



Camps as Evacuation or Temporary Housing Centers

Key Questions to Consider

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What if your camp is called upon to house guests in times of natural disaster or other temporary housing crises?

Camps may be called upon by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) — or another government agency or community organization — to serve as evacuation centers. The Department of Homeland Security may also contact camps about serving as housing for children and/or adults who are temporarily under their care. In any of these cases, camps need to consider all of the implications of agreeing to be a host site. In recent years, a number of camps have partnered with FEMA and others to take on these responsibilities. They learned some important lessons when they were asked to help. The following list of host site considerations was developed from their experiences.

Receiving Guests and Ensuring Safety:

- **Length of Time:** How long will guests be staying? Consider whether you can even accommodate guests. Is camp in session? Is camp not in session? Will camp be in session soon? What about rental groups already booked at camp?
- **Permanent Housing:** Who is securing permanent housing for your guests? How will guests be transported to new housing? What if permanent housing is not located quickly — what will you be able to do?
- **Liability Issues:** Who is responsible for insurance and other liability issues? Have you spoken to your insurance company about coverage? Can you get certificates of insurance from other responsible organizations (e.g., FEMA)?
- **Safety:** How will you orient guests to your rules, procedures, and safety issues? What do you do if rules are broken?
- **Security:** Who will provide security and law enforcement for the camp? How will you monitor the coming/going of guests? If your guests are a group that is vulnerable or otherwise could attract onlookers or the media, how will you provide for security from intruders? Who is responsible for ensuring guests remain on property, if required (for example, if the group is there as detainees of the Department of Homeland Security)?
- **Registering Guests:** You need to know who is at your camp. How will you “register” them?
- **Supervision:** If your guests are predominantly minors, who is responsible for their supervision and safety?

Guest Services:

- **Sleeping Quarters:** How will you provide accommodation? Who will supply bedding (e.g., sheets, blankets, sleeping bags, pillows)? Will you separate males and females? What about married couples? What about children? How will you provide for appropriate privacy?
- **Food:** How will you provide three meals a day to your guests? Who will prepare the food? Who will provide the food stuffs? Can your food supplier fill an order on short notice? Who will provide clean-up? How will you meet health department requirements for food safety and handling?

- **Language:** Do your guests speak the same language you do? If not, how will you communicate with your guests? Do you have access to interpreters?
- **Hygiene:** Do you have the necessary number of bathing facilities and toilets? Who supplies the toiletries, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, towels, etc. — especially when your guests first arrive? If necessary, how will you schedule showers, etc.?
- **Laundry:** How will you provide laundry services to your guests? How will you handle camp laundry — such as tablecloths and dishtowels?
- **Medical Assistance:** Who will provide medical services to guests? If your guests are predominately unaccompanied minors, who makes the decisions about their need for medical care?
- **Special Physical/Sensory/Emotional Needs:** Do any of the guests have special needs? If so, how will you provide support and accommodation for them?
- **Counseling/Guidance:** Who can provide counseling — spiritual, mental health, etc.?
- **Transportation:** Who will provide transportation for guests to do errands, interview for jobs, seek housing, etc.?
- **Daily Program:** Will you provide daily activities for guests? Who/how will you do it? What if your guests are predominantly minors?

Facility Issues:

- **Human Resources:** If your camp is not fully staffed year-round for groups how will additional work be handled? Will the camp hire additional staff; will you ask staff from the group placing the guests to assist you in daily duties? Do the guests participate in some of the duties?
- **Housekeeping:** Who will keep the facility clean every day? Who will supply cleaning supplies?
- **Telephones:** Guests will need to have access to telephones frequently to connect with family and friends and aid organizations. What is your phone capacity? Can you quickly get additional phone service (land lines and cell phones)? Who will pay for phone service?
- **Technology:** Consider the need for computers, Internet access, printers, etc. Who can provide these things? How will appropriate use be monitored?

Other Important Issues:

- **Reimbursement:** If you are supposed to receive financial support from FEMA, the American Red Cross, the Department of Homeland Security or some other entity, how will you get the funds? When will you get the funds? Can you provide support before getting funds? What will you do if promised funds are delayed and the guests are on property?
- **Contract:** Do you have a written contract with the agency that is placing these guests with you? Did you have legal counsel review the contract?
- **Mission:** Does the group you are being asked to host have any particular political/ideological issues associated with them that you need to consider as you decide whether to host them? Does it matter? If the group attracts negative attention such as from the media, how will you handle it?
- **Donations:** Once word is out that you are serving as an evacuation center, how will you manage the donations that will inevitably arrive? What will you do with donations you cannot use?
- **Community Involvement:** Do you have people in your community who can assist your camp in this effort? How will you recruit and manage them?

In the future, you may wish to officially pre-register as an evacuation or temporary housing center. If so:

- The American Red Cross (ARC) has a program that pre-selects facilities as evacuation centers and trains volunteers. This may be an option for you to consider. Contact your local chapter of the ARC for more information: www.redcross.org/where/where.html
- Pre-emergency, FEMA sets up "Logistical Centers." If your camp would like to become involved pre-emergency in the FEMA preparation efforts, visit www.fema.gov for details.
- In some areas of the country, the Department of Homeland security offers grants to facilities that are willing to serve as residential services for unaccompanied alien children. For more information, visit: www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/foa/files/HHS-2015-ACF-ORR-ZU-0833_0.pdf