

**Typical set of instructions for an emergency shelter revise as necessary for your application**

## **Severe Weather Shelter (SWS) Volunteer Handbook**

### **Responsibility structure:**

1. The SWS Program Manager is considered to be the final decision maker for shelter problems concerning logistics/programming. Phone numbers this person will be in the communication log. The SWS Program Manager will make an effort to be on site sometime during the first night the shelter is open, preferably during set up.
2. There will be two Volunteer Coordinators assigned to find coverage for each shift during the nights the SWS is open by activating a telephone tree. These shifts are 7pm to 2am; 2am to 7am. There will be at least two volunteers assigned to cover each shift; one of which will be designated Lead Volunteer.
3. Lead Volunteer responsibilities are as follows:
  - Assists with intake by reading (out loud) the shelter rules to clients and signing the form along with the client.
  
  - Manages other volunteers by making sure they have read the Communication Log, Alert Log and that they are familiar with the shelter procedure.
  
  - Is responsible for any keys used at the shelter, (entrance, storage, medicine box, "sharps"<sup>\*\*</sup> box, bathroom, etc.)
  
  - Assign duties such as setting up, wake up call, putting out signs, making sure doors are locked, preparing coffee, clean up, etc.

<sup>\*\*</sup>The term "sharps" when used in this document means pocket knives, scissors, or any other sharp object commonly carried on one's person. It specifically excludes all firearms, knives with a blade larger than 2 inches, and all martial arts weapons.

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### Setting up the SWS

1. Volunteers should arrive at the SWS ½ hour early to begin set up, putting out the 'Severe Weather Shelter-Open' sign, organize the intake area with intake packets, pens, tape, name tags, etc. If the church is not already open for another function, the Program Manager (or their designee) will open the facility.
2. All supplies will stored on the SWS premises, the Program Manager or their designee will have the key to open the storage area for these supplies.
3. Set up of sleeping area consists of pushing the benches to the side walls and unrolling the foam bedrolls at right angles to the benches on each side of the room. This allows clients to use the benches as seating and storage. Place a fleece sleeping bag on top of each bedroll.
4. Make sure there are snack kits, personal hygiene kits and extra blankets in the SWS to give out to clients when they leave in the morning. If supplies are needed contact the Program Manager.
5. Make sure the medicine and sharps lock boxes, keys and sandwich baggies are on premise and available for use.
6. Volunteers should familiarize themselves with the Communication Log book. This book should be filled in at the end of each shift by the Lead Volunteer and serves as a communication tool to pass pertinent information to other shifts/personnel, as well as documentation of incidents. This log will also contain an "Alert List" containing names of guests who have been asked to leave the shelter. These guests may undergo a reevaluation by the lead volunteer (at their discretion) before being allowed back in the shelter for another night. **Guests are only allowed one reevaluation and then will be denied shelter access.**

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### Intake

**If a guest does not appear to be someone you wish to allow in, please USE YOUR JUDGMENT AND TRUST YOUR GUT FEELINGS. Remember the lead volunteer has the final say on admissions.**

1. A volunteer should be assigned to the entrance area to assist guests in finding the intake area.
2. Initial intake forms will be handled by the Lead Volunteer.
3. Each guest will be given a name tag and escorted to a sleeping area where the volunteer will write their name on a corresponding name tag on the bedroll storage bag; also adding three boxes to be checked off as the bedroll is used. Maximum usage is three nights after which the guest must be given a new bedroll.
4. Guest's belongings can be stored in garbage bags and labeled with their names. Their belongings must stay at their bedroll and bedrolls/ belongings kept neat. Guests will be given a personal hygiene kit for use in the shelter.
5. Each morning as the guest leaves the shelter they must roll up bedding and place it back in the storage bag, to be used by **that guest only** each night they are in the shelter.
6. Guest medicines are to be collected during intake and stored in a plastic baggie with the **guest writing their own name on the bag**. These bags are then stored in the medicine lock box for the night and can be accessed by the guests as needed. Volunteers should match name tag to name on baggie when they hand out guest's medicine baggies, both on request and when they leave in the morning. **No** medication, even OTC, will be dispensed by volunteers at the shelter.
7. At intake guests will have the shelter rules read to them. They will be asked to sign the form listing the rules for the SWS. The Lead Volunteer will also sign this form so everyone is aware of the requirements for remaining in the shelter.
8. The only pets allowed in the SWS are bona fide companion pets and guests must present certification as to that status on intake. Companion pets must spend the night in a crate at the bedside of the guest. Once doors are locked the pets must stay inside until the morning.
9. All sharps should be put in a separate lock box from the medicines, stored in plastic baggies labeled by guests, and returned to guests upon request as they leave the shelter.
10. When the shelter is full (20 guests maximum) the "Severe Weather Shelter – Full" sign should be put out and the entrance door locked
11. Doors will be locked at 10:00 PM and will stay secure until 7:00 AM.

