schedules and digital clocks (using military time) in visible locations to restore a sense of control.
- Decorate the shelter with colorful artwork and murals. Including culturally significant symbols that are immediately recognizable can convey a sense of safety and security to guests upon their arrival.
- Display an “About Us” bulletin board with photographs and names of shelter staff members and regular volunteers.
- Enforce the “no photography” policy.
- Screen age-appropriate movies that are available in multiple languages, such as animated films.
- Offer childcare so that parents can participate in “Know Your Rights” presentations or other group sessions designed for adults.
- Create “inspiration walls” with messages of hope and encouragement from community members, past guests, staff, and volunteers. The photograph on page 89 shows a “helping hand” wall in which volunteers write supportive messages on cut-outs of their hands.
- Create safe spaces for guests to parent their children. Experiences in detention and moving through government processes wherein a parent is not in control may erode a parent's authority. Simple gestures, such as asking a parent's permission before offering help or even a treat (i.e. a toy, candy, a movie) to a child, are important markers of respect for the parent's authority. Similarly, when staff and volunteers provide services (such as interpretation during a medical screening), it is critical that questions about a child are answered by the parent. “Understanding that parents are the experts on their own children creates an environment of respect.”¹¹

A mural depicting a hummingbird, a common symbol in many cultures, [including in the Aztec tradition](#), at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter.



Case Management

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

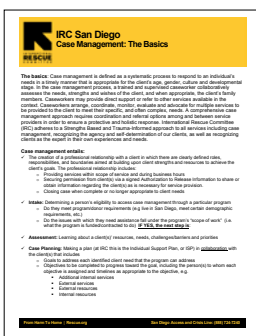
Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 6:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.”

In the United States, in the months and (often) years leading to a final adjudication of an asylum case, an asylum-seeker will navigate the many challenges of starting a new life in a new city with a new language. When available, case management is an excellent tool to ensure asylum-seekers do not have to navigate the challenges alone and to connect asylum-seekers to specialized resources. As explained by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) San Diego,

Case management is defined as a systematic process to respond to an individual’s needs in a timely manner that is appropriate for the client’s age, gender, culture and developmental stage. In the case management process, a trained and supervised caseworker collaboratively assesses the needs, strengths and wishes of the client, and when appropriate, the client’s family members. Caseworkers may provide direct support or refer to other services available in the context.¹²

Asylum-seekers face particular challenges when trying to meet their basic needs, in part because they must wait one year from filing their asylum application to apply for a work authorization document. Therefore, a case manager who has expertise in assisting asylum-seekers access available help while awaiting an outcome on their case can offer transformative support. Fortunately, there are a number of organizations that provide case management services for asylum-seekers in common destination cities across the country. These include organizations that traditionally have provided case management services to resettled refugees and some legal service organizations that offer case management to the clients they are representing on immigration matters.

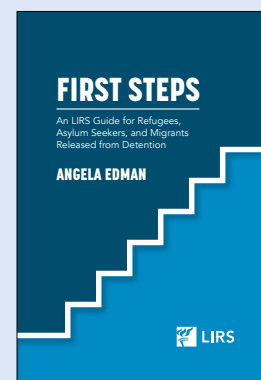
For a list of case management services or to find out if such services are available in any given community, asylum-seekers or their advocates can contact the Church World Service (CWS) Resource Call Center toll free at 1-800-375-1433. The CWS Resource Call Center is operated in English and Spanish (interpretation available for other languages) and connects asylum-seekers to legal and social service providers across the country. CWS Resource Call Center flyers are available in six languages in the [Resource Library](#).



◀ The IRC San Diego [handout, “Case Management: The Basics,”](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

Asylum-seekers who are unable to access case management services can benefit from a comprehensive resource developed by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, *First Steps: An LIRS Guide for Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants Released from Detention*. *First Steps* provides important information on legal rights, responsibilities, and eligibility for services and benefits (such as healthcare and education) depending on immigration status.

- The full guide in English can be found [here](#).
- The full guide in Spanish can be found [here](#).
- The condensed supplement in English can be found [here](#).
- The condensed supplement in Spanish can be found [here](#).



Case management services can unlock certain resources for guests. For example, for guests facing uncertain housing arrangements at their destination locations, Airbnb's Open Homes Initiative pairs hosts with asylum-seekers and refugees in need of temporary housing. Now an independent nonprofit organization, [Airbnb.org](https://www.airbnb.org) works with partner nonprofit organizations that refer clients to the Open Homes program and also provide support to the hosts during a stay.

Shelter best practices include directly referring guests to such services where available or otherwise ensuring that available case management services are included in the "onward movement" packet. See the [Onward Movement](#) chapter for more information.

If a guest discloses that they are a torture survivor, it is especially important that they are connected with specific services designed to support their recovery.

- The National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs maintains a [list by state](#) of member organizations that provide specialized services to victims of torture.

- A map of healing centers in the United States is available [here](#).
- The Center for Victims of Torture provides [resources](#) for survivors.

Various shelters have incorporated case management services into their programming, particularly for asylum-seekers who remain at the shelter beyond a brief stay or in the community where the shelter is located. For example, La Posada Providencia in San Benito, Texas has case managers on staff who work with the longer-term guests, while Safe Harbors Network in San Diego, California and the IRC Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona each have partnered with the local IRC office to provide case management services to guests remaining at the shelter or in the community which address their long-term needs.

More detailed information regarding public benefits available to asylum-seekers in each state can be accessed via this [resource](#), "Mapping Public Benefits for Asylum-seekers in the States."

Children

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
“Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

When planning to shelter families, it is important to address the specific needs of children of all ages. Their safety and health needs, as well as appropriate trauma responses, differ from adults’ and therefore require support specifically designed for children. When serving children in families, it is important to prioritize creating child-friendly spaces, implementing activities designed for children, and supporting parents so their children can thrive.

Organizations such as Save the Children and UNICEF have helpful guidance, trainings, and material resources to support children in a shelter context. Acknowledging the unique needs of children, these resources address how to create “child-friendly” spaces and activities as well as how to ensure the shelter services provide support to the whole family and are in line with the principle of “do no harm.”

