

RED CROSS PROTOCOL UPDATE:

Neil Brockway, Regional Disaster Officer for CT and Rhode Island, provided DEMHS with the following update on the American Red Cross Covid-19 safety protocol, effective June 7, 2021:

With the updated CDC guidelines that were endorsed by OSHA, the American Red Cross has revised its safety guidelines congregate sheltering and other in-person mission delivery activities. This is a momentous turning point in the pandemic we have been facing since early 2020.

Please note the changes to the Red Cross local Disaster Cycle Services programs that will take effect on June 7th.

Disaster Action Team Responses

- In-person responses, as opposed to virtual, will be our preferred method of responding to local recurrent disasters, which are mostly home fires. Only fully vaccinated American Red Cross Disaster Action Team members will respond in-person.

Home Fire Preparedness

- Fully vaccinated American Red Cross volunteers will resume conducting in-home fire safety education and free smoke alarm installation.

Youth Preparedness

- In-person American Red Cross disaster preparedness education can now be taught in person by fully vaccinated American Red Cross volunteers.

Congregate Sheltering

Congregate Sheltering, utilizing the American Red Cross COVID-19 Congregate Sheltering Guidance, is the preferred method of sheltering for all mass care services in all phases of disaster operations with the following exceptions:

- **Reimbursable Agreement with Government.** Non-congregate sheltering (generally hotel rooms during large disasters) per a reimbursable agreement completed pre-disaster (or a contemporaneous memorandum committing to such an agreement) with Government. Based on current FEMA policy, States with effective Stafford Act Declarations (EM, FM, or DR with PA) are eligible for non-congregate shelter reimbursement. Regardless of the availability of a Stafford Act declaration, the Red Cross will not acquire, or fund general population non-congregate shelter facility costs absent agreement/contract with government per FEMA policy without approval from American Red Cross – National Headquarters.
- **Significant COVID Outbreak.** The Red Cross will avoid opening congregate shelters in areas designated “Very High Risk” or “Severe Risk” by covidactnow.org at the time sheltering is initiated—in these situations and when feasible, the Red Cross may open congregate shelters in adjacent communities, staff shelters in the Very High/Severe Risk areas with fully vaccinated

workforce, and/or open non-congregate shelters if an applicable reimbursable agreement is in effect (any exception decision to open non-congregate shelters in these situations must be approved by American Red Cross – National Headquarters).

- **Positive Test for COVID.** Clients who are test positive for COVID 19 may be transferred, along with their household/families, from congregate shelters to non-congregate shelters for the duration of their quarantine. Upon completion of isolation/quarantine, clients and their households/families will be transferred back to a congregate shelter.
- **Health Services Recommendation.** Consistent with standard practice, American Red Cross Disaster Health Services may always recommend to shelter management that clients at immediate risk for severe illness and/or as a reasonable accommodation to those with access and functional needs be transferred to hotel rooms.

Note: In alignment with CDC guidance for congregate shelters, **the Red Cross will require both shelter staff and shelter residents to wear masks in our shelters** — regardless of vaccination status — to ensure the safety of our workforce and those we serve.

American Red Cross protocols will continue to be review and revised as needed.

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