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### **Recommended schedule**

**6:15-6:30 pm.** Volunteers should be arriving and setting up shelter.

**7:00-8:30pm.** Guests will begin arriving during this time. Once there are enough Volunteers to supervise guests you can begin to let them in. Paperwork should be completed.

**10:00 pm. Doors Secured for Night. LIGHTS OUT!** Any talking should be quiet and kept to a minimum.

**5:00 am.** Some guests may need to be up early to get to work. Indicate this in the Communication Log as the volunteer on duty at this time will be responsible for waking these guests. A Post-It note above the sleeping area with the wake up time is helpful or possibly having a floor plan with names of guest's needing this service.

**5:45 am.** This is general wake up time and can be accomplished by simply turning on the lights.

**6:30 am.** The Program Manager will check the weather forecast to determine if shelter will be open or closed for the upcoming evening and notify the on-duty lead volunteer. Guest will then be briefed regarding facility availability and if the shelter will be open, guests need to indicate whether or not they will be returning.

**6:45 am.** This is a verbal "Last Call" announcing the time and letting guests know it is time to leave.

**7:00 am.** All guests must depart.

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### **Shift guidelines**

1. Guests are not allowed to leave the shelter once they have been through intake and during the hours the SWS is functioning. If a guest insists on leaving then they cannot return that night. (This means no leaving to smoke.)
2. If the reading room is in use volunteers must check it often; at least every half hour. The reading room is for quiet awake activities, i.e. reading, writing, – not sleeping. If guests fall asleep in the reading room volunteers should ask them to return to their bedrolls.
3. If guests are not observing SWS rules they should be asked to leave and escorted to the door by at least two volunteers. Please make sure they are returned any personal items (medicines, sharps, etc) they may have turned in to the volunteers.
4. Water and juice will be available to guests during the evening.
5. Lights out/Quiet time starts at 10:00pm.
6. Volunteers should wear comfortable clothing such as jeans or sweat suits.
7. **DO NOT BRING VALUABLES OR MONEY WITH YOU.** A fanny pack with your essentials/car keys/cell phone would suffice.
8. If volunteers choose to bring games, cards, books or music, please be aware you are responsible for these items as they could be lost or stolen.
9. If a guest is ill you may need to isolate that person. If possible, move them to an area where they are by themselves,(i.e. designated sick room). Use your discretion and judgment concerning the situation.
10. Guests will be given a snack kit and donated blanket, if available, to take with them on the last morning of shelter operation.
11. The decision whether to re-open the SWS on subsequent nights will be made by 3pm of the previous day and posted on the door of the facility, as well as notifying the 211 line.

### **Taking down SWS**

1. When the SWS closes down all bedding must be washed and returned to their storage bags. Laundry volunteers will perform these duties during the day following closure of the shelter. The clean bedding will be locked again in the storage compartment.
2. Survey the number of snack kits and extra blankets left and notify Program Manger for replacements.
3. Return all furniture and equipment in area to its original placement.
4. Clean kitchen area and reading room. If the area needs to be vacuumed, notify the Program Manager.
5. Store all SWS signage and lock boxes in the designated storage area.
6. Turn in paperwork to Program Manager when shelter is closed. While the shelter is functioning intake paperwork should be left at the shelter for reference by the volunteers on their shifts.