Child-Friendly Spaces

Child-friendly spaces are designated areas within shelters for children to play and socialize in a safe, supportive setting. The Child-Friendly Spaces program, an initiative of Save the Children’s humanitarian work in emergencies, is designed to ensure that children in shelters have an outlet wherein they feel safe to be children and can participate in a program of activities created for them. The Child-Friendly Spaces program, managed and supervised by trained staff, also offers parents an important reprieve, allowing them to participate fully in “Know Your Rights” presentations and other sessions organized by the shelter as well as to attend to their own needs. Save the Children has partnered successfully with various shelters to

implement the program, including the Deming Shelter and the Las Cruces Asylum Shelter, both in New Mexico. Whether in partnership with Save the Children or organized and managed by shelter staff and volunteers, creating child-friendly spaces are vital to providing a sense of normalcy for children, for temporarily relieving some of the immediate pressure on parents, and to help shelters serve all their guests.

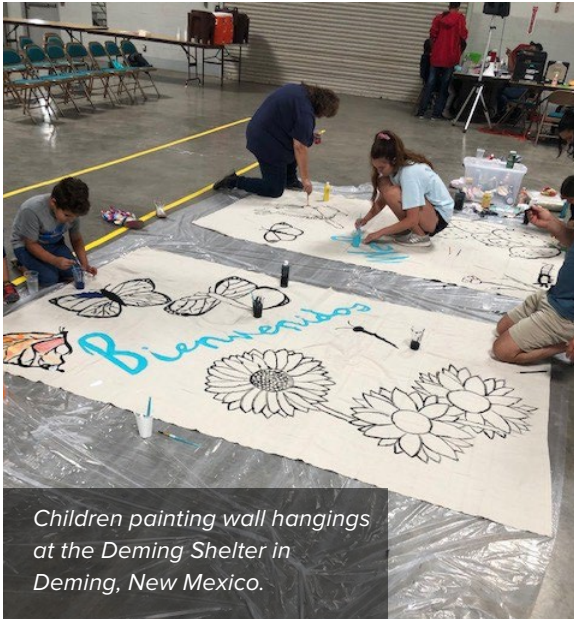


◀ For more information on the [Child-Friendly Spaces program](#), see the flyer available in the [Resource Library](#).

Children’s Activities

Shelters have developed creative and easy-to-implement ways to make children feel included and welcome in the shelter space, such as:

- Involving children in painting projects to decorate the shelter with colorful artwork and murals;
- Offering personal arts and crafts projects, such as painting a “worry rock” that children can take with them on the next leg of their trip (this provides them a sensory object onto which they can direct their worries while reminding them of community support);
- Screening movies in Spanish and other languages spoken by guests;



© Ariana Saldares

Children painting wall hangings at the Deming Shelter in Deming, New Mexico.

- Creating indoor and outdoor playrooms furnished with books and favorite toys (like dolls, building blocks, kites, and scooters).

Save the Children has developed and collected various materials to entertain and educate children during their shelter stay. These include learning activities by age group, Spanish language videos on a range of topics, a curated list of free educational websites and applications, and many other resources available [here](#). In conjunction with Border Servant Corps, Save the Children created a coloring book in English and Spanish called “Let’s Go!” that takes children through the steps of their journey and includes simple lessons on topics including their stay at a shelter, traveling by airplane and bus, and safe drinking water. The coloring book is a fun resource to use during a shelter stay or to include with crayons in a child’s care package intended for their onward journey to their family’s destination community.

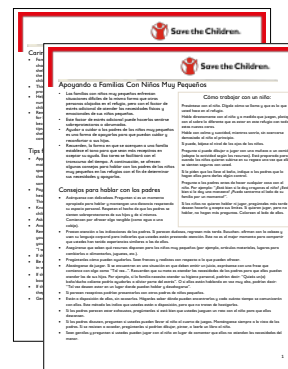


◀ Save the Children’s “Let’s Go!” coloring book.

Support for Parents

One of the primary ways to ensure children feel safe and cared for is to make sure their parents or other caregivers are equipped and supported and thereby able to care for their children. Save the Children has developed resources for shelter staff and volunteers working with families that support parents and caregivers who are managing a difficult journey while also caring for children.

Save the Children’s tips for shelter staff and volunteers to engage parents and children encourage simple approaches that provide support while respecting and affirming the parent’s parental role. Many shelter guests have experienced a loss of control during their flight from home or while in immigration custody; therefore, it is important for shelters to provide a safe space for parents to parent their children.



◀ Save the Children’s guidance is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) in the [Resource Library](#).

Just as with child-friendly spaces, it is important to create baby-friendly spaces where parents of newborns and infants can care safely for their baby’s needs while nurturing their parental bond. Save the Children developed operational guidance on baby-friendly spaces for the border shelter context, *Establishing a baby friendly space for families with children under 2 years and pregnant women*, available [here](#). It addresses the physical space and necessary supplies, activities for parents and young babies, and support for parents on feeding and care for infants. Designating a space for parents of young babies provides the opportunity for parents to connect with one another. Also, it is a useful space for shelter staff and volunteers to engage with parents and empower them through sharing

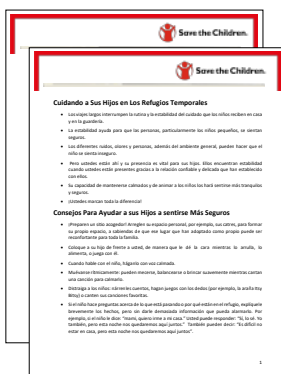
A mother and baby at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.



© Jewish Family Service of San Diego

information on finding and accessing needed support in their destination communities.

Save the Children developed a handout of general tips for parents on caring for children while at the shelter and how to promote a sense of safety, available in the [Resource Library](#). In addition, resources on self-care for families are available [here](#). Adult and family self-care activities can be incorporated into an activities schedule for the baby- and child-friendly spaces or otherwise shared with guests one-on-one or in a group.



Save the Children's general tips for parents are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) in the [Resource Library](#).

For assistance in setting up baby- and child-friendly spaces within a shelter, partner organizations such as Save the Children respond to requests for assistance and will help ensure shelters are outfitted to meet families' needs. The following items are shelter staples for baby- and child-friendly areas as well as for transportation:

- Portable cribs;
- Rocking chairs;
- Strollers;
- Car seats;
- Baby bathtubs;
- Diapers and wipes;
- Child and infant hygiene kits;
- Children's clothing;
- Nursing pillows and other supplies.

