PERSON-CENTRED AND TRAUMA-INFORMED CONSIDERATIONS IN A HOUSING-FOCUSED SHELTER

A Collaborative Writing

CALGARY
DROP-IN
CENTRE

ORG CODE

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE, PERSON-CENTRED CARE, AND HOUSING-FOCUSED SERVICES

What is Trauma?

Trauma refers to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. It can have both physical and psychological effects. Not all stressful events that occur in daily life involve trauma so medical professionals that provide specialized diagnostics and recovery options focus on the more specific definition of trauma incorporated in the DSM-5.[1] Here, trauma is defined as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways: (1) directly experiencing the traumatic event, (2) witnessing in-person the event as it occurs to others, or (3) learning that the event occurred to a close family member or friend.

Traumatic events can be single incidents (such as a car accident, natural disaster, or assault) or they can be prolonged situations (such as ongoing homelessness, long standing physical, emotional or sexual abuse, military combat experiences, living in a war zone, etc.). The experience of trauma can lead to a range of emotional, psychological, and physical symptoms – both in the immediate exposure as well as in delayed symptoms and responses. These can include but are not limited to:

1. **Emotional Reactions**: Intense fear, sadness, anger, guilt, or shame.
2. **Flashbacks and Intrusive Thoughts**: Recurring and involuntary memories or images of the traumatic event.
3. **Avoidance Behaviours**: Avoiding places, people, or activities that remind the person of the trauma.
4. **Hypervigilance**: Feeling "on edge," easily startled, or having difficulty relaxing. When working with trauma survivors, they may perceive threats even when the environment appears relaxed and safe to others.
5. **Difficulty Trusting Others**: Struggling to form or maintain trusting relationships. Constantly wondering what others **really** want or expect from them.
6. **Physical Symptoms**: Such as headaches, digestive issues (including such things as nausea, diarrhea and/or constipation), inability to achieve restorative sleep leading to ongoing fatigue, or muscle tension.
7. **Changes in Mood and Behaviour**: These can include irritability, mood swings, changes in sleep patterns, self-harming behaviours, involvement in high risk activities and alterations in appetite.
8. **Difficulty Concentrating**: Trouble focusing on tasks or making decisions and solving problems independently.
9. **Emotional Numbing**: Feeling detached, disconnected or shut down from one's own emotions or the outside world.

---

[1] American Psychiatric Association (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. 5th ed. Arlington, VA as cited in
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207191/box/part1_ch3.box16/#:~:text=Exposure%20to%20actual%20or%20threatened,family%20member%20or%20close%20friend.

10. **Acute Stress Disorder (ASD):[2]** For up to 4 weeks after experiencing a traumatic event, it is not uncommon for survivors to experience lingering feelings of fear, anxiety, nightmares, flashbacks, etc. as the body and the brain attempts to return to baseline functioning. It's important to recognize ASD symptoms as normal for the first 30 days or so after trauma.
11. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):[3]** This is a specific diagnosis for individuals who continue to experience severe symptoms for an extended period after a traumatic event. For people with PTSD, the symptoms of ASD described above continue past the 4-week recovery period.

Shelter providers see many of these symptoms in people served daily.

It's important to note that people respond to trauma in different ways, and not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will develop long-lasting symptoms. Additionally, what is traumatic for one person may not be traumatic for another. It's a deeply personal experience.

Canadian Statistics on Trauma[4]

1. **Prevalence of Trauma**:
   - Almost 64% of Canadians reported being exposed to at least one potentially traumatic event during their life.
2. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**:
   - Approximately 8% of adults in Canada meet the criteria for probable PTSD.

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

Trauma-informed care is an approach to providing support and services that recognizes and responds to the widespread impact of trauma on individuals. It emphasizes creating an environment that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of those who have experienced trauma.

Key standards of trauma-informed care include:[5]

1. **Safety**: Prioritizing physical, emotional, and psychological safety for individuals who have experienced trauma enhances safety. This may involve creating a safe physical environment and ensuring that interactions and interventions do not unintentionally retraumatize.

---

[2] For more information on ASD, explore: https://www.healthing.ca/diseases-and-conditions/acute-stress-disorder-asd-acm0255

[3] For more information on PTSD, explore: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/mental-health-wellness/post-traumatic-stress-disorder.html

[4] For more information on Canadian Statistics on Trauma, explore: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220520/dq220520b-eng.htm

[5] Many sources are available to explore an overview of the many standards, tenets, and principles incorporated into Trauma-Informed Care, including the following : Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center available at https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/#:~:text=Trauma%2Dinformed%20care%20seeks%20to,Actively%20avoid%20re%2Dtraumatization; Alberta Health Services available at https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-ecc-what-does-it-mean-to-be-trauma-informed.pdf and SAMHSA (2014) available at https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884

2. **Trustworthiness and Transparency**: Building trust with individuals involves being honest, reliable, and transparent in all interactions. This approach helps to establish a sense of safety and predictability.

3. **Choice and Empowerment**: Offering choices and involving individuals in decisions about their care, services, and treatment whenever possible is essential. Empowering individuals to have a say in their own healing process is crucial.

4. **Collaboration and Mutuality**: Engaging individuals as active participants in their own care and fostering a collaborative relationship between the individual and service providers.

5. **Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness**: Recognizing and respecting cultural differences and ensuring that care is provided in a culturally sensitive manner. This includes understanding the potential impact of cultural, historical, and systemic factors on trauma.

6. **Humility and Responsiveness**: Acknowledging that biases and stereotypes (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, geography, etc.) are recognized and continually addressed.

7. **Strengths-Based and Resilience-Focused**: Recognizing the strengths and resilience of individuals who have experienced trauma and building on these qualities to support healing and recovery.

8. **Trauma Understanding and Awareness**: Ensuring that staff and providers have a basic understanding of trauma, its effects, and its prevalence. This includes recognizing that behaviours or reactions may be coping mechanisms resulting from past trauma.

9. **Flexibility and Sensitivity**: Being flexible and responsive to the individual needs and preferences of those who have experienced trauma. This may involve adjusting approaches or interventions to better meet the unique circumstances of each person.

10. **Avoiding Re-traumatization**: Taking steps to prevent any actions, procedures, or interventions that might retraumatize an individual. This includes being mindful of language, tone, and physical contact.

Why is a Trauma-Informed Approach Important in Shelter Settings?

Trauma-informed care is relevant in a wide range of settings, including healthcare, mental health services, social services, education, and other community-based organizations. It is particularly important for individuals who have experienced various forms of trauma, such as abuse, violence, or other adverse life events. By adopting a trauma-informed approach, organizations and professionals aim to create environments that promote healing, resilience, and empowerment for individuals who have experienced trauma. This can lead to more effective and compassionate care and support.

Rates of trauma - including PTSD and Complex Trauma[6] - rare extraordinarily high for people experiencing homelessness. Many have experienced violence, marginalization, stigma, loss, dislocation and disconnection from important people, locations, cultures, safety, and security. Intergenerational and racial trauma also shapes some of the responses and interactions displayed by the people served in shelter. Due to the impact of trauma on views of the world, ability to trust, coping strategies,

---

[6] Complex trauma (sometimes termed CPTSD) describes the experiences of individuals who have endured chronic and prolonged trauma, often during childhood, without finding escape or protection from the abuse. Source: Kezelman, C. (2019). Childhood trauma – the long-term impact and the human cost. Humanising Mental Health Care in Australia as cited in https://www.powertopersuade.org.au/blog/implementing-trauma-informed-care-in-the-proposed-national-housing-and-homelessness-plan/11/8/2023

expectations of others and survival instincts, it is no surprise that rates of compromised mental wellness and substance use concerns are higher for people experiencing homelessness and housing crises.

To be trauma-informed in shelter delivery is to root care in the understanding of the impact of trauma and the specific needs of trauma survivors. One of the primary opportunities that shelter providers have in supporting shelter guests is to promote hope that homelessness and housing crisis – like all forms of trauma – can be overcome. It is valuable for survivors to understand that recovery from trauma often entails three distinct phases. Trauma begins with a deeply distressing experience that strips a person of all sense of control, ability to function, and the resources to keep oneself safe. Recovery from trauma also has a middle phase where strategies used to cope with the aftermath of traumatic events may prove to maladaptive yet essential for survival. Finally, trauma can come to an end characterized by recovery from the pain, mistrust and endless emotional, physical, behavioural, cognitive and/or existential chaos, as well as a new sense of purpose and belonging. In fact, the very experience of homelessness constitutes an additional exposure to trauma. As Hopper et. al. (2010) describes: *"Homelessness deprives individuals of…basic needs, exposing them to risky, unpredictable environments. In short, homelessness is more than the absence of physical shelter, it is a stress-filled, dehumanizing, dangerous circumstance in which individuals are at high risk of being witness to or victims of a wide range of violent events."*[7]

Shelter Staff have an Opportunity to Assist Guests in their Recovery from Ongoing Trauma Responses and Actively Resist Re-Traumatization

The need to recognize and respond effectively to the impacts of trauma is becoming an increasingly important component of effective homelessness responses and re-housing supports. By increasing the awareness of ongoing trauma responses that may be evident in engagements with shelter guests, the greater the opportunity to reduce staff frustrations over unexpected guest reactions and activities as well as the adoption of improved trauma informed services. Each day, shelter workers can play a key role in helping to address the lasting impacts of past trauma while in contact with people that access shelter.

What is Person-Centred Care?

Person-centred care prioritizes the individual needs, preferences, and values of the person. It recognizes that each person is unique and that their experiences, beliefs, and goals should be central to the delivery of supports.

Key principles of person-centred care include:

1. **Respect for Individual Preferences and Values**: This means taking into account the individual preferences, values, and beliefs when making decisions about their supports in shelter. It involves active listening and valuing the individual's input.
2. **Holistic Approach**: Person-centred care considers the whole person, not just their physical symptoms or medical condition. It takes into account their emotional, social, and psychological well-being as well.

---

[7] Hopper, E. K., Bassuk, E. L., and Olivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Services Settings. The Open Health Services and Policy Journal, 3,80-100.

3. **Collaborative Decision-Making**: It encourages open communication and shared decision-making between the shelter worker and the person. This means involving the individual in discussions about their options, goals, and plans.
4. **Empowerment and Autonomy**: Person-centred care aims to empower individuals to take an active role in their own care plan. It supports them in making informed decisions and to be partners in their plan development and plan implementation.
5. **Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity**: It acknowledges and respects the diversity of individuals, including their cultural, religious, and social backgrounds. This helps ensure that shelter services are culturally sensitive and appropriate.
6. **Flexible and Adaptable Care Plans**: Person-centred care recognizes that one-size-fits-all approaches may not be effective for every individual. Plans should be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of the individual during their stay in shelter.
7. **Continuity of Care**: This involves ensuring that care is coordinated across different providers and settings. It aims to provide seamless transitions between different phases of care.
8. **Feedback and Continuous Improvement**: It encourages feedback from the individuals about their experiences with services. This feedback can be used to improve the quality of services provided.

Person-centred care is particularly important in supporting people experiencing chronic or long-term conditions, mental health care, or chronic homelessness. It helps to promote a more compassionate and empathetic shelter environment that respects the dignity and autonomy of each individual.

What Does it Mean to be Housing-Focused?

A housing-focused emergency shelter is a type of temporary accommodation that places a strong emphasis on quickly transitioning individuals experiencing homelessness into stable and permanent housing. The primary goal of a housing-focused shelter is to engage with the shelter guest on establishing safe and appropriate alternatives to shelter (for example, reuniting with family or friend, independent housing) while meeting immediate needs.

Key features and principles of housing-focused emergency shelters include:

1. **Diversion**: Diversion in the context of homelessness refers to an approach that aims to respond to the individual's housing crisis while trying to avoid entry into the shelter system. Diversion seeks to quickly identify and connect individuals with alternative, safe housing options in community that can help them avoid literal homelessness altogether. Often embedded in Diversion approaches are problem-solving with the individual seeking shelter, rapid mediation with external parties (family members, friends, landlord, etc.), transfer of knowledge of other available resources, and/or use of flexible funding to resolve a situation that is primarily financial.
2. **Rapid Resolution**: Housing-focused shelters prioritize quickly assisting individuals into permanent housing. This may involve providing resources, case management, and assistance with finding and securing housing. Rapid Resolution can have two phases: 1. Upon first time shelter entry, the household is provided guidance and resources but is focused on self-resolving their housing situation; and 2. Progressing to more staff involved resolution including short-term

case management to provide enhanced assistance with identifying and overcoming barriers to housing.

3. **Person-Centred Approach**: Services are tailored to the individual needs and preferences of the people seeking shelter. This may include personalized case management, mental health support, substance use treatment, and other services.

4. **Low Barrier Entry**: Housing-focused shelters strive to have minimal eligibility requirements, such as sobriety or participation in certain programs, in order to provide access to shelter for those in need of a safe place. Centred on the needs of the people being served, a low barrier approach provides staffing and supports to ensure vulnerable people with challenges such as compromised mental health, substance use, legal history, and adapting to various social settings can more easily access the shelter, receive services, and be supported in addressing immediate needs while also focusing on housing solutions. Non-judgmental and compassionate, the low-barrier shelter is a place of acceptance that meets people where they are at. The focus on engagement and motivation trumps passively meeting people's needs or forced compliance.

5. **Harm Reduction:** Shelters that are housing-focused adopt a harm reduction approach, which aims to minimize the negative consequences of substance use and/or other higher risk activities. Grounded in equity, the aim is to assist people who engage in higher-risk behaviour, such as injection drug use, to have the same access to shelter, housing, and health care as any other person regardless of substance use.

6. **Trauma-Informed Care**: Trauma-informed care principles are incorporated throughout shelter operations to create a safe and supportive environment. It is accepted that trauma is widespread within the population of people served in shelter, and by accepting this as truth, the shelter provider aims to reduce retraumatizing people while receiving services.

7. **Collaboration with Community Resources**: Housing-focused shelters typically collaborate with various community organizations, housing entities, and service providers to ensure that shelter guests have access to a range of resources and support services.

8. **Affordable Housing Connections**: Housing-focused shelters often have connections with affordable housing providers (non-profits as well as private landlords that provide lower-end of market rental units) and work to facilitate the move from shelter to permanent housing.

9. **Data-Driven Approaches**: Housing-focused shelters use data and evidence-informed practices to track outcomes and measure the effectiveness of their programs in reducing homelessness.

10. **Housing First Approach**: Housing-focused shelters embrace the core principles of Housing First. Stable housing is prioritized as the first step towards addressing other challenges and concerns faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. Choice and self-determination, practicing a recovery orientation, developing individualized and person-centred supports, and helping people integrate into community are also important.

11. **System of Care**: Housing-focussed shelters are typically part of a larger system that includes outreach, prevention, day services, food security programs, and other services to address homelessness comprehensively.

Housing-focused emergency shelters play a critical role in addressing homelessness by providing immediate relief and a pathway to stable housing. By prioritizing housing as a fundamental right, these shelters aim to break the cycle of homelessness and provide individuals with the stability needed to rebuild their lives.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at three crucial aspects of shelter operations: understanding trauma, providing person-centred care, and adopting a housing-focused approach.

Recognizing and responding to trauma is fundamental in supporting individuals who have experienced traumatic events. It allows us to approach their needs with sensitivity and compassion.

Person-centred care ensures that each individual's unique experiences, preferences, and values are at the forefront of their support plan. This approach promotes dignity, autonomy, and holistic well-being.

A housing-focused shelter places a strong emphasis on swiftly transitioning individuals into stable and permanent housing. This approach not only offers immediate relief but also actively works towards breaking the cycle of homelessness.

By integrating these principles—trauma-informed care, person-centredness, and housing-focused — shelters can create environments that are compassionate, empowering, and focused on the long-term housing stability for individuals experiencing homelessness. This approach not only addresses immediate needs but also lays the foundation for lasting positive change in the lives of those seeking shelter and support.