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### **Information for General Emergencies**

1. All shift volunteers will be shown where the fire exits and fire extinguishers are located.
2. 911 dispatcher information will be posted in a prominent place for volunteer use if needed.
3. Volunteer coordinators and Program Manager's phone numbers will also be available in the communications log.
4. Universal Precautions are subscribed to, which means that latex/plastic gloves will be available and should be used if the occasion to clean up blood, or any other body fluids,.. Used gloves should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed in the dumpster behind the SWS immediately after use.
5. Emergencies are defined as any medical crisis on the part of volunteer or client and/or any situation where volunteers feel personally threatened with no alternative solution present other than to call 911.

### **See Appendix For:**

1. Supplies needed for SWS site.
2. Universal Precautions
3. How to handle (general) emergencies; list of common types of emergencies requiring immediate action.
4. List of contact persons, cell phone numbers and addresses.
5. Shelter Rules
6. Intake form

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### SHELTER RULES

It is important that the Severe Weather Shelter operates with a spirit of respect and consideration for others, therefore we require that the guests have the shelter rules read to them by whoever is Lead Volunteer at the time of intake. If guests do not abide by the Shelter Rules they may be asked to leave the shelter immediately and could be refused admittance in the future.

Please read the following rules and ask if there are any questions to ensure they understand what they have just heard. Both the guest and the Lead Volunteer sign at the bottom of the form. The signed form should be kept as part of their admission paperwork.

1. **Guests must remain in the shelter after checking in.** The only exceptions are those guests with bona fide companion pets, who may leave with their pet only once before the doors are secured at 10:00 PM. Anyone leaving the shelter cannot be readmitted unless there is an emergency and the shelter staff approves the re-entry.
2. **Guests must be settled in their beds by 10:00pm with lights out.** Any necessary toilet preparations should take place before this time.
3. **Illness must be reported to a volunteer on duty.**
4. **Volunteers will refuse admittance to guests at any time who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.** If a guest is found to have either drugs and/or alcohol in his possession, at any time, in the shelter, the guest will be asked to leave the shelter immediately and will be denied future admittance. Guests must surrender all medications including OTC medications at intake for safe keeping in a locked container. Medications will be returned to guests when they depart.
5. **Absolutely no weapons of any kind are permitted in the shelter.** If weapons are found in a guest's possession after a guest has been admitted, the guest will be asked to leave immediately and denied future admittance. Sharp objects like pocket knives, scissors or nail files must be surrendered during intake and will be returned to the guest when they depart.
6. **No violent or argumentative behavior should be tolerated.** Police will be called immediately at any evidence of violence. The guest will be asked to leave immediately and denied future admittance.
7. **No smoking in the shelter.** Any guest found smoking in the shelter will be asked to leave immediately and denied future admittance.
8. **The bathroom should be used only for guests restroom needs.** Guests are expected to leave the bathroom in a neat and orderly condition.
9. **Guests are not permitted to bring anyone else into the shelter on their own.**
10. **Guests are expected to leave the building and the shelter area by 7:00 am each morning.** Anyone loitering in the area may be denied access to the shelter for future nights.



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**SHELTER RULES (continued)**

- 11. Guests are not to use profanity or other insulting language to other guests, volunteers or staff.**
- 12. Guests must be considerate of other guests as appropriate in a group setting and keep noise at a reasonable level.**
- 13. Parents or guardians shall be responsible for the conduct of their children and must remain in the immediate area of their children at all times.** Parents who leave the shelter to smoke must take their children with them, children can not be left unattended in the shelter.
- 14. Guests are responsible for their own personal belongings.** Guests must keep money, personal papers, etc. with them at all times. SWS personnel and/or partnering organizations are not responsible for guest's belongings and not liable for loss or theft of those belongings. SWS is not responsible for transporting any personal belongings and any guest leaving belongings at the site should be aware that they may be disposed of as seen fit.