LGBTQI Guests

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:
 “Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

In addition to the harm experienced in a home country, LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) asylum-seekers are particularly vulnerable to abuse while displaced and on the move. Shelters are important, safe waystations along the journey in which staff and volunteers can ensure that the rights and dignity of LGBTQI guests are respected, their immediate needs are met, and they receive referrals for targeted services available in their destination locations. It is important that any particular accommodations a shelter makes for a guest identifying as LGBTQI (such as offering a private sleeping space to foster a sense of safety and security) are made with the consent of the guest and are not imposed in such a way as to stigmatize or isolate the guest. Confidentiality on a guest’s status as a member of the LGBTQI community must be respected along with the right to non-discrimination.

Case management services are an important tool that address the vulnerability that many LGBTQI asylum-seekers face even after they are united with their sponsors. Where available, shelters should aim to connect LGBTQI guests with case management services for specialized support in their destination communities. Please refer to the [Case Management](#) chapter for more information. If case management support is not available, the resources outlined below can be incorporated into the guest’s onward movement packet.

Referral Resources

The organization Asylum Connect hosts a database that connects LGBTQI asylum-seekers to legal service providers and other community resources, such as housing, food, medical, and mental health services. The nation-wide database can be searched using a zip code and accessed via their [website](#) or mobile applications. For further information, Asylum Connect has published seven legal [guides](#) related to LGBTQI asylum that are available on their website under the “Download Legal Guides” button.

LGBTQI asylum-seekers often require additional support. Ensuring that all guests feel welcome and safe is a priority for shelters. To this end, the following resources have been developed to guide organizations in creating a supportive environment:

- [Rainbow Bridges: A Community Guide to Rebuilding the Lives of LGBTI Asylum-seekers and Asylees](#), published by the Organization of Refuge, Asylum, and Migration (ORAM);
- [Serving LGBTQ Asylum-seekers and Building Welcoming Communities](#), published by the Center for American Progress;
- [Stronger Together: A Guide to Supporting LGBT Asylum-seekers](#), published by LGBT-Freedom and Asylum Network.

The following LGBTQI organizations can offer direct assistance or specialized support to asylum-seekers:

A welcoming banner hangs at the Deming Shelter in Deming, New Mexico.



© Ali Boyd

- [Immigration Equality](#) can connect LGBTQI and transgender asylum-seekers to legal resources and answer legal questions via their confidential inquiry form.
- The Heartland Alliance International – [Rainbow Welcome Initiative](#) offers a database with resources for asylum-seekers facing emergency, health, legal, employment, and social support needs.
- [LGBT Freedom and Asylum Network](#) hosts a resource library that includes a list of community support groups.

For transgender guests, the Transgender Law Center offers support for legal needs and connects clients to services, such as housing and health resources. A sample of the resources available include:

- [“Help Desk”](#) referral page for legal and community resources;
- [“Know Your Rights”](#) handout for Transgender or Gender Non-Confirming asylum-seekers;
- [How to Prepare](#) for a Credible Fear Interview as a Transgender or Gender Non-Confirming Immigrant.

Disability Inclusion

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 1:
“Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.”

Asylum-seekers with disabilities have unique needs and thus require specialized hospitality. Ideally, disability inclusion functions as a wide umbrella that covers a variety of topics, ranging from respect for disability rights to the protection and care of guests with physical and mental disabilities. Often these topics overlap and inform one another. Therefore, the following content should be read in relation to companion topics, with suggested policies and approaches for guests with physical disabilities also guiding practices for the elderly and guests with mental disabilities.

Shelters typically consider disability inclusion before the shelter doors ever open to guests. The process often starts with shelter access, by ensuring the facility is up-to-code and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For ADA guidance on access to emergency shelters, see Chapter 7, Addendums 2 and 3 of the ADA’s [Best Practices Toolkit for State and Local Governments](#). Complying with ADA regulations that ensure persons with disabilities have easy access to places and services is important fundamentally, but it also signifies to guests with disabilities that they are welcome and expected at the shelter.

Some shelters may become specialized in this form of hospitality. If a shelter location is designated to receive asylum-seekers with

disabilities, further comprehensive guidance can be found in the following resources:

- UNHCR, [Need to Know Guidance on Working with Persons with Disabilities in Forced Displacement](#);
- Women’s Refugee Commission, [Disability Inclusion: Translating Policy into Practice in Humanitarian Action](#);
- United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, [Resource Guide for Serving Refugees with Disabilities](#).

While recognizing the limited amount of time guests may spend at the shelter, there are many opportunities for shelters to identify and accommodate guests with disabilities, thereby ensuring their stay is safe, comfortable, and dignified and that they are equipped to travel to their final destinations. It is recommended that intake and medical personnel be trained to screen for disabilities and then ensure those guests’ needs are met. As the guest prepares to depart, it is important to provide specialized community service referrals when available. Additionally, if case management is available in their destination cities, the guests should be connected to the local provider. Please refer to the [Case Management, Legal Resources and Orientation](#), and [Preparing for Connecting Flights/Buses](#) chapters for further guidance.

Sample Guidance

The Alameda County Operational Area Emergency Management Organization's [guide on shelter planning](#) includes detailed guidance on ensuring that shelter space and services are accessible to guests with a disability.¹² The guide also includes checklists, adapted below, to help ensure staff are preparing for disability inclusion in all aspects of shelter operations.¹³

Identify Special Needs at Registration. Use the shelter registration process to identify needs that older or disabled persons may have for special assistance. For example:

- ☑ Prescription Medications. People may arrive at shelters without their medications; identify if there is a need for emergency medication replacement.
- ☑ Dietary Needs. Many older adults with hypertension or diabetes have important dietary restrictions and this should be noted during the registration process.

One-to-One Assistance. Community volunteers or other shelter residents may provide one-to-one assistance to older or disabled persons in disaster shelters.

- ☑ People with Visual Disabilities. Volunteers can help as sighted guides or readers.
- ☑ People with Mobility Disabilities. Volunteers can help with some support services, such as transferring the person from their chair to a cot. Ask the person with a disability for advice on safe methods before lifting or moving them.
- ☑ People with Developmental or Cognitive Disabilities. Establish a buddy system between volunteers and persons with developmental or cognitive disabilities to provide reassurance, calm explanations of procedures, and attention to their needs.
- ☑ People Who Are Deaf or Hearing Impaired. Volunteers can help with basic communication needs, such as writing or slowly repeating instructions.