SHELTER OPERATIONS

This chapter emphasizes the importance of using respectful and inclusive language when referring to the individuals served, preferring "guests" or "program participants" over terms like "clients" or "residents." It also highlights the significance of engagement in providing support to individuals experiencing homelessness, focusing on establishing trust and offering immediate assistance.

This chapter introduces the concept of initial engagement, emphasizing the importance of using the individual's preferred name and maintaining open body language. It outlines the steps involved, including conducting a private conversation, addressing immediate needs, and exploring previous attempts to avoid homelessness.

Additionally, this chapter covers the process of diversion, which aims to explore alternative solutions before resorting to shelter. It provides a detailed overview of the diversion process, including initial assessment, exploring alternatives, evaluating viability, discussing solutions, and providing resources. The booking process is explained, emphasizing its dual purpose of administrative organization and ensuring individual safety. It highlights the importance of safeguarding the confidentiality of information collected during the booking process and the importance of respecting the individual's preferred name and gender identity.

This chapter also includes an activity focused on orientation to the shelter surroundings, providing a detailed walkthrough of various aspects of the shelter stay. Another activity outlines the shelter's expectations for all guests, covering areas such as respect for others, cleanliness, adherence to policies, and conflict resolution. Understanding immediate needs is addressed, with a series of open-ended questions designed to allow individuals to express their current needs.

This chapter emphasizes the importance of prompt provision of basic necessities like food, water, clothing, and hygiene supplies. Lastly, this chapter stresses the importance of providing appropriate emotional support, acknowledging the potential trauma individuals may be experiencing, and assuring them of ongoing support throughout their journey. It provides statements to check-in on how individuals are feeling and encourages open communication.

Overall, this chapter provides a comprehensive framework for engaging with and supporting individuals experiencing homelessness in a respectful, inclusive, and compassionate manner. It underscores the importance of person-centred care and creating an environment that fosters trust and dignity.

Demonstrating a Trauma-Informed Service Culture in Engagements & Service. Language is Important: Referring to the People we Serve as "Guests" or "Program Participants", not "Clients" or "Residents"

With input from People with Lived/Living Experience, we understand that there is a preference that when generalizing the people we have the privilege of serving, we use either "guest" or "program participant". Many of the people we serve have been referred to as "clients" in other programs where the term was used to "otherize" their humanity. Furthermore, when the term "resident" is used it can unintentionally denote or project permanence which can be debilitating to people we serve that yearn for a living arrangement elsewhere in community. As such, collectively the people served and supported are guests, which projects the desire to provide safe and hospitable services. When people we serve engage in programs like case management, it can also be appropriate to collectively refer to people as "program participants" given the voluntary nature of their desire to participate in the program.

Engagement Builds Rapport, Safety and Trust

Engagement in the context of homelessness refers to the active involvement and support provided to individuals experiencing homelessness. This can take various forms, including outreach efforts to connect with homeless individuals, offering services like shelter, healthcare, and counselling, and working towards finding stable housing solutions with them. Engagement in homeless services aims to establish trust, provide immediate assistance, and help individuals transition towards long-term stability and independence. It often involves a person-centred approach that considers the unique needs and preferences of each individual experiencing homelessness.

During initial engagement with someone seeking shelter, helping people feel safe and ensuring transparency about the service – what your program/service can and cannot do – will prove to be essential. When considering this initial engagement with people, the following recommendations have assisted in delivering a trauma-informed, person-centred, and housing-focused approach.

Initial Contact – The First Opportunity to Build Rapport and Increase Physical, Emotional and Cultural Safety

In the pivotal moments when one is new to homelessness and seeks services, the approach used in communicating and interacting with the individual is everything. Whether connections with shelter staff are by phone or in-person, initial greetings that are welcoming and address any immediate safety needs for the individual need to be completed prior to determining "what brings them to our service today".

With this in mind, initial contact begins with a simple question: what name do they wish to be called? Open body language and neutral expressions promote a space of trust. The focus is singular, undistracted, a testament to the importance of their presence. Words are chosen with care, conveying empathy without making promises of swift resolution. Active listening, marked by non-verbal cues and reflective paraphrasing, reinforces their significance. The next steps are outlined clearly: a private conversation to delve into their situation, immediate needs met, a review of previous attempts to avert homelessness, and the option of short-term accommodation if no immediate alternatives exist.

Easing the Wait for Individualized Service

In some instances, a brief wait ensues before staff can fully engage. During this interlude, comfort is offered - a cup of water, access to a restroom, and a gentle preview of what sights and sounds may accompany their wait. Transparency reigns as the estimated wait time is shared, allowing them to choose a waiting location that feels safest.

Ask them where they would like to wait, and provide examples of possible waiting locations:
- In the neighbourhood walking around. This is a viable option if they have a phone, and you can call them to let them know when you or a fellow staff member are available.
- In the parking lot.
- On a chair with a clear view of staff, inside the building, but outside the intake office. This can be behind a partition with limited view of other activities on the main floor.

Diversion – The Final Opportunity to Prevent Literal Homelessness

Diversion endeavours to discover all possible options before shelter becomes the sole recourse. The diversion process is outlined comprehensively, ensuring clarity before embarking on this crucial endeavor.

1. Introduction and Purpose of Diversion:

Goal:
- **To explore safe and appropriate alternatives** to coming into the shelter that the person may not have considered yet.
- **To help individuals find the best solution for their current situation**.

Normalize Stress:
- Acknowledge that, during a period of crisis, it's **natural to struggle** to think clearly and make rational decisions when under stress. Staff will assist in exploring all possible and safe options.

2. **Diversion Process Overview:**
   A. Initial Assessment:
      a. Start by conducting an **initial assessment** to understand the individual's situation and needs. Exploring where the individual stayed last night, where they may have stayed previously as well as whether or not these places were safe and appropriate will increase the understanding of past experiences. **If the location or environment they were in previously indicates the individual is fleeing domestic/intimate partner violence, stop the diversion process and aim to redirect to a more suitable type of shelter in the community.** The redirect can include arranging transportation to the other shelter and, with consent, limited exchange of information with the receiving shelter.
   B. Explore Alternatives:
      a. Discuss **possible alternatives** to shelter entry, such as staying with friends or family, finding temporary housing, or accessing other resources available in the community.
   C. Evaluate Viability:
      a. Determine the **viability and safety** of each alternative. Consider factors like stability, support system, and potential risks.

    D.   Discuss Solutions:
- a. Engage in a **collaborative discussion** with the individual about the most suitable option(s).

    E.   Provide Resources:
- a. **Share information and resources** related to the chosen alternative(s) to assist them in their next steps.

3. Addressing Questions:
    A.   Ask for Questions:
- a. After explaining the process, ask if the person has any **questions or concerns** about the diversion process.

    B.   Provide Clear Answers:
- a. **Clarify any doubts** they may have and ensure they understand the purpose and steps involved.

4. Initiating Diversion Solutions and Options:
Start the Process:
- Once questions have been answered (or if there are no questions), **clearly state** that both you and the person are now ready to start implementing the solutions generated through the housing focused problem-solving process.

Additional Tips:

- **Empathy and Active Listening**: Throughout the process, practice **empathy and active listening** to make the person feel heard and supported.
- **Flexibility**: Be open to adjusting the process based on the individual's unique circumstances.
- **Respect Choices**: Ultimately, respect the individual's decisions, even if they choose not to divert.

Remember, the goal is to assist the person in finding the most appropriate and safe housing option, even on a temporary basis, to avoid literal homelessness by explaining the purpose and steps of diversion, you're providing them with valuable support and options.

Booking In or Shelter Admission

When shelter diversion has proven to be unsuccessful, the only safe option for the individual may be to enter shelter. Booking into shelter is explained, emphasizing its dual purpose: completion of essential administrative activities and enhancing individual safety. Trust is enhanced through assurances of confidentiality, reminding them that their story remains theirs to share.

1. **Purpose of Booking Process:**

   Administration and Safety:
   - The process of booking someone into shelter is crucial for administrative and safety purposes.
   - It helps determine which program or resources will best assist the guest based on their specific needs.

   Data Collection for Government Funders:
   - Collecting certain key data elements is also essential for meeting the requirements of government funders and maintaining the necessary support for programs.

2. **Confidentiality and Data Security:**

   Strictest Confidentiality:
   - Any information collected during this process is held in the strictest confidence.

   Access to Information:
   - The data goes into a secure database that only staff from the organization can access.

   Information Sharing:
   - The guest's information is not shared with anyone outside of the organization without their explicit consent.

3. **Name Preferences:**

   Full Legal Name:
   - The shelter needs one's full legal name for administrative purposes.

   Preferred Name:
   - Additionally, shelter will ask what name the person prefers to be called. This is important for shelter staff to address the individual in a way that makes them feel respected.

4. **Gender Identity:**

   Self-Identified Gender:
   - When asking about gender identity, the intention is for staff to always aim to serve the guest by self-identified gender.

By explaining the purpose of the booking process and emphasizing confidentiality and respect for self-identification, the shelter is creating an environment where the individual can feel comfortable and valued. This ensures they understand the importance of providing certain information and that it will be handled with the utmost care.

Orientation to the Surroundings

Orientation is the compass that grounds the individual. It unravels the intricacies of their new environment, ushering them through the layout, routines, and resources at their disposal. Respectful inquiry allows for preferences in the orientation process, ensuring a tailored approach.

Orientation Process:

Introduction:
- "Hello, I'm here to provide you with an orientation to our shelter. It's important to us that you feel comfortable and informed during your stay here. If at any point you have questions or need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out."

Worker Preferences:
- "Before we begin, is there a specific staff member you'd prefer to provide this orientation? It could be based on gender, age, cultural background, or language spoken. Your comfort is important to us."

Overview:
- "During this orientation, we'll cover various aspects of your stay, including building entry and exit, your assigned floor and bed, provided bedding, bathroom facilities, hygiene services, staff availability, storage options, privacy, common sounds, smoking areas, mealtimes, safety reminders, harm reduction supplies, and emergency procedures."

Duration:
- "This orientation typically takes around 30 minutes, but we'll go at a pace that suits you. Feel free to ask any questions along the way."

Walking Through the Shelter:

1. **Building Access:**
   - "Here's how and when you can enter and exit the building. Please let us know if you have any specific concerns or preferences."
2. **Floor Assignment and Bed:**
   - "You're assigned to the [specify floor]. Your bed is [mention bed number]. If you need any assistance with your belongings, we're here to help."
3. **Bedding:**
   - "Bedding is provided and located [describe location]. If you need anything else, just let us know."
4. **Bathroom and Hygiene Facilities:**
   - "The bathroom is located [provide location]. Hygiene facilities like showers and laundry are available [mention schedule and location]."
5. **Staff Availability:**
   - "Our staff are located on the floor to assist you. You can reach out to them for any help you may need."
6. **Storage of Belongings:**
   - "We'll show you the safest places to store your possessions. Your belongings are important, and we want to make sure they're secure."

7. **Privacy and Confidentiality:**
   - "We respect your privacy. If there's information you'd rather not share with other guests, please let us know."
8. **Common Sounds:**
   - "You may hear common sounds like snoring or people talking in their sleep. If you find it disruptive, please let us know."
9. **Smoking Area and Times:**
   - "There's a designated smoking area located [mention location]. Smoking is allowed [mention times]."
10. **Mealtimes and Location:**
    - "Meals are provided at [mention times] in [mention location]. If you have dietary restrictions, please inform us."
11. **Personal Items:**
    - "It's important not to leave personal items unattended to ensure their safety."
12. **Harm Reduction Supplies:**
    - "If you use substances, we have harm reduction supplies available. Just let us know if you need any."
13. **Emergency Procedures:**
    - "In case of an emergency like a fire, we'll guide you on how to evacuate the building and where to muster for safety."

By providing this detailed orientation, you're ensuring that the individual feels informed, comfortable, and supported during their stay in the shelter. Remember to be patient, attentive, and open to any questions or concerns they may have along the way.

Explanation of Expectations

Expectations form the backbone of any communal endeavor. A candid conversation ensues, assuring that every guest, regardless of circumstance, shares the same fundamental responsibilities. In this dialogue, questions are encouraged, and support is pledged. It is made clear that severe situations aside, everyone is welcomed, supported, and given an opportunity to thrive within the shelter.

Introduction:
- "Thank you for completing the orientation. Now, I'd like to go over the shelter's expectations for all guests. This is the same for every person who stays here. This discussion will take approximately [mention duration]. Afterward, you'll have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have, and remember, there are no bad questions."

Support and Understanding:
- "I want to emphasize that we're here to support you in meeting these expectations. It's important to note that only in severe situations would we consider asking someone to leave the shelter for not meeting these expectations."

Outlining Expectations:

1. **Respect for Others:**
   - "We ask that you treat everyone here with respect and kindness. This includes fellow guests, staff, and volunteers."
2. **Maintaining Cleanliness:**
   - "Please help us in keeping the shelter clean and tidy. This includes your personal space and common areas."
3. **Adherence to Quiet Hours:**
   - "During designated quiet hours, we request that noise levels are kept to a minimum to ensure everyone can rest."
4. **Compliance with Shelter Policies:**
   - "It's important to follow all shelter policies and guidelines. These are in place for the safety and well-being of everyone here."
5. **Use of Substances:**
   - "If you use substances, we ask that you do so in a responsible and safe manner. We have harm reduction supplies available if needed."
6. **Respect for Property:**
   - "Please be mindful of personal property, both yours and others. Avoid touching or taking things that don't belong to you."
7. **Conflict Resolution:**
   - "If any issues or conflicts arise, please let a staff member know. We're here to help mediate and find solutions."
8. **Attendance at Mandatory Meetings or Activities:**
   - "There may be mandatory meetings or activities. Your attendance is important for your well-being and participation in the program."

Questions and Clarifications:

- "That covers the main expectations we have for guests here. Do you have any questions or is there anything you'd like to clarify?"

By providing clear and concise information about the shelter's expectations, and emphasizing support and understanding, you're creating a positive and transparent environment for the individual. This approach encourages open communication and helps them feel more at ease during their stay.

Understanding Immediate Needs

Amidst the chaos, immediate needs surface as lifelines. Gentle inquiries guide the way, offering sustenance, clothing, and hygiene supplies. The focus remains steadfast on the present, redirecting long-term concerns back to the immediate. The aim is to nurture their well-being in the here and now.

Here are some open-ended, exploratory questions you can use:

1. "In addition to a safe place to stay tonight, what do you need right now?"
2. "When was the last time you ate and had something to drink?"
3. "What clothing do you need right now?"
4. "What hygiene supplies do you need?"
5. "How can we support you in feeling safer right now?"
6. "Is there anything else on your mind or any other immediate concerns you'd like to share?"

Remember, these questions are designed to allow the individual to express their current needs and concerns without making assumptions about what they may require. It's important to listen actively and respond with empathy and support. If a need mentioned is more long-term in nature, you can gently redirect the conversation back to the present by asking how you can assist them in the moment.

Meeting Immediate Needs

Urgency demands immediacy. A hunger for nourishment, a thirst for hydration—these are met with prompt provision, a tangible gesture of care, and responsiveness. Swift action echoes the shelter's commitment to meeting immediate needs.

Appropriate Emotional Supports

Trauma looms large in this precipitous juncture. Sensitivity to emotional needs is paramount, a continuous thread woven through every interaction. Empty assurances are eschewed, replaced with genuine acknowledgment of the difficulty, coupled with a promise of support. It is a reminder that they are not alone in this journey.

Here are some statements you can use to check in on how they are doing:

1. "I can imagine this is a lot to take in. How are you feeling right now?"
2. "Please take your time. If you need a moment or have any questions, feel free to let me know."
3. "Is there anything you'd like to discuss or any questions you have as we go along?"
4. "Remember, you're not alone in this. We're here to help and support you in any way we can."
5. "It's normal to feel overwhelmed. We're here to take things step by step, at a pace that works for you."
6. "If at any point you want to talk or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out."

Remember, acknowledging their feelings and providing reassurance without making unrealistic promises can help create a supportive and trustworthy environment.