**I have had the shelter rules explained to me and I agree to abide by them. I also understand that this emergency severe weather shelter is only open during periods of severe weather at the discretion of insert responsible party and the Volunteer Staff. In agreement to use this facility, I agree to release Interfaith, insert church name and the shelter volunteers from liability on my behalf during my stay.**

Guest signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Guest 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Adult Guest 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Child 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Child 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Child 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **SEVERE WEATHER SHELTER SUPPLIES**

1. Foam bedrolls and fleece sleeping bags.
2. White garbage/storage bags (with attached ties) for bedding, guest's belongings, clean up.
3. Tags with ties, stick on name tags for labeling guest and bedding.
4. Large zip lock bags for medications, weapons, etc.
5. Two lock boxes; one for medications, one for sharps.
6. Signs for interior and exterior use.
7. Pens, pencils, masking & scotch tape, three ring binders (at least two), pads of paper, Post-it notes.
8. Toilet paper, tissues, paper towels, trash can bags, small disposable drinking cups.
9. Cleaning supplies: disposable gloves (if possible, not vinyl), Lysol, hand wipes.
10. Two types of hand out kits: snack kit and personal hygiene kit.
11. Donated blankets for hand out at end of stay.
12. Universal Precaution supplies and box
13. First Aid kit.

### **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

#### **What are Universal Precautions?**

Universal precautions are infection control guidelines designed to protect workers from exposure to diseases spread by blood and certain body fluids. The U.S. Center for Disease Control has developed the strategy of "Universal Precautions" to prevent contact with patient blood and body fluids. These precautions stress that all patients should be assumed to be infectious for blood-borne diseases, such as HIV Aids and Hepatitis B.

**All body fluids should be handled with Universal Precautions and these precautions should also be applied when it is difficult to identify the specific body fluid or when any body fluid contains visible blood.**

#### **Precautions To Take**

Barrier protection (gloves) should be used at all times when coming into contact with blood, or any body fluid containing blood. As a general safety precaution, any body fluid should be considered contaminated and barrier protective used. Gloves should be worn when there is potential for hand and skin contact with body fluids, other potentially infectious material, and/or items and surfaces contaminated with these materials.

## **Typical set of instructions for an emergency shelter revise as necessary for your application**

**Wash hands (or any skin surfaces) thoroughly and immediately if there has been any contact with potential contamination, and also after removing gloves. Gloves should be disposed of by placing in a plastic bag and taken to an outside dumpster.**

Universal Precaution supplies should be kept in a special box with that designation and used only for that purpose.

## **HOW TO HANDLE COMMON EMERGENCIES**

### **Handling General Emergencies**

1. Remain calm.
2. One volunteer only should talk calmly to the guest.
3. Evaluate the seriousness of the emergency. ( Remember it is better to err on the side of caution.)
4. Provide a safe environment for the guest having the crisis.
5. Provide a safe environment, if needed, for the other guests.
6. Contact emergency services if necessary; 911 for ambulance or police.
7. Contact Program Manager anytime 911 is called.

### **Seizures**

1. Common symptoms: unresponsive, glassy eyes, body convulsing, possible vomiting.
2. Stay calm and turn guest on their side to prevent choking. Call 911 and stay with guest until medical help arrives.
3. Remove all dangerous items/furniture near guest.
4. Once guest is responsive do not give them anything to eat or drink.
5. Try to time the episode (both time of onset and duration) as this is helpful to the medical personnel.

### **Heart Attack**

1. Common symptoms: severe chest pain often radiating down left (or both) arms, pain can radiate up into jaw, shortness of breath, a feeling of pressure on the center of the chest.
2. Stay calm and try to keep the guest calm.
3. **Call 911**
4. Have guest lie down and remain quiet.
5. Elevate feet and keep warm.
6. Do not give them anything to eat or drink.
7. Have a volunteer remain with the guest until medical help arrives.

## **Typical set of instructions for an emergency shelter revise as necessary for your application**

### **Psychotic breakdown**

1. Common symptoms: bizarre behavior, unreasonable paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, potentially violent behavior.
2. Isolate the guest as much as possible and call 911.
3. Acknowledge that you understand that the guest is frightened; reassure them in a calm voice that the shelter is a safe environment.
4. Maintain a comfort zone at least an arm's length between yourself and the guest. Do not back the guest into a corner or against a wall, or allow yourself to be backed into a corner or against a wall. Do not touch a potentially violent guest.
5. Help the guest focus on the here and now: tell the guest our location, as for the guests name, etc.
6. Help the guest focus on his breathing to promote relaxation.
7. **Only one volunteer should talk to the guest.**