Individualized Shelter Orientations. Shelter orientations serve to help persons with visual or cognitive disabilities (or older persons who are disoriented from their journey) adjust to the shelter environment.

- ☑ Provide a walk-through of the shelter interior (i.e. bathrooms, dormitories, and eating areas) to help disabled persons familiarize themselves with the shelter layout; explain shelter schedule and rules; introduce guests to shelter staff.
- ☑ Provide a verbal mapping of the shelter facility in addition to a walk-through for people with visual disabilities; verbally explain any signage or written rules.

Shelter Accessibility. Pre-identify shelters that meet the following standards for accessibility and endeavor to direct disabled guests to those shelters. Buildings with these basic points of accessibility will enable persons who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids to function with greater independence.

- ☑ Parking that is close to the building entrance with appropriate curb cuts;
- ☑ An accessible entrance to the shelter (i.e. an entrance ramp in addition to stairs, doors that are easy to open or are automatic);
- ☑ Accessible access to all shelter service areas (eating, sleeping, and bathrooms);
- ☑ Restrooms that allow for free access to toilets and washing facilities;
- ☑ Navigable aisles. Once the shelter is in operation, arrange furniture and equipment as needed to keep access aisles clear of obstructions and to ensure the space is navigable for someone with a visual or mobility disability.



Guests make use of the outdoor space at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.

© Jewish Family Service of San Diego

Donation Accessibility.

- ☑ Ensure that donations are distributed equally. A “first come, first served” policy will preclude those with disabilities or mobility limitations.
- ☑ Use signage to clearly indicate what items guests are allowed to use. For example, having bottled water displayed on a table does not necessarily communicate that guests can take water whenever they need it.

Basic Communication. Ensure that persons who are deaf or hearing impaired (or who seem disoriented) receive and understand all shelter announcements. Have note pads, pens, and pencils available at the shelter for staff or volunteers to use to communicate with deaf or hearing-impaired persons. Keep language simple and draw pictures if necessary.

Medications, Supplies, and Equipment.

Physically disabled persons may have had less opportunity to access their personal items and emergency medical supplies before evacuating their home to disaster shelters.

- ☑ Request certain disability-specific supplies from supporting organizations, like items ranging from colostomy bags to air mattresses and hearing aids.
- ☑ Where cots and blankets are limited, give first priority to seniors and people with disabilities.
- ☑ Establish vendor agreements with local pharmacies to expedite purchases for medication or personal equipment needs.

Privacy Area. Create a section of the shelter that is separated from other shelter residents for use as a “privacy room.” Some persons with disabilities must change catheter bags and attend to other personal hygiene needs and desire privacy. In addition, some elderly persons, persons with psychiatric disabilities, and even parents with very young children may benefit from a quieter, secluded space.

Protection from Exploitation and Abuse

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 3:

“Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 4:

“Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 5:

“Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.”

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability Commitment No. 7:

“Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.”

Border shelters are an important point of intervention during asylum-seekers' journeys in the event that they are still in danger or are heading into dangerous situations. It is best practice to build safeguards into shelter operations that prevent further abuse and exploitation of guests (such as domestic violence and human trafficking) as well as prevent any abusive behavior by shelter staff and volunteers. If staff and regular volunteers are trained appropriately, they can identify and respond to these situations when they are present.

The resources included in this chapter identify safeguards and responses that shelters can implement that protect guest safety and are appropriate for the short duration of the guest's stay. Some shelters have established follow-up support for guests after they have departed the shelter in order to ensure that the guests have arrived safely to their destination communities and are connecting with needed support

networks. For example, the Galilee Center in Mecca, California conducts check-in calls with former guests, while the International Rescue Committee Welcome Center in Phoenix, Arizona provides departing guests with business cards containing the shelter's contact information so former guests can reach shelter staff if they do not know where else to turn for help.

For information on how shelters address potential abuse of guests by shelter staff or volunteers, see the [Onboarding and Training Procedures for Staff and Volunteers](#) chapter for information on background vetting and shelter code of conduct and the [Volunteer Management](#) chapter for information on shelter complaint mechanisms.

Sexual and Gender-based Violence

Many asylum-seekers displaced from Central America and Mexico and seeking safety in the United States suffer from one or more forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including rape, sexual assault, transactional sex, forced prostitution, and sex trafficking. Asylum-seekers from the north of Central America and Mexico (particularly women and those who identify as LGBTQI) report a lack of protection in their home countries from SGBV, and displaced people are especially vulnerable to SGBV while on the move.¹⁴

Understanding this context in conjunction with the brief nature of most guests' stays at a border shelter informs the ways in which shelters support guests who have suffered a form of SGBV. The baseline protection shelters offer is the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for all guests. As mentioned in the [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support](#) chapter, an overall trauma-informed approach to operating a shelter and interacting with guests helps create such an environment and is a critical component of adhering to the principle of "do no harm." If there is imminent risk to a guest's well-being, it is incumbent upon shelter staff to take immediate action. However, a shelter's ability to provide non-emergency SGBV services is curtailed by the short duration of a typical guest's stay. It is generally not advisable to offer guests intervention when follow-up counseling is not available or guaranteed on site or at their destination location. That said, detecting victims of SGBV remains important as it enables staff to offer psychological first aid and to provide appropriate referrals to follow-up services in the guests' destination locations.

Detecting victims of SGBV is challenging in a shelter context, especially given a transitory guest population and limited time to build trust between staff/volunteers and guests. As aforementioned, it is generally not recommended to screen for SGBV in a setting without follow-up support available. However, there are steps that shelters proactively can

take to encourage guests to feel able to share their SGBV histories and to seek support if they so choose. [The Silence I Carry: Disclosing gender-based violence in forced displacement – Guatemala & Mexico report](#) presents findings and recommendations from a project that examined SGBV disclosure among refugees moving through Central America and Mexico. The report's follow-up [Practitioners' Toolkit for Mexico](#) offers tools developed to boost such disclosure to service providers, including shelters. The tools developed include guided discussions to understand SGBV disclosure in one's own work context and on how an organization can create an environment that enables SGBV disclosure; a non-exhaustive list for creating such an environment; guidance on how to listen to refugees to understand what information on SGBV they need; recommendations for how common spaces can be used to educate about SGBV; examples of facilitated group discussions among shelter guests to raise awareness about SGBV; and resources that direct readers where to find help.