Conclusion

The initial engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness is a critical juncture that sets the tone for their journey towards housing and independence. This chapter has laid out a comprehensive guide, rooted in trauma-informed practices, to navigate this pivotal period. By adopting the terms "guests" or "program participants" rather than "clients" or "residents," we aim to convey a sense of hospitality and respect, acknowledging the inherent dignity of those we serve.

Engagement, in the context of homelessness, encompasses a range of supportive actions tailored to the unique needs of each individual. From outreach efforts to the provision of essential services, the goal is to establish trust, offer immediate assistance, and facilitate a transition towards long-term stability.

The activities outlined in this chapter are designed to approach this engagement with care and sensitivity. Beginning with a simple inquiry about the individual's preferred name, we create a foundation of trust through open body language and active listening. Easing the wait for intake and offering diversion options further demonstrate the commitment to their well-being.

The process of booking in is explained not only for administrative purposes but also as a gesture of respect for the individual's identity and confidentiality. Gender identity is handled with utmost sensitivity, ensuring everyone is served according to their self-identified gender.

Orientation to the surroundings provides a vital sense of grounding, offering a clear understanding of the shelter environment, routines, and available resources. This is done with consideration for the individual's preferences and comfort.

Expectations are communicated candidly, emphasizing mutual respect and shared responsibilities. It is made clear that severe measures would only be considered in extreme situations, reaffirming that every individual is welcomed and supported.

Understanding and meeting immediate needs is crucial in ensuring the individual's well-being. This includes providing sustenance, clothing, and hygiene supplies promptly, demonstrating the commitment to their immediate comfort and safety.

Finally, appropriate emotional support is extended, recognizing the potential trauma associated with homelessness. By acknowledging their feelings and offering genuine support, we remind them that they are not alone in their journey towards stability.

In all these activities, the underlying principle remains the same – to treat each individual with dignity, empathy, and a genuine commitment to their well-being. Through these actions, we aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for those embarking on their path to stability and independence.

DAILY SHELTER OPERATIONS

This chapter outlines important principles and practices for providing trauma-informed support and person-centred care in a shelter setting. It emphasizes the importance of prioritizing service over control and highlights key aspects such as respecting individuals' chosen names and pronouns, maintaining staff visibility, and engaging in preferred languages.

This chapter also covers topics like screening belongings with privacy and dignity, managing personal belongings with sensitivity, and assigning beds based on safety considerations. It stresses the need for a peaceful sleep environment, understanding diverse sleep patterns, and implementing a gentle wake-up process.

Additionally, this chapter addresses providing access to meals, medication, and telephone services with respect for guest autonomy and privacy. It emphasizes the importance of efficient and respectful check-in and check-out procedures and provides guidance on navigating access to various services within the shelter.

Overall, this chapter aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment that empowers and respects the individuals being served.

Social Service, Not Social Control

At the core of operational philosophy there is a commitment to service, not control. Regardless of role or responsibility, every staff member or volunteer embodies this principle. It means that the primary aim is to influence, model positive behaviour, and offer unwavering support. Steer away from attempts to exercise authority or surveillance. Instead, lead with presence, dialogue, and genuine care. Escalated staff voices are reserved for moments of immediate danger, ensuring that communication in emergencies is clear and effective.

Acknowledge People by the Name and Pronouns They Want to be Known by

Empowerment takes root in acknowledging each person by the name and pronouns they hold dear. Their chosen identity is honoured, with administrative data respecting legal names while interpersonal engagements exalt their preferred names and pronouns. Staff should be transparent about the purpose of the full legal name while providing assurances that name will not be shared beyond staff.

Visibility and Presence of Staff

Guests find solace in the visible presence of staff. Shelter apparel serves as a visual identifier, ensuring that guests can easily distinguish staff members from others in the building. Even when staff members are behind closed doors, open communication signifies that they are accessible. Engaging guests with a simple yet powerful question, "How can I help you?" sets the tone for meaningful interactions. It's a reminder that staff are there to support them every step of the way.

Staff on any floor or part of the building that has guests/program participants present should refrain from examining their personal phone. Maintaining connection with all guests present through visible

presence, circulating through the space, and cordial brief exchanges conveys presence and helps foster feelings of being safe and supported.

Engaging in Preferred Language Whenever Possible

In a dedication to inclusivity, language should never be a barrier to understanding and support. For those whose primary language is not English, staff should strive to engage them in their preferred language whenever possible. This is not merely a courtesy, but a fundamental aspect of a commitment to respecting diverse cultural identities.

To facilitate effective communication, proactive steps should be taken to identify the languages spoken by staff members. Those who are comfortable and proficient in a language other than English are encouraged to communicate with individuals in their chosen language. This ensures that every guest feels heard and understood, regardless of their linguistic background.

As part of an effort to create an environment of linguistic inclusivity, the DI implemented several practical measures. One such initiative involves staff members wearing buttons that greet in languages other than English. For instance, a button may bear the word "Hola!" to welcome Spanish-speaking guests. This small yet impactful gesture serves as a visible symbol of the commitment to linguistic diversity.

Understanding that it can be challenging to ascertain a person's chosen language through initial interactions, at the DI we've introduced signage to bridge this gap. Guests are encouraged to look for signs that indicate staff members' proficiency in specific languages. For example:
- "Please speak to me in:
    - French = Français
    - Spanish = Español
    - Korean = 한국어
    - Punjabi = ਪੰਜਾਬੀ"

These signs empower individuals to identify their preferred language, ensuring that communication flows smoothly and effectively.

By actively embracing linguistic diversity, the aim is to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all guests. Effective communication is not only a right but also a cornerstone of providing meaningful support and care. In doing so, it fosters a sense of belonging and understanding that transcends language barriers.

Safe Expression of Emotions

Shelters should hold a fundamental belief that every person served is entitled to their emotions. Feelings, whether they be joy, sadness, anger, or frustration, are an integral part of the human experience. In a safe and supportive environment, staff should encourage the free expression of these emotions. However, there may be instances where intense emotions lead to behaviours that could potentially put others, both guests and staff, in unsafe situations. In such cases, it is imperative to respond to the behaviour itself, rather than focusing on the emotions that drive it.

Centre on understanding that the expression of any emotion is valid and acceptable. By responding to the behaviour while affirming the guest's right to feel what they feel, creates a space that encourages emotional authenticity. It is crucial for guests to know that staff do not seek to suppress or invalidate their emotions in any way.

Through this approach, the aim is to foster an atmosphere of empathy, respect, and safety. By honouring the emotions of those served, staff not only support their emotional well-being but also cultivate an environment where genuine healing and growth can occur.

Screening Belongings

This process is conducted discreetly, ensuring the privacy and dignity of each individual.
Upon request, guests may be kindly asked to open their bags for inspection. This includes unzipping compartments, such as those in a backpack, to allow for thorough screening. Additionally, guests may be respectfully requested to empty their pockets from their clothing or outerwear, placing the contents in a small plastic bin for inspection.

It is important to emphasize that this procedure is in place solely to foster a safe and secure environment for everyone present. The goal is to ensure the well-being of all guests.

When conducting inspections, staff members will adhere to the following guidelines:
- **Prioritize Communication**: Before proceeding with the inspection, staff will first inquire whether the individual has any items that require special attention, such as weapons, needles, drugs, or alcohol. This information is crucial to ensure the safety of both staff and fellow guests.
- **Maintain Privacy**: At no point will a guest be asked to empty their belongings in plain view of other guests. Understand the importance of respecting personal privacy and take measures to conduct inspections discreetly.
- **Use Caution and Discretion**: Staff will employ a gentle approach when handling items inside bags. A rod may be used to carefully move objects around, aided by a flashlight to observe the contents. This ensures thoroughness while respecting the integrity of the guest's belongings.

By implementing these procedures, the aim is to strike a balance between safety and respect for the privacy and dignity of each individual.

During the screening process, staff will:
1. Begin by asking if the guest has any items that may pose a hazard, such as weapons, needles, drugs, or alcohol. These items can be safely stored in a tote.
2. Ensure that guests are not asked to dump their belongings out in plain sight of others.
3. Use a rod and flashlight to safely move objects within bags to inspect their contents.

Responding to Too Many Belongings by Any One Guest

Shelters may have limitations on the number of belongings individuals can bring in. These limitations stem from practical considerations, such as space constraints and storage availability. Ensuring the cleanliness and safety of the facility is paramount, and an excess of personal belongings can potentially pose health and safety risks.

It's important to recognize that individuals experiencing homelessness often have a significant number of belongings, much like anyone else. When working with them to downsize, it's crucial to approach the process with sensitivity and clear communication.

There are various reasons why a person may have an abundance of belongings, which may be linked to mental health conditions, including hoarding, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed. In such cases, it's imperative to address this aspect with care and, if necessary, connect the individual with appropriate mental health supports.

Staff members should engage with the person in an inquisitive manner, explaining the shelter's guidelines regarding belongings. Downsizing can be an emotionally charged process, and individuals should be given the time and personal space to go through their items. If possible, providing a separate private area for this purpose can greatly facilitate the process.

Offering assistance and providing information about resources to help individuals reacquire any necessary items once they secure stable housing is an additional support measure. If a person requires more time than initially anticipated for downsizing, it's important to engage in a conversation about their needs and attempt to accommodate their request.

If feasible, having bags available, such as backpacks or luggage, can be a practical solution to assist individuals in managing their belongings.

When accommodating new individuals at the shelter, it's crucial to provide additional storage space. These individuals may not yet be familiar with the shelter's expectations, and offering extra support for downsizing can help them transition into the shelter environment more comfortably. The Diversion team should work closely with new arrivals to ensure appropriate downsizing strategies are employed.
By approaching the management of personal belongings with empathy, clear communication, and practical solutions aligns with a commitment to providing a safe and inclusive space for all.

Assigning Beds or Mats

At shelters, the assignment of a particular bed or mat is not contingent upon perceived behaviour or participation in tasks like cleaning. Instead, it is guided by the commitment to promoting the emotional and physical safety of all guests.

For newer shelter guests, aim to provide a bed or mat that offers proximity to and visibility of staff on duty, whenever possible. This approach helps foster a sense of security and ease during their initial stay. Understand that some guests may have specific needs, particularly those with mobility issues or those who require more frequent access to bathroom facilities. In these cases, allocate beds or mats that accommodate these needs appropriately.

In considering bed or mat allocation, take into account group dynamics. If there is a cluster of individuals affiliated with one another who may be seeking to exert dominance or intimidation over other guests, take measures to separate them through the assignment of beds or mats.

Additionally, for guests who are known to have conflicts or have been involved in previous incidents of violence, prioritize their safety and the safety of others by ensuring they are allocated beds or mats separate from those with whom they may have conflicts.

It is important to approach the allocation process with sensitivity, particularly for longer-term guests who may have developed a sense of attachment to a particular bed or mat. While understanding the significance of these attachments, aim to avoid promoting a sense of permanence in the shelter. The goal is to maintain a dynamic and supportive environment that encourages progress toward stable housing.

Lights Out

Ensuring a peaceful and restful environment for all guests is a priority for shelters. To facilitate this, have established a light out procedure that is communicated clearly to all individuals.

For guests who are new to the shelter, staff will provide verbal notification when the lights out period begins. In addition to verbal communication, place clear signage throughout the shelter to remind all guests of the lights out process.

The process of extinguishing lights is carried out in a gradual manner, taking into consideration the specific layout of the sleeping spaces. At the designated time, the first bank of lights will be turned off. Following this initial step, other banks of lights will be extinguished in three-minute intervals. This gradual approach allows for a smooth transition into a more dimly lit environment, conducive to rest.

It's important to note that while most lights will be extinguished, those in the bathrooms and staff offices will be dimmed but not fully turned off. This ensures that essential areas remain sufficiently illuminated for safety and accessibility.

By implementing these lights out procedure, the aim is to create an environment that supports a restful night's sleep for all guests, while also maintaining necessary visibility in key areas of the shelter.

People Sleeping Outside of a Sleep Program

Sleeping in a shelter environment can be incredibly challenging, and it's not uncommon for individuals to find rest during the day in various areas like tables or floors. This pattern may be indicative of underlying mental health concerns. If this persists, it's imperative to connect the individual with appropriate mental health resources for their well-being.

Engaging with individuals in this situation is of utmost importance, and it should be approached with empathy and understanding rather than punitively. Understanding the reasons behind an individual's sleep patterns outside of designated sleep programs is crucial. It's worth noting that newcomers to homelessness may find it particularly difficult to adjust to sleeping in a shelter setting compared to those who have been in shelter for a longer period. Therefore, inquiring about their experiences and needs, and striving to accommodate them in a person-centred manner, is essential.

If there is a need to wake a person who is sleeping, it should be done in a gentle and calm manner, without resorting to physical contact. Taking a moment to inquire about their needs and preferences is a respectful way to approach the situation.

Furthermore, it is advisable for shelters to provide spaces where individuals can rest and sleep at any time, 24/7. This ensures that guests have the flexibility to find a moment of respite whenever they need it.

Morning Wake-Up

Shelters should implement wake-up procedures that prioritize the well-being and dignity of guests. How individuals are woken in the morning can set the tone for their day ahead.

Staff members responsible for waking guests shall approach this task with sensitivity and care. They will circulate through the sleeping area, using a normal speaking voice to gently announce, "Good morning. It is time for wake-up." In addition to verbal cues, staff may carry a speaker playing soft, calming sounds of nature or soothing classical music. This gentle audio backdrop aims to create a serene awakening experience.

Staff will refrain from raising their voices or using abrupt, jarring sounds or commands to wake individuals. Understanding that abrupt awakenings can be disorienting and potentially distressing. Instead, prioritize a gradual and nurturing approach to the waking process.

When it comes to lighting, be mindful of the impact it can have on a person's state of wakefulness. Therefore, lights will only be turned on after staff have circulated through the sleeping area at least three times, using verbal cues to signal wake-up time. When lights are introduced, they will be gradually brightened, rather than all at once, allowing for a smooth transition into the day.

For guests who may not immediately rise after the initial notification, staff will approach their sleeping area calmly and kindly reiterate that it is time to wake up. Understand that each individual's morning routine may vary and respect their unique needs and pace.

It is important to note that under no circumstance should staff touch a guest as a means of rousing them if there are signs of breathing.

By implementing these gentle wake-up procedures, the aim is to ensure that every guest begins their day in an atmosphere of respect, care, and understanding.

Meals

Food is not used as a reward for compliance with instructions from staff. Denying access to food is not used as a punishment for any behaviour judged by staff to be negative.

To the best of the organization's ability, known food allergies will be accommodated. In addition, culturally appropriate food options will be made available whenever possible.

Staff shall be present and proximate during mealtimes. The food on offer for the meal shall be communicated to guests. When volunteers are present to assist with meal service, staff shall transparently communicate who the organization volunteering are in advance of the meal. Whenever possible, organizations that are volunteering shall be easily identifiable as volunteers.

Through knowledge of what is being served and who is providing the service, guests are empowered to decide if they wish to remain on the premises for the meal or whether the guest will choose to have their food needs met elsewhere.

Guests are not required to say thank you to people providing access to food. Guests are not required, nor are they encouraged to divulge personal details to volunteers.

Neither staff nor volunteers shall provide commentary to guests on the amount of food the guest chooses to consume. There is no judgment in the amount consumed.

Medication Access

Shelters should offer guests the option to have their medication safely stored, though it is important to note that this should be an entirely voluntary and not a requirement.

Uphold the principle that guests should never feel obligated to disclose the nature or purpose of their medication. This is a private matter to be discussed solely between the guest and their healthcare provider.

For those who choose to have their medication securely stored, extend the option of receiving reminders for when to take it. However, it is important to emphasize that guests are under no obligation to accept these prompts.

Guests who opt for medication storage maintain complete independence in determining when and how much of their medication to take. Staff do not regulate the dosage or timing. Nevertheless, they may inquire about the last administration of the medication and confirm if the guest still wishes to have access, even if it contradicts the instructions on the label.

Shelters should prohibit the use of medication access as a means of controlling or influencing guest behaviour. It is never withheld as a form of punishment or retaliation for any other actions. In cases where medication usage deviates from prescribed instructions, do not rescind the option for safe storage.

Access to a Telephone for Guests and Taking Messages

As part of the orientation process, ensure that guests are informed of the location of the telephone and the hours during which it is accessible.

When a guest requests to use the telephone, staff refrain from asking about the recipient or the nature of the call. Before the conversation commences, it may be suggested that guests limit their talk time to accommodate others who may also need the phone.
Eavesdropping on conversations is strictly prohibited. If staff inadvertently overhear any part of a conversation, the information is treated as confidential and is not disclosed to other guests or staff, unless legally required.

Access to the telephone is not used as a means of behaviour control. It is not provided as a reward, and extended conversation time is not granted as a special privilege. Conversely, access is never denied as a form of punishment.

For incoming calls to guests, staff cannot confirm or deny a guest's presence at the shelter due to privacy concerns. Instead, staff offer to take a written message, including the caller's name and number, and the intended recipient. It is then at the complete discretion of the shelter guest to return the call.

Staff diligently record the caller's information in a legible manner, refraining from additional details or notes. Guests are discreetly informed of any messages throughout their stay, and these messages are never posted in publicly viewable areas.

Checking In and Out of the Building

The process of checking in and out of a facility should prioritize the well-being and privacy of the individual while ensuring a welcoming environment. Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

1. **Trauma-Informed Design**: Consider trauma-informed design principles when planning the check-in and check-out area. This includes factors like layout, lighting, and overall atmosphere.
2. **Welcoming Environment**: Ensure that the physical space is inviting and comfortable for guests. This can help create a positive first impression.
3. **Privacy**: Maintain the privacy of individuals during the check-in and check-out process. Design the area in a way that prevents others from overhearing sensitive information.
4. **Efficiency**: Design the process to be efficient, avoiding long line-ups or congestion. This helps reduce wait times and frustration for guests.
5. **Respectful Language**: Staff should refer to individuals by their chosen names, demonstrating respect for their identity.

6. **Information Accessibility**: Provide clear and easily accessible information about the check-in and check-out process. Post general instructions or guidelines near the check-in area for guests to reference.
7. **Professionalism and Courtesy**: Staff should respond to questions about the process in a polite and professional manner. This helps create a more positive experience for guests.
8. **Reducing Institutional Feel**: Recognize that the check-in and check-out process can sometimes feel institutional to guests. Being polite, welcoming, and respectful can help counteract this perception.

Creating a positive and respectful experience during check-in and check-out contributes to a more inclusive and supportive shelter environment.

Navigating Access to Services Within the Shelter

In a large multi-service organization, ensuring guests have clear access to the array of services available can be a complex task. Here are guidelines to streamline this process:

1. **Transparent Information Sharing**: Staff should openly share information about available services during both formal and informal interactions with guests. This helps in understanding specific needs or requests. A case note documenting this information, along with when and why it was provided, ensures that the guest doesn't have to repeatedly recount potentially traumatic experiences.
2. **Warm Referrals**: Whenever operationally feasible, staff should facilitate warm referrals. This means that the staff member who initially identifies the service need should either accompany the guest to meet with staff from the program or liaise with staff from the other program and request their presence. This promotes a seamless transition between services.
3. **Introduction and Explanation**: Consider organizing a small group discussion to make introductions and outline the reason for the referral. This helps in familiarizing the guest with the new program and the staff they will be interacting with.

By following these steps, staff can help guests navigate the array of services offered by the organization in a supportive and efficient manner. This approach minimizes the need for guests to repeat their needs multiple times, reducing potential re-traumatization.

Conclusion

In the rhythm of daily operations, we are guided by a profound commitment to a trauma-informed approach. This chapter has unveiled a constellation of considerations vital in creating an environment that fosters respect, empowerment, and nurturing for those we have the privilege of serving.

Referring to those we serve as "Guests" or "Program Participants" embodies the commitment to humanize and dignify their experience, avoiding terms that may inadvertently devalue their humanity.

This conscious language choice reflects an aspiration to provide safe and hospitable services.

At the core of our operational philosophy lies a dedication to service, not control. We lead with influence, positive modeling, and unwavering support, eschewing authoritarian approaches. Staff voices are reserved for moments of immediate danger, ensuring clarity and effectiveness in emergencies.

Acknowledging individuals by their chosen names and pronouns is a cornerstone of empowerment. It is an act of respect that reinforces their unique identities. We maintain transparency regarding legal names while safeguarding the sanctity of their preferred names and pronouns.

Visibility and presence of staff offer a reassuring anchor for guests. Shelter apparel serves as a visual cue, ensuring easy identification of staff members. Even when behind closed doors, open communication signifies accessibility, while the question "How can I help you?" sets the tone for meaningful interactions.

Engaging in preferred language is a testament to the dedication to inclusivity. Striving to communicate in the guest's primary language fosters a sense of belonging and understanding that transcends linguistic barriers.

The screening of belongings is conducted discreetly, with utmost respect for privacy and dignity. This process is essential in maintaining a safe and secure environment for all, guided by clear protocols that prioritize safety and respect.

Supporting individuals with an excess of belongings requires a sensitive and person-centred approach. Understanding the underlying reasons and providing practical solutions, such as additional storage options, empowers individuals to navigate their belongings with dignity.

Bed and mat assignments are made with a focus on safety and individual needs. Proximity to staff, accessibility, and consideration for mobility issues are central to these allocations. Group dynamics and potential conflicts are also considered, ensuring a harmonious living environment.

The lights-out procedure is designed to facilitate a peaceful and restful environment. This gradual transition to dim lighting is considerate of individual sleep patterns and ensures essential areas remain sufficiently illuminated for safety.

Recognizing that sleep patterns may vary, particularly for those sleeping outside of designated areas, compassion and understanding guide interactions. Providing spaces for rest and respite throughout the day acknowledges the diverse needs of guests.

Morning wake-up procedures prioritize gentle and nurturing approaches, setting a positive tone for the day. Verbal cues and soothing sounds are employed to create a serene awakening experience, avoiding abrupt awakenings that can be disorienting.

Meals are provided as a fundamental right, not as a reward or punishment. Accommodating known food allergies and offering culturally appropriate options demonstrate the commitment to individual needs and preferences.

Medication access is offered as a voluntary service, respecting the privacy and autonomy of guests. Staff do not regulate dosage or timing, and access is never used as a form of control or punishment.

Access to a telephone is facilitated with respect for privacy and confidentiality. Staff refrain from inquiring about the nature of calls and avoid eavesdropping. Messages are taken and delivered discreetly to safeguard communication.

Checking in and out of the facility is designed with sensitivity and respect for privacy. Trauma-informed design principles create a welcoming environment, while clear instructions and efficient processes minimize wait times.

Navigating access to services within the shelter is facilitated through transparent information sharing and warm referrals. These steps aim to streamline the process, minimizing potential re-traumatization for guests.

In weaving together these operational considerations, we craft an environment that nurtures, respects, and empowers those who seek support. Each element contributes to a tapestry of care that reflects the deep commitment to trauma-informed practice. It is through these daily operations that we illuminate the path toward housing, stability, and renewed hope for those we serve.

OTHER DAILY OPERATIONS

In the world of providing support to those experiencing homelessness, the condition and maintenance of the facilities play a critical role in ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of all guests and staff. It is imperative that we approach this task with diligence, empathy, and a commitment to maintaining an environment that fosters dignity and respect for all who seek support.

This chapter outlines a set of comprehensive guidelines that underscore an organization's commitment to maintaining a clean, safe, and welcoming space. It encompasses everything from handling construction or renovation projects to addressing property damage, all while adhering to principles of fairness and consistency. Moreover, we firmly believe that access to basic necessities such as clothing, hygiene supplies, laundry, and showers is not a privilege, but an essential right for every individual seeking shelter and support.

This chapter emphasizes transparent communication and sensitivity when it comes to personal hygiene, recognizing the diverse needs and experiences of all guests. We also recognize the invaluable contributions of individuals with lived experience in shaping the daily operations of the organization. Their voluntary participation in operational tasks is a testament to the commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that every voice is heard and respected.

As we embark on this journey together, let us remember that every action we take, no matter how small, contributes to the creation of a space where all guests feel valued, supported, and treated with the dignity they deserve. Through collective efforts, aim to provide not only shelter and services, but also a sense of belonging and safety to those facing the challenges of homelessness.

Maintaining a Clean, Safe Environment and Good State of Repair or Influenced by Staff Members' Personal Opinions

Organizations should prioritize the state of the facility to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of guests. Here is a guideline to follow:

1. **Construction or Renovation Projects**: Guests will be notified in advance of any construction or renovation projects, along with information about potential noises, smells, or restricted access resulting from the project.
2. **Same-Day Notifications**: On the day of a project, guests will receive a reminder notification, building upon the advanced communication.
3. **Reporting Maintenance Issues**: Staff members are responsible for reporting any maintenance matters that may impede the feelings of safety, security, or worthiness of guests. This includes small issues like burnt-out light bulbs, which can still have a significant impact on a guest's sense of safety, to larger issues like a bathroom being out of use while awaiting repairs.
4. **Regular Facility Walk-Throughs**: Staff, under the direction of a supervisor, will conduct regular walk-throughs of all "guest-facing" areas of the building at least once per hour. This includes common areas, bathrooms, sleeping areas, and more. Any untidiness or spills will be addressed immediately, and maintenance issues will be reported to the on-duty supervisor for communication with maintenance.

5. **Engagement Within the Vicinity**: Under the direction of a supervisor, staff will also engage with guests within approximately 250 meters of the property, ensuring their well-being and addressing any signs of distress.

6. **Addressing Property Damage**: If staff witness a guest damaging part of the building, they will inquire about the reason behind the behaviour. Staff will emphasize that all emotions are acceptable, but damaging property is not condoned. Service restrictions for property damage will only occur in extreme cases, with consultation among staff and a supervisor. Fairness and consistency in applying consequences for property damage are crucial.

7. **Fair and Consistent Responses**: Staff will not lecture guests in an angry tone about their actions. Essential services will not be withheld due to property damage. Guests will not be demanded to fix damaged parts of the building themselves.

By adhering to these guidelines, they aim is to maintain a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for all guests, while addressing any maintenance concerns promptly and with care.

Access to Clothing, Hygiene Supplies, Laundry, Showers, Etc.

Access to essential goods and services for personal dignity and cleanliness is a guest right, not rewards.

1. **Transparent Orientation**: During building orientation, staff will transparently explain when and how guests can access clothing, hygiene supplies, laundry, and showers. Access will not be granted as a reward for tasks or withheld as a punishment for perceived negative behaviour.

2. **Daily Availability of Hygiene Supplies**: Hygiene supplies such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hair combs, and shaving equipment will be made available daily without guests needing to request them. While staff may encourage guests to take only what they need for the day to ensure availability for others, they will not police how much a guest takes.

3. **Sensitivity to Personal Hygiene**: When staff encounter a guest with compromised personal hygiene, they will sensitively and privately inform the guest about how and when they can access clothing, laundry, or a shower. While encouragement to use available resources may be offered, demanding the use of hygiene services as a condition of stay is not acceptable.

4. **Accommodations for Individual Needs**: Staff may inquire if any amendments or exemptions to current practices are necessary for the individual. For example, if a guest has a traumatic experience associated with nudity in a shelter environment, staff will work to accommodate their needs, such as arranging a private showering time.

By following these guidelines, the aim is to provide guests with access to essential goods and services in a dignified and respectful manner, ensuring their well-being and comfort during their stay.

Roles for People with Living Experience

Organizations should value and respect people with living experience. Here are guidelines for their involvement in day-to-day operations:

1. **Voluntary Participation**: People with living experience will never be required to participate in the delivery of operational tasks or chores. Their involvement in such tasks will always be voluntary.
2. **Fair and Transparent Selection**: If volunteers are sought for specific tasks, staff will ensure a fair and transparent process for selecting volunteers from the roster of guests. No guest should be pressured or obligated to participate.
3. **No Conditions or Punishments**: Guests will not be asked to perform any duty as a condition of their stay or as a punishment for perceived infractions of shelter expectations.
4. **No Preferential Treatment**: Volunteers will not receive preferential treatment in accessing other services within the shelter due to their voluntary participation. All guests will have equal access to services.
5. **Support and Risk Assessment**: When a guest volunteers for a task, staff will assess potential emotional and physical risks. Tasks should not negatively impact the guest's well-being or other shelter guests.

We are committed to maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment for all guests, ensuring that their dignity and autonomy are upheld in all interactions and activities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have delved into the crucial daily operations that form the backbone of providing a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for guests. The state of the facility reflects the commitment to guests' well-being, and it is imperative that there is priority on maintenance.

Guidelines for construction or renovation projects emphasize the importance of advanced communication with guests to prepare them for any potential disruptions. Same-day notifications serve as a reminder, ensuring that guests are well-informed and supported throughout the process. Staff members play a pivotal role in reporting maintenance issues promptly, recognizing that even seemingly minor concerns can have a significant impact on a guest's sense of safety and well-being.

Regular facility walk-throughs and engagement within the vicinity are vital components of maintaining a clean and secure environment. These activities, conducted under the supervision of a designated staff member, ensure that "guest-facing" areas remain tidy and safe. Addressing property damage is handled with sensitivity and a focus on understanding the underlying emotions, while also maintaining fairness and consistency in consequences.

Access to essential goods and services for personal dignity and cleanliness is recognized as a guest right, not a privilege. Transparent orientation ensures that guests are aware of how to access clothing, hygiene supplies, laundry, and showers without the imposition of conditions or punishments. Daily availability of hygiene supplies is provided to guests, with an emphasis on personal responsibility in usage.

Involving individuals with living experience in day-to-day operations is a testament to the commitment to inclusivity and respect. Their participation is always voluntary, and they are never obligated to perform operational tasks or chores. Fair and transparent selection processes are in place, and no guest should feel pressured or obligated to participate. Volunteers do not receive preferential treatment, ensuring that all guests have equal access to services.

ENGAGEMENT

This chapter covers various aspects of interactions with shelter guests. It begins with guidelines for addressing guest apparel, emphasizing sensitivity and respect. Next, it focuses on engaging with guests in a manner that is respectful of their culture, gender, and history, highlighting principles of cultural competence, inclusivity, and privacy. The chapter also addresses conflict resolution, emphasizing verbal de-escalation techniques for trauma-informed responses. Finally, it stresses the importance of staff neutrality in political discussions and events, promoting an environment of impartiality and inclusivity. Adhering to these guidelines ensures a space where diverse perspectives are valued, and guests feel comfortable engaging in conversations.

Considerations in Responding to the Apparel of Guests (for example, a person wearing sunglasses indoors)

Organizations should understand that engagements regarding guest apparel must be handled delicately. Here are guidelines:

1. **Delicate Handling**: Staff will approach conversations about clothing choices with sensitivity, providing transparent reasoning to the guest. They will be mindful of potential triggers and avoid actions that could inadvertently traumatize or re-traumatize a guest.
2. **Intervention for Inappropriate Apparel**: If a guest is wearing clothing that negatively impacts others (e.g., lewd slogans, incomplete coverage, political messaging), staff may privately intervene. They will express concerns about the apparel and its perceived impact on others and offer alternative clothing options.
3. **Seasonably Appropriate Clothing**: If a guest's clothing is not seasonably appropriate, staff will offer more suitable clothing options.
4. **Sunglasses**: Staff will not request guests to remove sunglasses worn indoors. They recognize that there could be various reasons for wearing them, including medical or sensory needs, or a desire for anonymity.

By following these guidelines, the aim to address guest apparel matters with respect, empathy, and an understanding of individual needs and preferences.

Engaging with Shelter Guests in a Manner that is Respectful of Culture, Gender, and History.