◀ *Example Tool: "Enabled Disclosure" of SGBV: Some Do's and Don'ts.*

For additional guidance on supporting survivors of SGBV in the context of a humanitarian response, see the field [resource](#), *How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area: A step-by-step pocket guide for humanitarian practitioners* (GBV Pocket Guide), developed to accompany the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's [GBV Guidelines](#). The GBV Pocket Guide is a practical guide that uses a survivor-centered approach to provide valuable information on how to respond to survivor disclosures, including easy-to-reference Do's and Don'ts.

Trafficking in Persons

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a violation of human rights that involves the recruitment, movement, harboring, or receipt of persons by unlawful or otherwise improper means to be exploited sexually, for labor, or in other ways. As the graphic below from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) illustrates, the crime of trafficking is analyzed in three parts: the act, the means, and the purpose. As per the international definition of trafficking in persons, all three parts must be present to constitute a trafficking crime, except in the case of trafficking children; children under 18 years old are victims of trafficking regardless of the means by which an act was committed and with the purpose of their exploitation.¹⁵

There is often confusion about what constitutes trafficking in persons and how it occurs in the United States. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s “Blue Campaign” works to educate the public and law enforcement on how to recognize situations of human trafficking and how to appropriately respond. [The Blue Campaign website](#) provides helpful resources to understand better and to detect trafficking in persons along with infographics and other materials available to download and print.

In addition, the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#), operated by Polaris, is a resource available nationally to protect trafficked persons in the United States. The hotline connects trafficked persons with services to reach safety and receive help. The hotline also receives tips about potential trafficking situations, facilitating the reporting of that information to the appropriate authorities when necessary. [Flyers](#) advertising the National Human Trafficking Hotline are available in 23 languages, and Polaris has developed [guidance](#) on how to recognize human trafficking.

With the general lack of public awareness about human trafficking and how it manifests in the United States, there are common myths and misconceptions that have taken root. Among these myths are the idea that human trafficking is always sex trafficking; only women and girls are targeted; it always involves the movement of a person across a border; and other myths debunked on the National Human Trafficking Hotline’s [website](#). A common misunderstanding that arises in the context of movements of people across borders is the conflation of human trafficking with human smuggling. Human trafficking can involve, but does not require, an element of movement across borders for

Act	Means	Purpose
Recruitment	Threat of use of force	Exploitation, including
Transport	Coercion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitution of others
Transfer	Abduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual exploitation
Harboring	Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced labor
Receipt of persons	Deception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slavery or similar practices
	Abuse of power or vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of organs
	Giving payments or benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other types of exploitation

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, available at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>

Trafficking in Persons Defined

“Trafficking in persons” is defined in Article 3 of the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children](#) as:

- (a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
- (d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

the purpose of exploitation. Human smuggling, however, is the crime of assisting people to enter or stay in a country illegally for profit; it always involves movement across borders but does not include, necessarily, the means and purposes that are elements of human trafficking. [UNODC](#) provides a detailed explanation of the difference between human trafficking and human smuggling with accompanying examples.

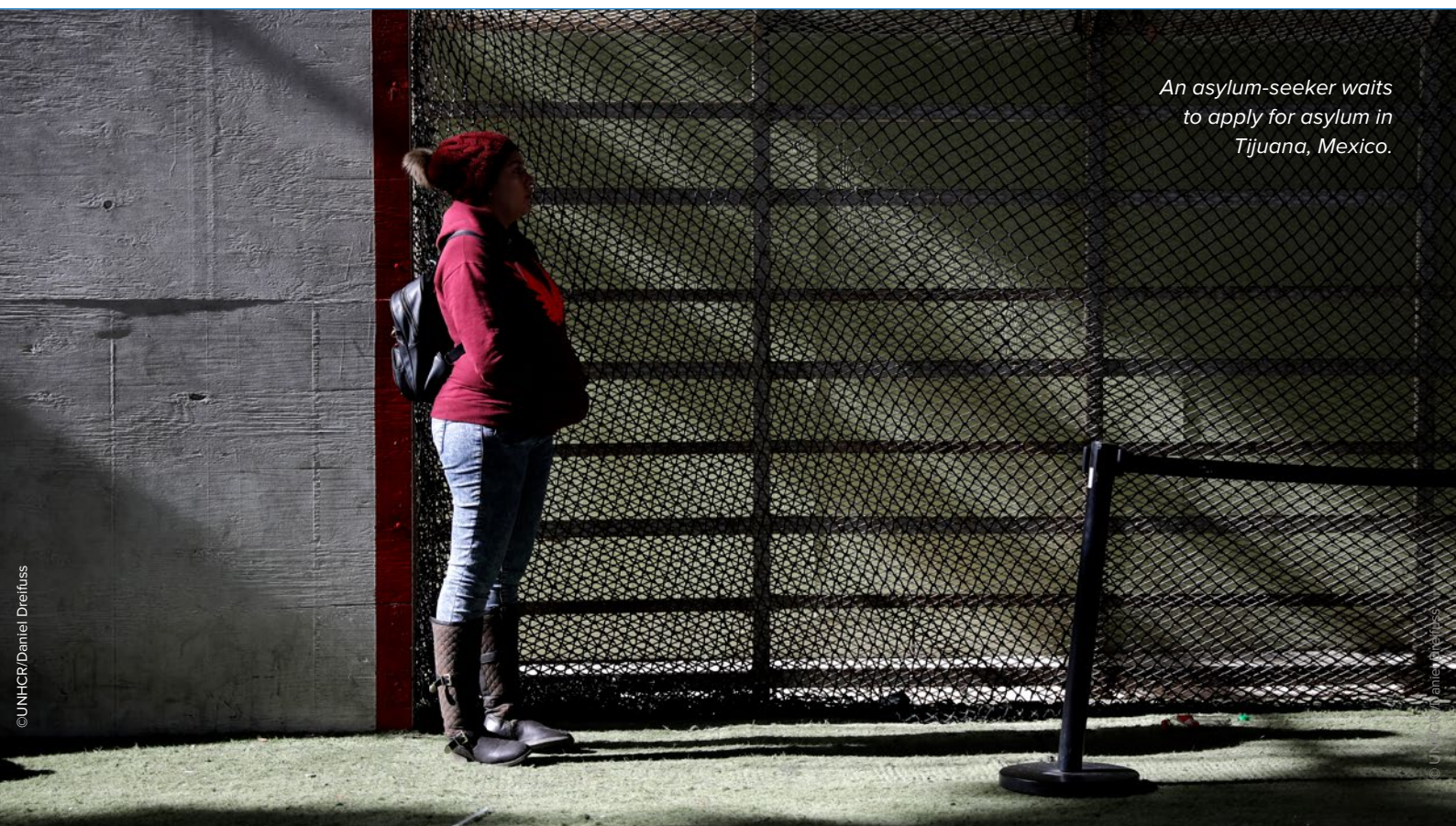
For guidance on responding to human trafficking in the context of uprooted populations, the Global Protection Cluster Task Team on Anti-Trafficking in Humanitarian Action produced [An Introductory Guide to Anti-Trafficking Action in Internal Displacement Contexts](#). The guide is a useful resource on the roles of responders to human trafficking in a humanitarian context, and includes information on how to detect and identify cases of human trafficking as well as how to refer and manage such cases.