Organizations should recognize and respect the diverse range of cultures, genders, and histories that the guests bring. Here are some key principles that guide should service delivery:

1. **Cultural Competence and Humility**: All staff are required to implement the training they have received on culturally appropriate engagement and service delivery, and to practice cultural humility. This ensures that we approach each guest with sensitivity, respect, and an open mindset towards their unique cultural background.
2. **Cultural Matching, When Possible**: When operationally feasible, staff may offer guests the option to primarily interact with staff members who share their cultural identity. This can foster a sense of understanding and comfort for the guest.

3. **Gender-Inclusive Environment**: Welcome individuals of all genders. Staff are trained on gender identities and gender-based safety considerations in service delivery. When operationally possible, guests may have the option to interact primarily with staff who share their gender identity.

4. **Respecting Individual Histories**: Guests have individual histories that may encompass experiences of trauma, housing instability, and encounters with various resources. To respect their privacy and prevent re-traumatization, staff are encouraged to ensure that guests do not have to repeatedly share their story with multiple staff members within the organization. With transparent consent and proper documentation, relevant information can be shared among staff in a manner that upholds privacy and trust.

5. **Acknowledging Shared Histories**: Guests may also have shared historical experiences, such as Indigenous experiences of Residential Schools or experiences of newcomers to Canada. Staff are encouraged to continuously educate themselves about these historical events to provide context for current service needs. However, it's crucial to remember that while shared histories may involve common events, the individual experiences, interpretations, and impacts can vary significantly. Generalizations should be avoided.

By adhering to these principles, the aim is to provide a respectful and inclusive environment where guests feel understood, valued, and supported.

Responding to Conflict Between Guests, or Between a Guest and a Staff Member

Conflict can be a direct response to trauma and a defensive tool for individuals who have experienced trauma. In a shelter environment, staff should undergo verbal de-escalation training, which is a crucial component of a trauma-informed approach:

10 Principles of Verbal De-escalation

1. **Respect Personal Space**: Maintain a respectful distance and avoid blocking exit paths. In shelters, be aware of the surroundings to prevent escalation from spreading.

2. **Avoid Provocation and Anger**: Respond in a controlled and measured manner. Avoid being provocative or reacting in anger.

3. **Establish Calm Verbal Contact**: Approach the individual calmly and establish verbal contact in a non-threatening manner.

4. **Use Clear, Concise Language**: Speak in short, easy-to-understand phrases. Be prepared to repeat yourself if necessary.

5. **Active Listening**: Pay close attention to what the person is saying. Show that you are actively engaged in the conversation.

6. **Recognize Wants and Feelings**: Identify the individual's wants and feelings and try to accommodate reasonable requests.

7. **Agree or Agree to Disagree**: Validate the person's concerns without resorting to negative statements. It's okay to agree or agree to disagree.

8. **Set Clear Limits with Expected Outcomes**: Provide clear boundaries without demanding or ordering specific behaviour. Review any policies related to barring or restricting services.

9. **Offer Choices and Optimism**: Provide options and maintain an optimistic outlook in your interactions.
10. **Post-Event Review**: After a de-escalation, take time to review the event and identify areas for improvement within the agency's protocols.

Cultural Sensitivity in De-Escalation:

- Avoid statements that may trigger trauma, such as asking a person to maintain eye contact. Understand that in many cultures, direct eye contact may not be appropriate.

Response After De-Escalation:

- If an individual successfully de-escalates and there is no immediate harm to others, they should not be subjected to a bar or restriction of service.
- Acknowledge the de-escalation with the individual and express gratitude for how the situation was handled.

By implementing these de-escalation principles within a trauma-informed framework, staff can create an environment that supports individuals who may be responding to trauma through conflict.

Avoid Sharing Personal Political Perspectives or Commentary on Local, Provincial, National, or International Events.

Organizations should value impartiality and neutrality when it comes to political discussions and event by:

1. **Staff Neutrality**: Staff members should be expected to refrain from asserting or sharing their personal opinions or insights on events occurring at local, provincial, national, or international levels with guests. If a guest wishes to discuss an event, staff can provide factual information as known to them, but should make it clear that they will not be sharing personal opinions or perspectives on the matter.
2. **Democratic Elections**: During democratic elections, staff may provide factual information on how individuals experiencing homelessness can vote. However, they are not to share their opinions or perspectives on any policy position of any candidate or party. Staff should also refrain from indicating which party they plan to vote for and should not ask guests about their voting intentions.
3. **Political Affiliation**: It is not appropriate for staff to outwardly indicate a political position of affiliation using buttons, slogans, or apparel. This helps maintain a neutral and inclusive environment for all guests.

By adhering to these guidelines, we ensure that organizations remain a space where diverse perspectives are respected, and where guests can feel comfortable engaging in conversations without feeling pressured.

Conclusion

In the realm of engagement, the commitment to a trauma-informed approach remains steadfast. This chapter has illuminated crucial considerations in the interactions with guests, recognizing the uniqueness of each individual's needs and preferences.

Addressing guest apparel requires delicate handling, rooted in empathy and respect. We approach conversations with sensitivity, mindful of potential triggers, and avoid actions that may re-traumatize. Intervening in cases of inappropriate apparel is done privately, with a focus on offering alternative options. Ensuring seasonably appropriate clothing and respecting the choice to wear sunglasses indoors exemplifies the dedication to individual autonomy.

Cultural competence and humility lie at the heart of an engagement philosophy. We honour the diverse range of cultures, genders, and histories that guests bring. Through training and practice, staff approach each guest with sensitivity and respect for their unique background. Offering the option of interacting with staff who share cultural or gender identities fosters understanding and comfort. Additionally, we respect individual and shared histories, taking care to prevent re-traumatization.

Conflict resolution is a vital skill in a shelter environment, particularly for individuals who may use conflict as a defense mechanism. Verbal de-escalation training equips staff with ten principles, enabling them to respond to conflicts with empathy and skill. These principles, rooted in respect and clear communication, provide a framework for defusing tense situations.

In matters of politics and personal opinions, staff maintain neutrality. Refraining from sharing personal perspectives on local, provincial, national, or international events ensures a neutral and inclusive environment. This approach respects the diverse perspectives of all guests and allows for open, non-pressured conversations.

By upholding these principles of engagement, we create an environment where every guest feels understood, valued, and supported. It is through these meaningful interactions that we pave the way for healing, empowerment, and the journey towards stability and ending a person's time without a home.

RESPONDING AND SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL HEALTH NEEDS

Ensuring the health and wellness of guests is a paramount priority in any shelter environment. This chapter provides comprehensive guidelines on how to approach various health-related situations with sensitivity, empathy, and a trauma-informed perspective.

This chapter covers a range of critical scenarios, including responding to drug poisoning, supporting individuals who use substances, and providing assistance to guests experiencing mental health challenges such as psychosis, hallucinations, and delusions. It emphasizes clear communication, empathetic listening, and the importance of respecting each guest's individual experiences.

Furthermore, this chapter addresses the provision of immediate needs, including access to hygiene products to people who are menstruating, reinforcing the value of dignity and comfort for all guests. It also offers guidance on how to support guests with emerging, ongoing, or chronic physical health concerns, highlighting the significance of nonjudgmental engagement and confidentiality.

By following these guidelines, staff can create a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all guests, promoting their overall well-being and contributing to a more inclusive shelter experience.

Responding to a Drug Poisoning

Responding to drug poisoning is a critical situation that requires a trauma-informed approach to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved. Here are some key considerations:

1. **Use the Term "Drug Poisoning"**: Recognize that many individuals are experiencing drug poisoning due to the toxic drug supply, rather than traditional overdoses. Using accurate terminology is important for understanding the nature of the situation.
2. **Clear the Immediate Area**: If possible, clear the immediate area of bystanders who may also be traumatized by the occurrence. This helps create a focused and safe environment for response.
3. **Reassure the Individual**: Once the person has started to recover, reassure them that they are okay. Offer support and comfort during this vulnerable moment.
4. **Address Suicidal Ideation**: Be prepared for the individual to express feelings of distress or ask questions like "why did you save me." Monitor for signs of suicidal ideation and connect them to additional services if needed.
5. **Provide a Safe Space for Recovery**: Have a designated area in the shelter where individuals who have experienced drug poisoning can remain for monitoring and recovery. This space should be calm, quiet, and conducive to healing.
6. **Peer and Addiction Support**: Ensure that peer support workers and/or addiction support workers are available to connect with the individual if they request it. These roles within shelter can offer valuable insights and resources.
7. **Follow-Up**: Recognize that this may not be the appropriate time to intervene on the individual's personal drug use. However, it is crucial to have a follow-up plan in place to address their well-being and connect them with relevant services.

By approaching drug poisoning with a trauma-informed lens, you can provide more effective support and care for individuals in crisis.

Supporting a Guest that has Used Alcohol or Other Drugs

Supporting individuals who have consumed substances requires a trauma-informed approach. Here are some key considerations:

1. **Use "Substance Use" Terminology**: Employ the term "substance use" to describe all types of substances. This inclusive language helps avoid stigmatization or judgment based on the type of substance.
2. **Understand Addiction as a Mental Illness**: Recognize that addiction is a mental illness, not a choice. Approach individuals with empathy and understanding rather than judgment.
3. **Offer Storage Options**: Provide individuals with the choice to safely store their substances rather than feeling pressured to consume or use them before entering the shelter. Consider implementing Amnesty Totes for this purpose.
4. **Adjust Communication**: Acknowledge that communication may be challenging for individuals under the influence. Speak slowly, repeat information as needed, and explore alternative methods of communication such as writing or drawing.
5. **Monitor Individuals**: Keep a watchful eye on individuals while they are using substances and continue to monitor them after use. This process should align with the same approach used for responding to drug poisoning.
6. **Respond to Medical Emergencies**: If an individual loses consciousness, becomes unresponsive, experiences difficulty breathing, has a weak pulse, or begins vomiting excessively, call 911 immediately. When possible, move the person into the adult recovery position.

A trauma-informed approach emphasizes safety, compassion, and support for individuals experiencing substance use. It helps create an environment where individuals feel respected and cared for, which is essential for their well-being and recovery.

Supporting a Guest that has Experienced a Drug Poisoning

Dealing with individuals who are struggling with substance use requires a sensitive and trauma-informed approach. Here are some key strategies:

1. **Facilitate Access to Detox and Treatment Centers**:
   - Make the process of accessing detox programs as seamless as possible.
   - Consider providing transportation, if feasible, to help individuals reach these facilities.
2. **Mind Language Use**:
   - Avoid stigmatizing and derogatory terms like "addict," "user," "junkie," and so on.
   - Instead, use language that is more respectful and understanding, such as "habit," "abuse," "medication-assisted treatment," etc.
3. **Utilize Data for Support**:
   - Analyze data related to an individual's experiences with substance use to identify patterns and potential opportunities for engagement.
   - While not a precise method, data analysis can be a useful tool for providing timely support.

This aims to create an environment where individuals feel valued and supported, which is crucial for their well-being and recovery.

Supporting a Guest Experiencing Psychosis

Supporting a guest experiencing psychosis requires a compassionate and non-judgmental approach. Staff should be trained in Mental Health First Aid and adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Clear and Calm Communication**:
  - Staff use clear, concise sentences in a calm, non-threatening tone.
- **Empathy and Validation**:
  - Staff acknowledge the person's feelings and experiences, showing understanding and empathy.
- **Listening and Understanding**:
  - Staff actively listen to the guest's explanations and perceptions, without passing judgment.
- **Avoiding Confrontation**:
  - Staff do not argue, challenge, or confront the person about their beliefs or experiences.
- **Respect and Mindfulness**:
  - The person is treated with respect, and staff are aware that the individual may be fearful.
- **Calling for Assistance**:
  - In consultation with other staff, a decision to call 911 is made if the guest poses a threat to themselves or others.
- **Avoiding Speculation**:
  - Staff refrain from speculating about specific categories of mental illness unless there's documented information shared by the guest.
- **Safety Measures**:
  - If a 911 call is made, staff ensure other guests are safely removed from the environment.
- **Post-Episode Support**:
  - Upon the guest's return from a health facility, the episode of psychosis is not held against them, and they are welcomed and supported.

This protocol emphasizes compassion, understanding, and safety in interactions with guests experiencing psychosis, prioritizing their well-being and dignity.

Supporting a Guest Experiencing Hallucinations

When a guest is experiencing hallucinations:

- **Address the Person Respectfully**:
  - Staff address the person by their name or ask how they would like to be addressed.
  - The immediate goal of the staff response is to help the person focus on reality rather than the hallucination. One designated staff member takes the lead, while others provide support. The lead staff member:

- **Acknowledge the Hallucination**:
    - They do not pretend to experience the hallucination but do not try to convince the person that it doesn't exist to them.
- **Ask Questions**:
    - They ask questions to understand the nature of the hallucination, such as what the person is hearing, seeing, feeling, or sensing.
- **Express Belief**:
    - They tell the person, "I don't hear/see/feel what you do, but I believe that you do."
- **Redirect Focus**:
    - They instruct the person to listen to their voice or focus on them rather than the hallucination.

Depending on the nature and duration of the hallucination, it may elicit reactions from other guests or staff. Staff may need to explain to others that the behaviour is not intentional and cannot be controlled. Activating a 911 call is only necessary if the person is perceived to be a danger to themselves or others. Accommodations may be made in the sleeping or day service environment to provide privacy and sustained staff support during the episode.

Supporting a Guest Experiencing Delusions

When a guest is suspected of experiencing one or more delusions, staff should approach the situation with care and sensitivity:

- **Designate a Lead Staff Member**:
    - One staff member takes the lead in engaging with the guest, with others providing support as necessary.

The designated lead staff member should:
- **Ask Questions about the Delusion**:
    - Inquire about the nature of the delusion, especially if there are indications that it may lead to harm for themselves or others.
- **Do Not Challenge the Delusion**:
    - Avoid arguing or trying to convince the person that their thoughts are wrong or not real.
- **Validate the Guest's Experience**:
    - Acknowledge the guest's perspective, saying something like, "I believe you are telling me this is how you see it."
- **Maintain Neutral Expression**:
    - Avoid smiling or shaking the head while the person is speaking to prevent misunderstanding.
- **Offer Support and Comfort**:
    - Ask if there's anything that can be done to make the guest feel more comfortable. Explain staff intentions before taking any action.

A 911 call should only be made if there are indications that the delusions are putting the guest at risk, either to themselves or others.

Responding to Physical Health Needs (Emerging, Ongoing, or Chronic)

Guests at the shelter may have had negative experiences with the healthcare system in the past, which can lead to a lack of trust in seeking medical assistance. In such cases, it's important for staff to approach the situation with sensitivity and empathy:

- **Nonjudgmental Engagement**:
  - Staff should be nonjudgmental when interacting with guests who may have reservations about seeking or following up with healthcare providers. Expressing concern and offering support is appropriate.
- **Avoid Offering Untrained Medical Opinions**:
  - Staff should refrain from providing their own medical opinions or treatment suggestions. Instead, they should encourage guests to seek assistance from qualified healthcare professionals.
- **Maintain Strict Confidentiality**:
  - Any health information shared by a guest must be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- **Shared Decision-Making Approach**:
  - When assisting a guest with their health concerns, staff should involve the guest in decisions about visits to healthcare providers, fostering a sense of control and agency.
- **Show Compassion and Acceptance**:
  - Approach guests with empathy, understanding, and acceptance, recognizing that their health concerns are valid and important.
- **Support Continuity of Care**:
  - Staff should aim to facilitate consistent access to healthcare providers, promoting continuity in the guest's care.
- **Follow Support**:
  - After a visit with a healthcare provider, it's appropriate for staff to ask how the guest is feeling and if they need any additional support.
- **Respect the Privacy of Medical Recommendations**:
  - It is not appropriate for staff, except those specifically trained in healthcare, to inquire about the explicit details of the care or treatment protocol recommended by a healthcare provider.

By approaching guests with care, respect, and a commitment to their well-being, staff can help create a supportive environment for individuals seeking healthcare assistance.