Detecting human trafficking at a border shelter

In the context of a border shelter, there are two primary ways in which a human-trafficking scenario could play out and which the shelter potentially could detect. The first scenario is when a trafficker poses as the family member of the victim and avoids detection by border officials as a trafficker. The second scenario is when an asylum-seeker is en route to a sponsor who intends to exploit the asylum-seeker. In this latter situation, it may be that the sponsor is known to the guest or it may be a person the guest has never met before.

Detecting a human-trafficking situation, particularly while it may be unfolding, can be difficult and uncertain. It is critical that shelters have an action plan in place in the event a human-trafficking situation is detected; it is equally critical that staff and volunteers are trained on its implementation. A key element of any action plan is the referral process to appropriate law-enforcement and social-

An asylum-seeker waits to apply for asylum in Tijuana, Mexico.



service agencies, including obtaining the guest's consent for such a referral and knowing which shelter staff members are designated to make those calls. *Shelters have an important responsibility to safeguard the guest's privacy, including not disclosing the details of the incident or the guest's identity without the guest's informed consent.* In addition to how to carry out the shelter's plan, staff and volunteer training should include an explanation of human trafficking, tips for detecting a victim of trafficking and guests at risk of trafficking, and information on how to engage with guests using a trauma-informed approach. Being attentive to the demeanor and behavior of guests as well as the arrangements being made with sponsors is crucial in order to observe when a guest appears at risk of harm.

Examples of shelter best practices

- The New Mexico Hospitality Coalition in Las Cruces, New Mexico created a trafficking action plan that designates staff members with specific response roles in the event shelter staff or volunteers suspect a guest is at risk of trafficking. The shelter site director

and staff or volunteers serving in roles with significant one-on-one interaction with guests (such as shift coordinator, travel coordinator or case manager, and medical coordinator) are to attend a human-trafficking training. Any concern about human trafficking is to be reported first to the shift coordinator or site director. If the shift coordinator or site director determines further screening is merited, they should contact the local Homeland Security Investigations' (HSI) designated special agent, a contact the site director has established previously. The HSI special agent would then respond in plain-clothes, pursuing a conversation-based inquiry with the guest on site in order to assess the situation and to address it in a proportionate manner. With such an action plan in place, shelters are able to minimize the risk of inadvertently causing harm by unduly escalating a situation while also ensuring appropriate follow-up on any trafficking concerns raised. The action plan also instructs that the shelter should contact local law enforcement in the event of a specific disclosure of human trafficking or potential for immediate harm.

- Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) in California partners with a local organization with trafficking expertise to host an annual training on human trafficking for shelter staff at the San Diego Rapid Response Network (SDRRN) Migrant Shelter. Staff are trained to be alert to potential indicators of human trafficking when speaking with guests and their sponsors. If a trafficking concern is noted, JFS first relies on its Immigration Advocate to advise on how to proceed, including whether contacting law enforcement is necessary and communicating with the guest as to whether they prefer to remain at the shelter. The Immigration Advocate is part of JFS' immigration legal-services team and is embedded at the SDRRN Migrant Shelter to enhance the shelter's ability to address guests' legal needs.
- For an example of a simple but important tip, the United Methodist Committee on Relief recommends that staff “[c]onsider posting signs for the National Human Trafficking Hotline in private, discrete locations (bathroom stalls, changing rooms).”¹⁶ These are locations in which an at-risk guest is most likely to have enough privacy to read the posters.

National Human Trafficking Hotline Recommendations

- If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911.
- If you believe you may have information about a trafficking situation:
 - Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline toll-free hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocates are available 24/7 to take reports of potential human trafficking.
 - Text the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 233733.
 - Chat the National Human Trafficking Hotline via www.humantraffickinghotline.org/chat.
 - Submit a tip online through the anonymous online reporting form via <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/report-trafficking>. However, please note that if the situation is urgent or occurred within the last 24 hours, we encourage you to call, text or chat.¹⁷

Appendices

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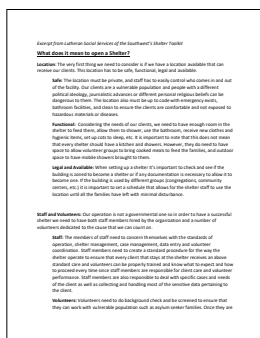
Cots are set up at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter in San Diego, California.

New Shelter? Start Here

Opening a new shelter can be daunting. There are many considerations at the outset, ranging from the logistics necessary to open and operate a shelter to the short- or long-term nature of the commitment and the degree of community support in place (or needed) to sustain the shelter's operations. Fortunately, there are tools to guide the decision-making processes and useful reference resources to assist a new shelter that have been compiled from the collective experience of the contributing border shelters named throughout this toolkit.

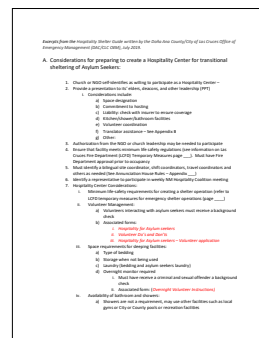
Considerations before opening a new shelter for asylum-seekers

Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest in Phoenix, Arizona developed materials to guide new shelters.



◀ An [adapted excerpt](#) highlighting important concerns when opening a new shelter is available in the [Resource Library](#).