Supporting Guests that Menstruate with Access to Appropriate Hygiene Products

Ensuring easy access to free hygiene products to people that menstruate is essential for the dignity and well-being of all individuals. Here are suggested protocols to consider putting in place:

1. **Stocking Bathrooms**:
   - Female and universal bathrooms are consistently stocked with free hygiene products for people that menstruate.
2. **Replenishment Protocol**:
   - Female staff members conduct regular safety and cleanliness checks of bathrooms.
   - They ensure that the stock of menstrual hygiene products is replenished as needed.

This guarantees that guests experiencing menstruation have seamless access to necessary supplies, promoting comfort and dignity within the shelter.

Conclusion

Responding to the diverse health needs of guests at the shelter is a multifaceted task that requires compassion, empathy, and a trauma-informed approach. Here are some key takeaways from this chapter:

1. **Empathy and Nonjudgmental Engagement**: Staff should approach guests with sensitivity, recognizing that past experiences may have created reservations about seeking medical assistance. Expressing genuine concern and offering support without judgment is crucial.
2. **Avoiding Untrained Medical Opinions**: Staff should refrain from providing their own medical opinions or treatment suggestions. Encouraging guests to seek assistance from qualified healthcare professionals ensures they receive appropriate care.
3. **Maintaining Strict Confidentiality**: Any health information shared by a guest must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Respecting their privacy builds trust and ensures their comfort in seeking help.
4. **Shared Decision-Making Approach**: In assisting guests with their health concerns, staff should involve them in decisions about visits to healthcare providers. This approach empowers guests, giving them a sense of control and agency over their own health.
5. **Compassion and Acceptance**: Approach guests with empathy, understanding, and acceptance. Acknowledge that their health concerns are valid and important, reinforcing their dignity and worth.
6. **Supporting Continuity of Care**: Facilitate consistent access to healthcare providers to ensure continuity in the guest's care. This may involve assisting with appointment scheduling or providing transportation options.
7. **Follow-Up Support**: After a guest visits a healthcare provider, it's appropriate for staff to ask how they are feeling and if they need any additional support. This demonstrates ongoing care and concern for their well-being.
8. **Respecting Privacy of Medical Recommendations**: Unless specifically trained in healthcare, staff should avoid inquiring about the explicit details of care or treatment recommended by a healthcare provider. This ensures the guest's privacy and upholds professional boundaries.

By approaching guests with care, respect, and a commitment to their well-being, staff can help create a supportive environment for individuals seeking healthcare assistance. This chapter emphasized the importance of empathy and sensitivity in addressing the health needs of guests, ultimately contributing to a trauma-informed and person-centred care environment.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the cornerstone of any successful operation, especially in an environment dedicated to providing support and care for individuals experiencing homelessness. In this chapter, we outline a set of comprehensive guidelines to ensure that communication within the organization is not only efficient and effective but also conducted with the utmost respect for the dignity and privacy of guests.

We begin by addressing the use of broadcast messages, emphasizing that they are reserved exclusively for emergencies. This structured approach, utilizing specific 'codes' for different emergency situations, serves to minimize potential re-traumatization and ensures that information is disseminated clearly and promptly in critical situations. Next, we delve into the protocols for communicating about a guest among staff members. It is essential that any discussions regarding a guest take place in a private setting, where only relevant staff members are present. This approach promotes a professional environment, steering clear of casual gossip or unnecessary divulgence of personal information. Furthermore, we underscore the importance of involving guests in conversations about their own care. When a discussion goes beyond transactional matters and directly relates to a case plan, transparency is key. Guests should be informed about the conversation, its purpose, and given the opportunity to participate if they wish. We also address the use of walkie-talkies as a communication tool. Proper volume adjustment is crucial to ensure that information is conveyed effectively without compromising privacy. Sensitive information should never be shared over this channel; instead, it should be reserved for secure, in-person conversations or over a telephone.

Lastly, we stress the significance of accurate and factual case notes. These records play a vital role in providing services to the program participants, and guests should be informed about their accessibility. Case notes should strictly adhere to factual information, avoiding opinions or assumptions. Additionally, shift hand-over notes serve as a crucial means of communication within the organization, summarizing essential information for incoming staff.

By following these protocols, we aim to maintain a communication environment that upholds their dignity, privacy, and autonomy in every interaction.

Broadcasting a Communication that the Entire Building Can Hear

Broadcast messages in the facility are reserved strictly for emergencies. To minimize potential re-traumatization, agencies may utilize 'codes' for specific emergency situations:

- Code Red signifies a fire emergency.
- Code Brown indicates a hazardous material spill.
- Code Green signifies the need for evacuation.
- Code Blue indicates a medical emergency where a guest or staff member has appeared to stop breathing.

For inquiries about specific guests, a discreet communication process will be followed. Staff members equipped with walkie-talkies will convey information about the program attempting to reach the guest. This discreet approach ensures that messages are delivered appropriately, minimizing unnecessary disturbance to other guests.

This emphasizes the importance of clear communication during emergencies and respects the privacy and dignity of guests in non-emergency situations. It also provides a structured method for staff to communicate about specific guests without causing unnecessary disruption.

Communicating with Colleagues Regarding a Guest

To respect guest privacy and maintain a professional environment, staff conversations about a guest should only occur in a private setting where only relevant staff can hear. Staff members should only communicate about a guest when it is necessary for providing support, care, or ensuring safety. Casual gossip or discussions about personal peculiarities of a guest should be avoided, as it does not contribute to their well-being and can be inappropriate.

When communication about a guest goes beyond transactional matters (such as coordinating reminders for appointments), and directly relates to a case plan, the guest should be informed about the conversation. They should be provided with an explanation of why the conversation is taking place and invited to participate if they wish. This ensures transparency and empowers the guest to be involved in decisions about their own care.

Communicating with a Shelter Guest

In addition to cordial exchanges, staff communication with shelter guests must be mindful of the environment and potential listeners. Discussions of personal or sensitive matters should not occur in areas where they can be overheard by other guests or uninvolved staff members.

If a conversation has a direct impact on the guest's services, it should be documented in a case note within the agency database before the end of the shift. In cases where a late note is necessary, it must be entered within 24 hours and clearly labeled as a "Late Note" for proper documentation and record-keeping.

Communicating Over a Walkie-Talkie

When using walkie-talkies, it's crucial to adjust the volume appropriately. It should be set high enough for the staff member to hear, but not so high that others in the vicinity can clearly discern the content. This is especially important in areas where people may be sleeping.

Sensitive information should never be shared over the walkie-talkie system. Instead, it should be communicated in secure, in-person locations where others cannot overhear or over a telephone for added privacy and confidentiality.

Documentation and Case Notes

For program participants, the importance of case notes in receiving services shall be clearly communicated during program enrollment. They will be informed about when and how they can request access to any case note written about them, as well as the type of information included in a case note. When creating a case note, staff will ensure it contains the following details:

- The author's name (in 3rd person).
- The program participant's full name, preferred name, and date of birth.
- Details of the provided service, observations made, or documentation received.
- Date and time of the service.
- Duration of the service.
- Specific location of the engagement.
- Identification of the type of service, the need, and purpose.
- Explanation of why a particular course of action was taken.
- Record of follow-up information, including next steps and expected outcomes.

Case notes are to be strictly factual and must not include opinions, assumptions, or conjectures. Additionally, shift hand-over notes should adhere to the same guidelines as general case notes. They serve as a summary of shifts, events, trends, or essential data for the incoming staff. This communication practice is not exclusive to emergency shelters but extends to all person-facing departments within the shelter.

Examples of shift hand-over notes may encompass:

- Individuals who have experienced drug poisoning.
- Names of all new arrivals to the shelter.
- List of identified hazards and their repair status.
- Individuals requiring additional support.
- Details of any critical incidents.
- Positive interactions with individuals.

By following these procedures, staff can maintain accurate and helpful case notes that contribute to the well-being of program participants/guests.

Conclusion

In the intricate web of providing compassionate care and support, effective communication is the cornerstone of the approach. This chapter has elucidated a set of guidelines that not only uphold the dignity and privacy of the guests but also facilitate a professional and respectful environment.

Broadcast messages within the facility are reserved exclusively for emergencies, ensuring that critical information is conveyed swiftly and efficiently. The introduction of discreet 'codes' for specific emergencies not only streamlines response efforts but also minimizes potential re-traumatization for guests.

Respecting guest privacy, all staff conversations about a guest should take place in private settings, with only relevant staff present. Gossip or casual discussions about personal details of a guest are discouraged, as they do not contribute to their well-being.

When discussions about a guest extend beyond logistical matters and relate to a case plan, transparency is paramount. The guest should be informed of the conversation's purpose, invited to participate if they wish, and empowered to be involved in decisions about their own care.
Mindful communication with shelter guests in appropriate settings ensures that sensitive matters remain confidential and respectful. Documentation through case notes is essential, capturing every service provided with accuracy, objectivity, and pertinent details.

The use of walkie-talkies demands attention to volume levels, striking a balance between audibility for staff and confidentiality for others nearby, particularly in areas where individuals may be resting. Sensitive information should never be shared over this channel, and instead, should be communicated in secure, private settings.

Case notes, a critical aspect of the service, are communicated with transparency. Guests are informed of their accessibility and the type of information they contain. These notes are strictly factual, free from opinions or assumptions, and include essential details to facilitate the continuity of care.

Shift hand-over notes serve as a vital summary of events and trends for incoming staff. These notes encompass a range of critical information, from individuals needing additional support to positive interactions with guests.

By adhering to these communication procedures, staff can uphold the highest standards of care, ensuring that every guest's well-being is at the forefront of every interaction.

ENGAGEMENT IN HOUSING-FOCUSED SERVICES

In a housing-focused shelter, providing case management services is a crucial step towards supporting guests in their journey towards stability and housing. This chapter outlines essential guidelines for the voluntary participation in case management services, emphasizing guest autonomy and choice.
The guidelines stress the importance of introducing case management services in a manner that empowers the guest, allowing them to select a comfortable location for meetings and setting a reasonable timeframe for decision-making. Clear and accessible language is used to explain the purpose and focus of case management, ensuring guests fully understand the process.

Confidentiality, collaborative goal setting, and a grievance process are integral aspects of this service, reinforcing trust and transparency between staff and guests. Additionally, it's highlighted that participation in case management is entirely voluntary and not a requirement for shelter stay.

The chapter also addresses the importance of distinguishing case management from therapy, allowing guests to make informed decisions about their engagement with support services. Ultimately, the goal is to create an environment where guests feel respected, supported, and empowered in their journey towards stable housing.

Offering Case Management Services

Shelters should prioritize guest autonomy and choice in their journey towards stability and housing. These are suggested guidelines regarding participation in case management services:

1. **Voluntary Participation**: Engagement in case management services is entirely voluntary and not a requirement for shelter stay. Guests are empowered to make informed decisions in their best interest.
2. **Introduction and Empowerment**: Shelter staff will facilitate an introduction between the guest, shelter staff, and the case manager whenever possible. The guest will be empowered to choose a comfortable location for this meeting from provided options.
3. **Timing for Offer**: For new shelter guests, offers of case management services will be introduced after allowing a period for self-resolution of homelessness. Returning and existing guests may be invited to discuss the benefits of case management.
4. **Clear Explanation of Case Management**:
   - Plain and accessible language will be used to explain the purpose and focus of case management, especially in relation to housing.
   - Jargon and insider terms will be avoided.
5. **Confidentiality and Reporting**: Case managers will clarify the confidentiality of the process and the limited circumstances under which reporting may be required instead of maintaining confidentiality.
6. **Collaborative Goal Setting**:
   - The process of identifying goals through collaborative dialogue will be outlined.
   - The collaborative nature of case management, where activities are undertaken together or independently, will be explained.

7. **Documentation and Access**:
   - Case management documentation, its storage, and who has access will be explained.
   - Guest consent for participation will be explicitly sought.
8. **Grievance Process**: Guests will be informed about the grievance process if they feel they are not receiving quality or attentive services.
9. **Distinguishing Case Management from Therapy**:
   - Case management will be distinguished from therapeutic or clinical services.
10. **Option to Cease Participation**: Guests will be informed that they have the option to cease participation in case management services at any point.
11. **Time for Decision**: Guests will not be pressured to make an immediate decision about participating in case management services. Deliberation is encouraged, and a reasonable timeframe for deciding will be discussed.
12. **Written Outline of Discussion**:
    - Case management staff may provide a written outline of the offer of case management services, using plain and accessible language.
    - Translation of the document into commonly spoken languages, if possible, is encouraged.

Case Management Meetings with Guests After Intake

Shelters should prioritize the autonomy of participants in case management services. Here are suggested guidelines:

1. **Determining Engagement Frequency**:
   - Participants have an active voice in deciding how often they want to engage with their case manager (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly).
2. **Setting Meeting Duration**:
   - Participants can determine how long each case management meeting will last or establish a maximum duration for any meeting.
3. **Choosing Meeting Location**:
   - Participants can select the location for case management meetings, whether in a case management office, another designated area within the building, on shelter grounds, or within the community if feasible.
4. **Meeting Reminders**:
   - At the start of each meeting, the case manager will remind the participant of the allocated time.
5. **Reviewing Agenda Items**:
   - The case manager will review the agenda items, which may have been partially determined at the previous meeting and are informed by agreed-upon timelines in the case plan.
6. **Motivational Interviewing Skills**:
   - Case managers are encouraged to utilize their motivational interviewing skills during the engagement with the participant.

7. **Avoiding Mandates and Unsolicited Advice**:
   - Case managers will refrain from mandating specific actions and offering unsolicited advice on any aspect of the participant's life.
8. **Maintaining Housing Focus**:
   - With a primary focus on housing, case managers will draw connections between activities, goals, and their relevance to accessing and sustaining housing.
9. **Documentation and Review**:
   - Case managers will take notes during the meeting and provide a summary at the end of the session.
   - Meeting notes should be entered into the shelter database before the end of the shift.

These guidelines aim to empower participants in their case management journey, ensuring their voice and preferences are valued throughout the process.

Active Engagement with Guests in Passive Settings Regarding Housing

Shelters should recognize the value of informal conversations about housing, especially for guests not yet actively engaged in housing-focused services. Here are suggested guidelines:

1. **Passive Settings Defined**:
   - Passive settings include common areas, lounges, outdoor areas, and dining spaces post-meals.
2. **Staff Presence**:
   - Staff will be intentionally present in these passive settings, allowing for organic housing conversations.
3. **Engaging Guests**:
   - Staff, including paid Peer Support Workers, may lead conversations about housing, particularly with guests not yet involved in housing-focused case management or local Coordinated Access.
4. **Respectful Persistence**:
   - Frequent and respectful conversations about housing are encouraged, emphasizing the importance of persistence without crossing into harassment.

These guidelines aim to create a supportive environment for housing discussions, recognizing that informal conversations can play a crucial role in helping guests transition towards stable housing.

Empowering Guests: Assessing Strengths, Self-Perception, and Support Needs

Shelters must believe that intentional conversations with guests are essential to providing the best support. Here are suggested guidelines:

1. **Topics for Discussion**:
   - After approximately 10 overnight stays without a clear self-directed exit plan, designated staff or case managers will engage in intentional conversations covering various topics, including housing experience, safety, cultural and support needs, identification documents, income, wellness, food security, legal matters, daily living activities, social supports, spiritual needs, and access to basic necessities.
2. **Informing the Guest**:
   - At the start of the meeting, guests will be informed of the purpose of the conversation and reassured that there are no wrong answers. They can choose to disclose as much or as little as they're comfortable with, and they can skip any topic without negative repercussions. Guests can also request follow-up discussions. Information gathered will be used to better assist them and will be noted in the organization database.
3. **Exploring Strengths and Experiences**:
   - Each topic should be explored with a focus on identifying the guest's strengths and past experiences, as well as their support needs.

These intentional conversations aim to empower guests and provide tailored support to help them navigate their unique situations. Open, respectful, and person-centred discussions are crucial in this process.

Exploring Reunification with Housed Family/Friends

A Housing-focused shelter recognizes the importance of exploring safe and appropriate alternatives to shelter for guests, with a particular focus on reuniting with family or friends. This exploration should not be limited to shelter diversion but should be an ongoing process.