In addition, the Doña Ana County/City of Las Cruces Office of Emergency Management's Hospitality Shelter Guide includes a section on considerations when preparing to shelter asylum-seekers as well as a facility set-up checklist. They are available in the [Resource Library](#) and are based on procedures developed by the Peace Lutheran Church in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

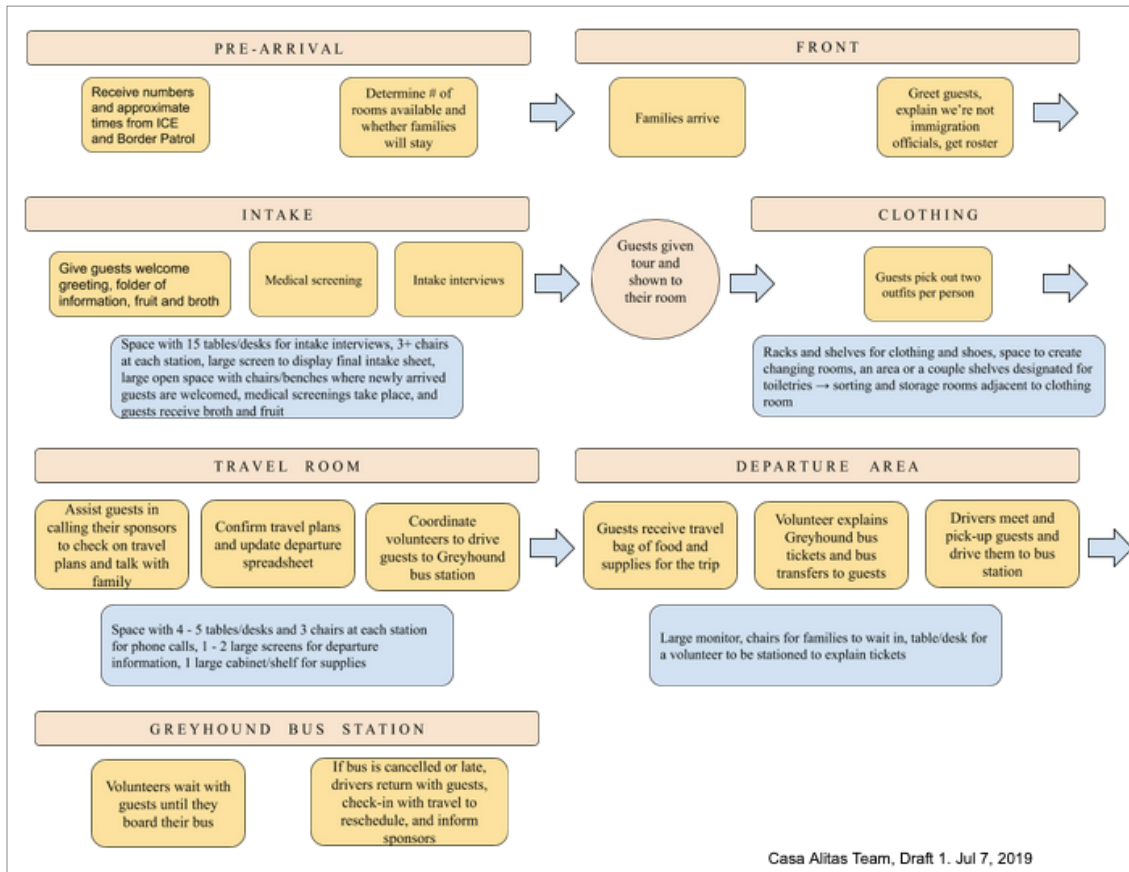


◀ The Doña Ana County/City of Las Cruces Office of Emergency Management's [Hospitality Shelter Guide](#) is available in the [Resource Library](#).

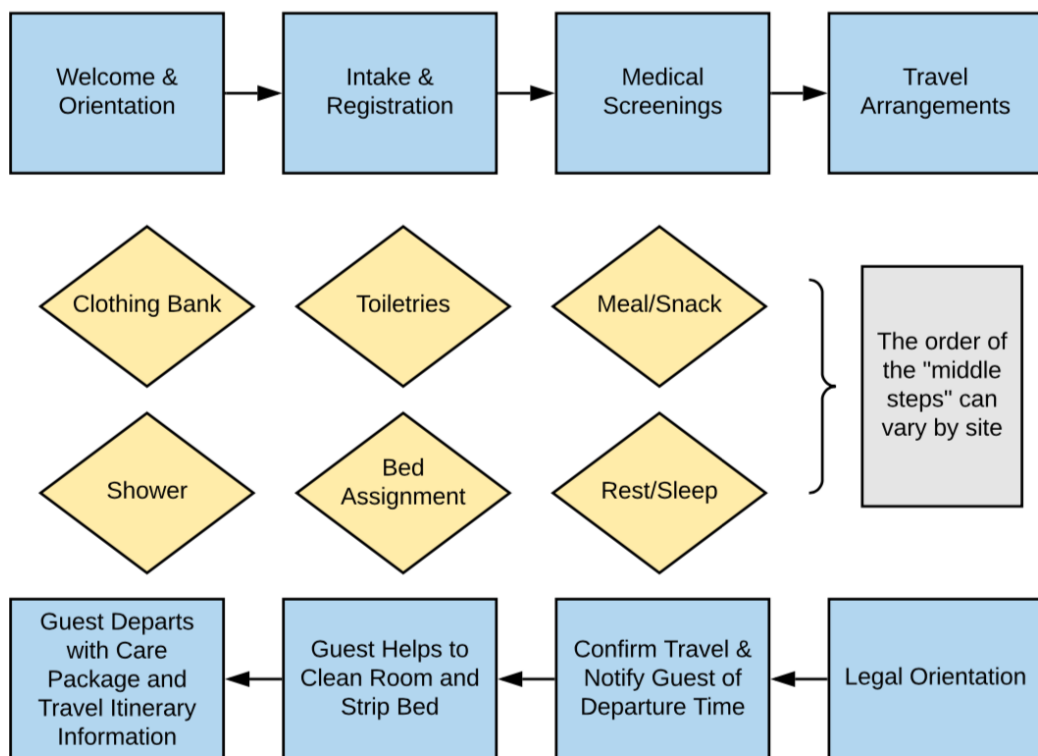
Tools to assist shelter start-up

The American Red Cross offers a [library](#) of forms and checklists for starting a new shelter. The [Shelter Field Guide](#) published by the American Red Cross and FEMA provides detailed instructions and checklists for operating a shelter. In addition, the American Red Cross and FEMA have developed [guidance](#) on COVID-19 sheltering in congregate and non-congregate settings. Because the American Red Cross generally is involved in sheltering in a mass-care disaster setting, not all materials will be applicable to a border context; nonetheless, they offer a strong foundation in developing shelter expertise.