1. **Revisiting Reunification**:
   - After approximately 10 overnights in the shelter, staff or case managers should revisit the option of reunification with family or friends unless the guest has explicitly shared past trauma related to these individuals during the shelter diversion process.
2. **Exploratory Conversation**:
   - The emphasis is on conducting an exploratory conversation about the possibility of staying with other family members or friends in a safe and appropriate environment rather than continuing to stay in the shelter.
3. **Offering Support**:
   - Staff may offer to assist in communicating with the family or friends.
   - Staff may help connect the guest with mediation services, if needed.
   - Exploration of potential assistance or incentives for the family or friends to assist the guest, such as increased access to food, short-term housing or utility cost assistance, or help in accessing furniture or household goods for the guest.

The goal is to ensure that guests have a safe and supportive environment, and this includes considering options beyond shelter when appropriate. Reuniting with family or friends can be a valuable step in achieving stability and housing.

Connecting with Coordinated Access

All shelter staff should be equipped with comprehensive knowledge of the local Coordinated Access process. For shelters that serve as an Access Point for Coordinated Access, staff are trained in the following:

1. **Enrollment in Coordinated Access**:
   - Staff are proficient in enrolling a guest in the Coordinated Access system.
   - They are trained to complete any required assessments for Coordinated Access.
2. **Maintaining Active Status**:
   - Staff ensure that the guest is included on the By Name List and remains in active status until suitable housing is secured.
3. **Transparent Communication with Guests**:
   - When explaining Coordinated Access to a guest, staff are explicit in stating that it is one pathway to housing, not the only option available.
4. **Additional Housing Pathways**:
   - Staff provide information on other housing options, including how Rent Geared to Income (RGI) housing applications work in the community.
   - They also reiterate self-resolution options, particularly for guests with sufficient employment income to afford housing in the private market.

The commitment is to provide guests with a clear understanding of the various pathways to secure housing, empowering them to make informed decisions that align with their unique circumstances and preferences.

Completing Forms, Documents, Etc.

When it comes to administrative tasks involving forms and documents, the staff adhere to a set of principles to ensure transparency and guest empowerment:

1. **Explanation of Purpose and Sharing**:
   - The purpose of the form or document is clearly explained to the guest.
   - Staff provide information on who the form or document will be shared with.
2. **Storage Information**:
   - Guests are informed about where the form or document will be securely stored.
3. **Accessibility and Rescinding**:
   - If possible, guests are informed whether they can access or rescind the form or document in the future.
4. **Overview of Information**:
   - Before requesting specific information, an overview of the types of information to be collected is provided.

5. **Sufficient Reading Time**:
   - Guests are given ample time to read the form or document in its entirety before providing a signature.
6. **Language Accessibility**:
   - If the form or document is available in multiple languages, the guest's language preference guides the version provided.
7. **Addressing Literacy Issues**:
   - In cases of literacy challenges, staff read the form or document in full without paraphrasing or editorializing.
8. **Opportunity for Questions**:
   - Guests are encouraged to ask questions about any content within the form or document.
9. **Voluntary Nature**:
   - If the form or document is voluntary, this fact is explicitly communicated.

These practices ensure that guests are fully informed and can engage with forms and documents in a way that aligns with their preferences and needs. Prioritize transparency and empowerment in all administrative processes.

Apartment Tours: Exploring Housing Options with Program Participants

When program participants wish to have a case manager accompany them to apartment viewings, follow a set of steps to ensure a smooth and empowering experience:

1. **Viewing Coordination**:
   - The case manager takes charge of scheduling the viewing with the housing provider or landlord.
2. **Document Preparation**:
   - All necessary documentation that may be required during the viewing is gathered by the case manager.
3. **Discussion or Roleplay**:
   - The case manager offers the program participant the opportunity to discuss or roleplay the viewing in advance, providing a chance to prepare.
4. **Logistics Planning**:
   - The case manager assists in organizing logistics for getting to and from the unit viewing.
5. **Empowering Questions**:
   - The case manager empowers the participant to ask questions of the landlord or housing provider during the viewing, ensuring they feel confident in advocating for their needs.
6. **Post-Viewing Debrief**:
   - After the viewing, the case manager engages in a debrief with the participant to gain insights into what they liked or disliked about the unit.

While attendance of the case manager at the rental viewing is encouraged, it's important to note that it's not mandatory. The goal is to provide participants with the support and resources they need to make informed decisions about potential housing.

Lease Signing

When a participant involved in case management services selects a rental unit or has their rental application approved, case managers take the following steps:

1. **Lease Explanation**:
   - Reiterate that the lease is a binding contract. As long as the participant complies with the lease terms, they can likely remain in the rental unit for an extended period, potentially indefinitely.
2. **Encourage Reading the Lease**:
   - Encourage the participant to read the entire lease document at their own pace.
3. **Advocacy for Participant**:
   - Politely intervene on behalf of the participant if the landlord or property manager pressures them to sign the lease without reading it thoroughly or attempts to paraphrase the contents.
4. **Open-Ended Questions**:
   - Ask open-ended questions like, "What questions do you have about the lease?" to ensure the participant feels empowered to seek clarification.
5. **Tenant Rights Overview**:
   - Provide a high-level overview of the participant's rights as a tenant once the lease is signed.
6. **Lease Storage**:
   - Offer to keep a copy of the signed lease on-site at the shelter for safekeeping.
7. **Lease Copy for Participant**:
   - If the landlord, property manager, or owner does not promptly provide a copy of the signed lease, ensure the participant receives one in a timely manner.

This process ensures that participants have a clear understanding of their lease agreement and their rights as tenants, with the support and guidance of their case manager.

Planned Shelter Exit When Housing is Secured

Planned exits from shelters should be celebrated as significant milestones in an individual's journey toward stable housing. Here are some important considerations for a successful transition:

1. **Person-Centred Approach**:
   - Each individual's move-out plan should be tailored to their unique circumstances, preferences, and needs.
2. **Staged Exit**:
   - Depending on the individual's comfort level and state of mind, consider a staged exit from the shelter. For example:
     - Day 1: Spend the day at the new home, return to the shelter at night.
     - Day 2: Spend the day at the new home, return to the shelter at night.
     - Day 3: Spend the day at the shelter, return to the new home at night.
     - Day 4 & Onward: Stay at the new home.

3. **Equipping the New Resident**:
   - Provide tools to help the new resident adjust to their new living situation, including:
     - A crisis plan.
     - Help establishing boundaries of when to invite friends/family over, and when and how to ask those people to leave if their ongoing presence will place the new resident in a position of violating the lease.
     - Emergency contact phone numbers.
4. **Addressing Culture Shock**:
   - Explain the concept of culture shock to the new resident. This awareness can help reduce anxiety associated with the transition to a new home.
5. **Clothing Care**:
   - Assist the individual in cleaning their clothes before they exit the shelter.
6. **Insect Prevention**:
   - If possible, consider heat treating all personal items to eliminate any potential insect issues and ensure a clean start in the new home.

By following these guidelines, staff can help individuals make a smooth and successful transition from shelter living to independent housing. This approach prioritizes the individual's well-being and sets the stage for a more stable and fulfilling living situation.

Moving In

When staff are assisting an individual in transitioning to a new home, it's important to provide essential support and information. Here are some crucial aspects to consider:

1. **Furniture Delivery and Setup**:
   - Ensure that any promised or provided furniture is in place at the time of move-in. This creates a comfortable and functional living environment from day one.
2. **Food Accessibility**:
   - Guarantee that the individual has immediate access to food. Ideally, provide a basic food hamper upon move-in, or offer information on nearby resources for obtaining groceries.
3. **Basic Home Operations**:
   - Don't assume that the new resident is familiar with operating basic household items. Inquire if they require assistance with tasks like using the stove, shower, dishwasher, or vacuum cleaner.
   - Sharing this knowledge can prevent potential frustrations and ensure a smooth transition into their new living space.

Remember that small gestures, like ensuring the resident knows how to use the stove, can have a significant impact on their comfort and confidence in their new home. These efforts contribute to a positive and successful transition, setting the stage for a more stable and fulfilling living situation.

Supporting Housing Stability: Roles of Shelter Staff and Case Managers

It's crucial to have structured and evidence-based models in place when providing direct supports to individuals in order to help them sustain housing after leaving the shelter. Depending on the depth of support need of the participant, one of the following models should be followed with fidelity:

1. **Critical Time Intervention (CTI)**:
   - This model is designed to provide time-limited, intensive support during critical transition periods, such as moving from homelessness to housing. The focus is on helping individuals establish stability and connections within their new living situation.

2. **Recovery-oriented, Housing-focused Intensive Case Management**:
   - This model emphasizes individualized support plans that are recovery-focused and tailored to the unique needs of each participant. The goal is to provide comprehensive assistance in areas such as mental health, substance use, and overall wellness to ensure housing stability.

3. **Recovery-oriented, Housing-focused Assertive Community Treatment**:
   - This model involves a multidisciplinary team approach to provide intensive and assertive support to individuals with higher acuity needs. It often includes a range of services, including psychiatric care, substance use treatment, and general support for daily living.

Selecting the appropriate model based on the participant's level of need ensures that the support provided is both effective and targeted to their specific circumstances. This approach increases the likelihood of successful housing retention and helps individuals achieve greater stability in their lives.

Conclusion

In a housing-focused shelter, the provision of case management services stands as a cornerstone in the path towards stability and secure housing for the guests. Through this chapter, we have outlined a set of guidelines, placing a strong emphasis on guest autonomy and choice.

By prioritizing empowerment, we advocate for guests to take an active role in their own journey. We encourage them to select meeting locations where they feel most comfortable and to determine their own pace for decision-making. Through clear and accessible language, we aim to ensure that every guest comprehends the purpose and focus of case management, facilitating a genuine partnership in their pursuit of stability.

Trust and transparency are at the core of this approach. Confidentiality, collaborative goal setting, and a responsive grievance process serve as crucial components, establishing a foundation of mutual respect between staff and guests. Moreover, we affirm that participation in case management is entirely voluntary, affirming the agency of the guests throughout their stay in the shelter.

Recognizing the distinction between case management and therapy, we empower guests to make informed choices about their engagement with support services. The ultimate aspiration is to cultivate an environment where guests feel not only respected and supported, but also fully empowered in their transformative journey towards stability and housing.

PROMOTING SAFETY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SHELTER ENVIRONMENTS

In the pursuit of safer shelter operations, the primary objective is to create a secure space for guests, staff, and volunteers. Establishing explicit guidelines is pivotal to safeguarding the well-being of all individuals within the shelter.

Achieving a safe and supportive shelter environment hinges on striking a balance between setting transparent expectations and engaging appropriately when behaviour deviates from the expectation. The forthcoming discussion will outline effective strategies for upholding these guidelines, which may include the infrequent use of bars or service restrictions, all while maintaining a steadfast commitment to person-centred support.

This section delves into the core principles and approaches for conflict management, dispute resolution, and incident response, all within a framework that is both trauma-informed and person-centred.

Clear and Concise Expectations

One fundamental strategy to minimize barring or service restrictions is to establish a concise set of easily understood expectations, rather than an overwhelming list of rules that can be challenging to remember. The shelter's primary objective is to empower individuals to progress towards stable housing while adhering to the shelter's guidelines. It is crucial to avoid a culture of surveillance or rule enforcement for its own sake. Instead, guidelines should be transparent, integrated into the shelter's culture, and modeled by staff.

During the orientation process, staff should take the time to thoroughly review these expectations. They should explain what happens when there are unmet expectations and foster a dialogue with questions like, "How can we best support you in meeting our expectations?" and "Do you have any questions about our expectations?"

The expectations should be communicated verbally and in writing during orientation, as well as posted throughout the facility. Appropriate expectations serve as the bedrock for a safe and inclusive shelter environment.

Setting the Foundation: Shelter Expectations

Shelters should have clearly articulated expectations that inform and influence guest behaviour and interactions. While there are expectations in place with regards to guest behaviour there must be an understanding amongst staff that restricting services for not meeting each expectation does not heal the core trauma that may have caused the inability to realize the expectation. The response by staff to unmet expectations should emphasize non-violent conflict resolution, while remaining trauma-informed and person-centred.

Shelter expectations will vary between organizations but should be anchored in safety for all and not punitive for a person's emotions or responses to trauma.

Some examples of not meeting expectations:

1. Intentional damage to property

2. Physical violence to another person

3. Extortion of an individual

4. Weapons on property – Real or Replica

Some examples of behaviours and actions that result in barring or service restrictions in shelter, but really should not are:

1. Over sleeping

2. Emotional outbursts that do not directly affect the safety of the individual or others.

3. A person being in a restricted area that is not mark as restricted.

4. Adverse reaction to being woken up.

Navigating Grey Areas: Trauma-Informed Decision Making

Recognizing that situations may not always be straightforward, staff are encouraged to exercise their judgment based on real-time events rather than adhering strictly to a set of rigid rules. Trauma-informed decision-making empowers staff to respond appropriately to complex scenarios, taking into account the individual circumstances and needs of each guest. Staff should consider the values of the organization when making a judgment call in a grey area: *is the decision I am about to make aligned with my organization's values?* If it is truly an attempt to live the organization's values and is not explicitly trying to (re)traumatize the person, the actions are most often justified.

Addressing Rule Infractions: A Calm and Considered Approach

When faced with situations where shelter expectations are unmet, it is crucial for staff to maintain composure and respond calmly. This measured approach is achieved through self-awareness, emotional regulation, and a set of practical techniques:

1. *Pause and Take a Breath*: A momentary pause allows staff to collect their thoughts before responding.

2. *Acknowledge One's Own Emotions*: Recognizing and accepting one's emotions without judgment is the first step towards effective management.

3. *Avoid Immediate Reactions*: Taking time to reflect before responding can prevent impulsive reactions.

4. *Practice Empathy*: Understanding the perspectives of all parties involved fosters empathy and compassion.

5. *Focus on Solutions*: Shifting focus towards practical solutions empowers staff to make more person-centred decisions.

Team Collaboration and De-escalation

In challenging situations, seeking assistance from fellow staff members is helpful. De-escalation procedures, including self-tapping out or supporting a colleague in doing so, are vital in diffusing tension and ensuring safety for all parties involved.

Often in a heightened situation the responding staff is not aware of their need to tap out and it is vital that if asked to by another staff, it occurs. This process should be written into any agency associated procedure.

Reflection and Learning: The Aftermath of an Incident

After an incident has been addressed, it is imperative to engage in a structured debriefing process. This involves:

- Informing management about the occurrence and the response.

- Independently documenting the incident, including who was involved, where it occurred, and actions taken.

- Conducting wellness checks among staff.

- Providing support and debriefing to guests who witnessed or were impacted by the incident.

- Follow-up/offer support to the individual in crisis, recognizing that debriefing may not occur immediately.

Suggested Training

Staff training on responding to difficult situations will support the continued commitment to being person-centred and trauma informed.

Recommended training for shelter staff for dealing with difficult situations include:

1. Non-Violent Crisis Intervention

2. Verbal-De-escalation

3. Suicide Intervention/Awareness

4. Mental Health First Aid

5. Mental Health Self-Awareness

Staff should have continued scenario-based training to go along side any core trainings.

Barring vs. Service Restrictions

Barring access to the shelter or its programs should be a measure of last resort, reserved for situations where behaviour poses immediate risk to others and cannot be promptly resolved through alternative means. In most cases, service restrictions prove to be a more suitable intervention. These restrictions provide the affected individual a safe space overnight, although access to other services throughout the day may be limited.

A tiered approach to barring can be instrumental in striking a balance. While access to certain non-essential services may be restricted, measures should be in place to ensure that core programs supporting housing stability remain available. This approach requires careful consideration and tailored decision-making.

Involving a colleague in discussions adds valuable perspectives and helps ensure fair and thoughtful decision-making. This approach fosters a supportive and constructive environment for all involved.

Definitions for the purpose of this document.