The physical layout of a shelter is instrumental in providing safe, efficient, and effective service delivery. In general, shelters aim to maximize space based on the flow of services provided. The charts on the next page provided by Casa Alitas in Tucson, Arizona and Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas highlight systems common to any shelter welcoming asylum-seekers.



Sample Flowchart, Adapted from the Annunciation House Model



Additional Resources for Sheltering Displaced Populations

A range of international resources exist to guide UNHCR, other UN agencies, and partners during global emergency response. The resources below provide global guidance and best practices for sheltering people displaced due to conflict or natural disaster.

UNHCR Emergency Handbook

The [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#) is the primary tool for UNHCR in emergency operations. This comprehensive resource covers a range of topics critical to providing a coordinated, thorough response to displaced peoples' needs during an emergency, from [preparations and contingency planning to service delivery, protection of rights, staff well-](#)

[being](#), and [communications and media](#). Each topic includes key standards and guiding principles, good practices, and considerations for coordinating services alongside other actors. While the content is focused on large-scale emergency response, many sections may help strengthen overall shelter operations. The following operations-focused sections are particularly relevant:

- [Collective Centre Management and Coordination](#);
- [Protecting and Empowering](#);
- [Site Planning for Transit Centres](#);
- [Alternatives to Camps – Response in Urban and Rural Settings](#).



A young boy who fled with his family from their home holds his toys in Mexico City.

Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster Resources

In the context of emergency response to internal displacement caused by conflict or natural disaster, a “cluster” is a group of agencies – UN and otherwise—that work together toward common objectives in a particular sector. The “cluster” approach seeks to enhance coordination among various actors in order to improve overall service delivery and outcomes. The [Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management \(CCCM\) Cluster](#) seeks to coordinate humanitarian actors around the services provided to displaced populations within communal settings and work with the affected population to ensure representation and access to information about services provided. The CCCM Cluster has deep expertise in emergency response and has compiled a range of [resources](#) reflecting good practices in humanitarian/human rights service delivery. The following two resources are particularly relevant:

- **Urban Displacement and “Out of Camps” Review.** In recent decades, people displaced by conflict and natural disasters have shifted

away from sheltering in camps or camp-like settings toward living in urban areas. This resource explores how existing CCCM resources and experiences from more camp-focused responses can be applied to meeting the needs of people displaced and living outside camp settings, in particular in urban areas.¹⁸ The complete review and other online resources on urban and “outside of camp” displacement can be found [here](#).

- **Collective Centre Guidelines.** Many people forced to flee conflict or natural disasters seek “temporary shelter accommodation and protection in pre-existing buildings and structures commonly known as Collective Centres.”¹⁹ The CCCM Cluster has developed guidelines for the management and coordination of collective centers, much of which may be useful for the shelter context as well. Found and referenced [here](#), the Collective Centre Guidelines “assist in the planning, implementation, monitoring, maintaining and overall management of Collective Centres to ensure protection and assistance to those in need.”²⁰

International Organizations’ Resources on COVID-19 Response

For guidance from the international humanitarian field on managing COVID-19, including among displaced populations around the world, the following resources are available:

- **International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent (IFRC)** website’s [COVID-19 page](#) collates resources by category, including sanitation and infection prevention and control.
- **United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**, *Interim Guidance on Scaling-Up COVID-19 Outbreak Readiness and Response Operations in Humanitarian Situations, Including Camps and Camp-Like Settings* can be found [here](#).
- **World Health Organization**, *Considerations for quarantine of contacts of COVID-19 cases* can be found [here](#).

Shelters and Shelter-Coordinating Organizations



These shelters represent those that UNHCR visited as part of its field research conducted in 2019 and early 2020. It is not an exhaustive list of all border shelters that have received asylum-seeking families in recent years and does not reflect necessarily a current list of border shelters in operation as of publication.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 Some individuals, even asylum-seekers, are not released from government custody and can remain in detention for months and even years while their immigration proceedings are pending. Those who are released are often required to wear a GPS ankle monitor and report to regular check-in appointments with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
- 2 United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles*, available at https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf
- 3 Sphere Project, Chapter 2, *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, 2018 Edition*, 2018, available at: <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch003>
- 4 Ibid, Chapter 3, available at: <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch004>
- 5 The Core Humanitarian Standard, *Frequently Asked Questions*, available at: <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 *The Sphere Handbook*, Chapter 4, available at: <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005>; and the Core Humanitarian Standard, *Frequently Asked Questions*, available at: <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>.
- 8 This video was produced by HIAS in collaboration with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., Feerick Center for Social Justice, and Fordham University School of Law.
- 9 UNICEF, *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Families at the US-Mexico Border*, 2020, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/71491/file>.
- 10 The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, available at: <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html>.
- 11 Church World Service, *Border Volunteer Corps Handbook*, 2019.
- 12 International Rescue Committee of San Diego, California, "Case Management: The Basics," unpublished fact sheet.
- 13 Alameda County Operational Area Emergency Management Organization, *A Guide for Local Jurisdictions in Care and Shelter Planning* (Sept 2003) 65-69, available at: https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Docs/Guide_for_Local_Jurisdictions_Care_and_Shelter_Planning.pdf.
- 14 UNHCR, *Women on the Run: First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico*, 2015, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/operations/5630f24c6/women-run.html>.
- 15 OHCHR, *Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, Fact Sheet No. 36, page 2, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS36_en.pdf.
- 16 UMCOR, *Tips for United Methodist-Affiliated Transitional Shelters along the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Available in the [Resource Library](#).
- 17 The National Human Trafficking Hotline, *Report Trafficking*, available at: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/report-trafficking>
- 18 Global CCCM Cluster, *Desk Review: Urban Displacement & Outside of Camp*, 2014; available at: <https://ccmcluster.org/index.php/resources/urban-displacement-out-camps-review-udoc>
- 19 Global CCCM Cluster, *Collective Centre Guidelines*, 2010, available at: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/Collective%20Centre%20Guidelines%202010.pdf>
- 20 Ibid.