A Bar: A predetermined amount of time a guest cannot access any part of the shelter

A Services Restriction: An individual may be allowed to access some services but not all. Example: Not allowed to access a sleep program but can still obtain supports from Health Services in the building.

De-escalation and Short-Term Strategies

When faced with escalating situations, particularly those directed at staff, deploying de-escalation techniques should be the first course of action. If de-escalation proves ineffective, short-term strategies such as calmly instructing the individual to leave the property for a brief period (e.g., 15 minutes) can defuse the situation. In certain cases, the disproportionate response of denying access to shelter services can be influenced by one's own triggers and biases.

Rehabilitation, Not Punishment

Any imposition of a barring or service restriction should have the primary aim of correcting the behaviour that led to an unsafe situation for staff or other guests. The intention is rehabilitative rather than punitive. Whenever operationally feasible, if a guest is denied service for an extended period, information on alternative community resources should be provided.

Addressing Serious Incidents

In cases of severe, potentially life-threatening incidents such as violence against staff or guests, a defined period of barring from the property may be warranted. However, if law enforcement is involved and the individual is removed from the property, communicating the barring immediately afterward may not be possible. Instead, a debriefing and safety plan should be established before permitting the individual to return.

Extending Barring Periods: A Last Resort

Consideration of a bar extending beyond a certain duration should be reserved for the most extreme cases such as intentional arson causing significant property damage and/or risk to health and life of building occupants; attempted murder of a staff member or shelter guest; or, engaging in human trafficking within the shelter. Lifetime bars should be approached with the utmost caution and should only be considered after exhaustive discussions among staff and management about viable alternatives to support the guest in modifying their behaviour. All extended bars should be reviewed and reconsidered at a minimum every 6 months.

Conclusion

Effectively managing behaviour in a shelter environment requires a thoughtful approach that balances expectations with appropriate engagements. By prioritizing transparency, rehabilitation, and individual support, shelters can foster a culture of growth and accountability while maintaining a safe and inclusive space for all guests and staff.

A multidisciplinary team, comprising staff members from various departments and related program teams, should convene at least once every two weeks for a comprehensive review. This review should encompass the following key points:

1. Scrutinize any instance where a bar has been issued for a duration exceeding three nights.

2. Examine cases where a shelter guest has undergone three or more bars, for the same behaviours, within the preceding 90 days. Anything prior to 90 days should not be considered.

3. Evaluate situations in which a service restriction, limiting access exclusively to overnight hours, has been imposed for a period of seven days or more.

4. Investigate scenarios in which a shelter guest has encountered three or more daytime service restrictions in the past 90 days.

5. Appoint a dedicated staff member, preferably a Guest Advocate or Peer Support Worker, who can act as a liaison between the guest and the review team. This person should be responsible for relaying the concerns of the guest to the review team while maintaining confidentiality.
6. The shelter should have a process in place for all staff to advocate for a bar review.

This review process serves several crucial purposes:

1. Affirming Accountability and Oversight: The objective is to ascertain whether the imposition of a bar was appropriate and whether all available alternative options were duly considered.

2. Brainstorming Supportive Measures: The team should collectively brainstorm ways to better support the guest in meeting expectations in the future.

3. Exploring Modifications: Deliberations should include brainstorming sessions regarding potential adjustments to staff approaches and service delivery, with the aim of reducing the necessity for bars or service restrictions, all while upholding a safe environment for all guests and staff.

4. Enhancing Clarity and Communication: The review process seeks to enhance the clarity, communication, and implementation of behavioural expectations within the shelter.

Furthermore, any action items identified during the review should be meticulously documented within the database, serving as an integral part of the guest's comprehensive service record.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH

In the realm of shelter operations, moments arise where guests' behaviour necessitates corrective action. Traditionally, this has been met with punitive measures, focusing on consequences for breached rules. A trauma-informed, person-centred, housing-focused shelter should be one that recognizes the deeper implications of such incidents on the fabric of human relationships within a shelter. This looks at the principles and practices of a restorative approach, which seeks not only to address the immediate transgression but also to heal the wounds inflicted on individuals and relationships.

Reframing Expectations: The Restorative Approach

The essence of a restorative approach lies in its perspective. Rather than viewing an infraction as a mere violation of a rule, it acknowledges it as a breach of trust and interpersonal connections. This approach should be integrated seamlessly into the policies governing service restrictions and barring access, forming the backbone of the agency's response framework.

Accountability and Repair

Central to the restorative approach is the concept of accountability. It begins with the individual responsible for the harm acknowledging their role in the situation. This acknowledgment paves the way for not only mending the immediate harm but also addressing the underlying reasons behind their actions.

Empowering Through Dialogue

Restorative justice empowers all parties involved. When confronting the person responsible for the harm, it provides a platform for the affected parties to voice their experiences and feelings. This inclusive dialogue ensures that those most impacted have a say in shaping the path forward.

Establishing Collective Codes of Conduct

The restorative approach extends its reach beyond the immediate incident. It allows those affected to actively participate in formulating codes of conduct for the individual responsible. This collective effort not only rebuilds trust but also fosters a sense of ownership and community within the shelter.

The Power of Personal Apology

One of the most potent aspects of a restorative approach is the opportunity it provides for the person who caused harm to offer a genuine, in-person apology. This act of accountability transcends the shelter staff, reaching out to the broader shelter community, including those most affected by the harm.

Conclusion

A restorative approach is a powerful tool for shelter operations. By embedding this philosophy into the agency's policies, shelters can transform moments of conflict into opportunities for growth, understanding, and healing. It underscores the importance of preserving the human dignity and connections that are the foundation of any shelter community.

NAVIGATING RETURN TO SHELTER AFTER PREVIOUS EXCLUSION

In the wake of a bar or service restriction, the pivotal question arises: how can we ensure that the affected guest's journey forward is one of growth, support, and rehabilitation, rather than punishment? This explores the vital role of reintegration and outlines strategies for welcoming back individuals into the shelter community with empathy and a clear path towards positive change.

A Supportive Return

The core principle guiding the reintegration process is to facilitate the guest's progress, not stifle it. As such, staff must ensure that the returning guest feels welcomed and supported. This entails revisiting the shelter's expectations, initiating open-ended discussions, and actively seeking the guest's input on their own path forward.

Creating a Path to Progress

Welcoming someone back offers an opportune moment to collaboratively construct a care plan tailored to the individual's needs. This may encompass various components, such as connecting the guest with resources like anger management, counseling services, or engaging in the agency's restorative justice process.

Open-Ended Conversations

Fostering an environment of trust and growth begins with open-ended dialogue. By asking probing questions, staff can gain insights into the guest's perspective and identify areas where additional support may be required. Questions like "How can we help you meet the expectations going forward?" and "Which expectations should we discuss in greater detail?" lay the foundation for a collaborative and forward-looking partnership.

Learning from the Past

Acknowledging the possibility of missteps is an integral part of the reintegration process. Encouraging the guest to share any aspects of the situation that may have been overlooked or misunderstood empowers them to actively contribute to a more comprehensive understanding.

Ensuring Future Success

Addressing similar situations effectively requires a collective effort. Collaboratively exploring strategies to prevent recurrences demonstrates a commitment to learning and growth, benefitting not only the individual but the entire shelter community.

Conclusion

Reintegration is a pivotal phase in a guest's growth. By approaching this process with empathy, open communication, and a commitment to learning from the past, shelters can create an environment where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and move forward on their housing journey and well-being.

SIGNAGE

Clear and consistent signage is an indispensable communication tool within a shelter environment. It serves as a vital means of providing essential information about programs, schedules, resources, and changes in routines. Effective signage ensures that guests can navigate the shelter space with confidence and stay informed about crucial details relevant to their stay.

In this chapter, we delve into key considerations for creating and utilizing signage that is both informative and accessible. From strategic placement to the choice of language and graphics, every aspect of signage design plays a crucial role in enhancing the guest experience. We will explore how to strike the right balance between providing necessary information and avoiding overwhelming visual clutter.

Furthermore, we will emphasize the importance of regular updates and removal of outdated materials to ensure guests receive current and accurate information. By following these guidelines, shelters can create an environment that is organized, safe, and conducive to positive guest experiences.

Additionally, we will address the significance of clear, non-threatening messaging in posted materials. Effective communication is not only about what is said, but also about how it is presented. By considering the purpose, clarity, and timing of posted information, staff can ensure that guests receive messages in a manner that is respectful and easily understood.

Lastly, we will explore the importance of making signage accessible to individuals with varying language proficiency and literacy levels. By providing critical information in multiple languages and offering verbal explanations for those with literacy challenges, shelters can demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and ensure that all guests can navigate the shelter environment effectively.

Through thoughtful consideration of these guidelines, shelters can establish a welcoming and informed atmosphere, ultimately benefiting both guests and staff. Effective signage is a crucial component of creating a safe, organized, and empowering space for everyone in the shelter community.

Signs/Posters/Instructions

Clear and consistent signage is an important communication tool within a shelter environment. Here are some key considerations for effective signage:

1. **Purposeful Communication**: Signage should serve a specific purpose, whether it's providing information about programs, schedules, resources, or changes in routines. It should be clear, concise, and relevant to the guests' needs.
2. **Location Matters**: Signs should be strategically placed where they are most visible and relevant. Permanent instructions, like restroom locations, should be easily accessible, while event-based posters should be placed on designated bulletin boards or areas.

3. **Natural Light and Visibility**: Signs should not obstruct natural light or visibility through windows or doors. They should be placed in a way that doesn't impede the view of staff or guests.
4. **Avoid Overwhelming**: While signage is important, an excess of posters and instructions can be overwhelming and lead to information overload. Prioritize essential information and avoid clutter.
5. **Regular Updates and Removal**: Outdated or irrelevant signs should be promptly removed. Establish a process for regular review and removal of outdated materials to ensure guests receive current and accurate information.
6. **Avoid Threatening Language**: Use positive and kind language rather than threatening or punitive statements. Encourage desired behaviours in a respectful manner.
7. **Consider Colour and Font**: Use simple, easy-to-read fonts and avoid neon colours or stark white backgrounds, which can be overstimulating. Cool colours like blue and green are generally more calming.
8. **Graphics and Pictures**: Use graphics and pictures sparingly, focusing on enhancing message clarity rather than decoration.

Remember, effective signage contributes to a safe, organized, and informed environment, ultimately benefiting both guests and staff in the shelter.

How to Provide Clear, Non-Threatening Messaging

When considering putting information or instructions in a posted format, staff should first ask themselves:

1. **Purpose and Intention**: Clearly define what you want to communicate and why it's important. Ensure that the information is relevant and serves the guests' needs.
2. **Best Communication Method**: Consider whether posting the information is the best or only way to communicate it. Sometimes, direct communication or discussion may be more effective.
3. **Clarity of Message**: Choose words and graphics that provide the greatest clarity. Avoid jargon, acronyms, or complex language. Aim for simplicity.
4. **Peer Review**: Before posting, have fellow staff, including Peer Support Workers, review the content to ensure it is clear and understandable. Their input can help refine the message.
5. **Placement and Timing**: Discuss with others where to place the sign, poster, or instructions for maximum visibility and impact. Timing can also be crucial, so consider when it's best to post the information.
6. **Language Level**: Use language that is at a Grade 6 level or below. Short, simple sentences are more likely to be easily understood by a wider range of individuals.

Clear, effective communication is vital in a shelter environment to ensure that all guests receive important information and guidance. These practices help create a more accessible and inclusive space for everyone.

Ensuring Signage is Accessible to Non-English Reading People and People that Struggle with Literacy

To demonstrate a commitment to clear and inclusive communication, accommodating guests with various language and literacy levels.

1. **Multilingual Signage**: Providing critical operational information in multiple languages spoken by shelter guests ensures accessibility and inclusivity.
2. **Outreach for English Literacy Challenges**: When it's known that a guest has difficulty with English literacy, direct outreach should be made to verbally explain any new information posted, ensuring they fully understand.
3. **Use of Visuals for Clarity**: While unnecessary visuals should be avoided, pictures and graphics that enhance understanding can be extremely helpful in conveying important information.

When Signage is Appropriate and When Signage is Inappropriate

Signage is appropriate when it improves or enhances the shelter guest's understanding of what is occurring in the shelter environment and enhances feeling of safety and promotes transparency. Signage is appropriate when it helps shelter guests meet expectations and decreases conflict. Signage is inappropriate when it is used exclusively to avoid interactions between staff and shelter guests. Signage is inappropriate when it is threatening or delivers ultimatums. Signage is inappropriate when it causes confusion or raises suspicion of the intentions of staff.

Conclusion

In conclusion, clear and consistent signage stands as a cornerstone of effective communication within a shelter environment. It bridges the gap between staff and guests, providing essential information crucial for navigating the shelter's offerings and routines. By following the principles outlined in this chapter, shelters can ensure that their signage is purposeful, well-placed, and accessible to all.

Striking the right balance between information and visual clarity is paramount, preventing overwhelming clutter and fostering a welcoming atmosphere. Regular updates and removal of outdated materials further ensure that guests receive accurate and current information, contributing to an organized and safe shelter environment.

Moreover, the way information is presented matters greatly. Clear, non-threatening messaging on posted materials ensures that guests feel respected and understood. By considering the purpose, timing, and clarity of these messages, staff can facilitate effective communication that enhances the overall guest experience.

Finally, inclusivity remains at the forefront of effective signage. Providing information in multiple languages and offering verbal explanations for those with literacy challenges demonstrates a commitment to accessibility. This ensures that all guests, regardless of language proficiency or literacy level, can confidently navigate the shelter environment.

Incorporating these guidelines into signage practices establishes a welcoming and informed atmosphere, benefiting both guests and staff. Effective signage serves as a powerful tool in creating a safe, organized, and empowering space for everyone in the shelter community. It is an essential element in fostering an environment where individuals can thrive on their path to housing.

Volunteers

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting homeless shelters, contributing their time and energy to help create safe and welcoming environments for shelter guests. However, to ensure the best possible outcomes for both volunteers and shelter residents, it is essential to provide comprehensive training and establish clear guidelines for their involvement. In this chapter, we will explore the key aspects of volunteer training and the importance of guidelines to maintain a safe and respectful shelter environment.

Volunteer Training

Volunteers who work in homeless shelters should undergo proper training before engaging with shelter guests. This training is essential to ensure that volunteers are well-prepared to handle the challenges and responsibilities that come with supporting individuals experiencing homelessness. Here are some crucial components that should be included in volunteer training:

1. **Confidentiality**: Volunteers must understand and commit to maintaining the confidentiality of all information they encounter during their service. This includes details about shelter guests, their personal stories, and the shelter's operations.
2. **Boundaries**: Setting clear boundaries is crucial for maintaining a respectful and safe environment. Volunteers should learn how to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with shelter guests to prevent any misunderstandings or conflicts.
3. **Emotional, Cultural, and Physical Safety**: Volunteers should be trained to recognize the emotional, cultural, and physical safety needs of shelter guests. This training helps volunteers understand how to create an environment that fosters a sense of security and comfort.
4. **Legal Framework**: It's essential for volunteers to be aware of any overarching legislation that pertains to their role in the shelter. For example, understanding laws such as the Protection of Persons in Care and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act can help volunteers adhere to legal requirements.

Communication with Shelter Guests

To maintain transparency and ensure that shelter guests are aware of the presence and activities of volunteers, staff should communicate this information both verbally and through signage. This communication helps shelter guests understand the role of volunteers and their involvement in the shelter's daily operations.

Identifiability

For the safety and comfort of shelter guests, it is vital that volunteers are easily distinguishable from staff and other shelter guests. This can be achieved through the use of easily recognizable identifiers such as name badges or specific clothing. This clear identification helps prevent confusion and ensures that shelter guests can easily approach volunteers for assistance.

Confidentiality and Behaviour Agreement

Before engaging with shelter guests, volunteers should sign a confidentiality and behaviour agreement. This agreement outlines the expectations and responsibilities of volunteers while serving in the shelter. It includes the following provisions:

1. **Sign-In and Sign-Out**: Volunteers are required to sign in upon entry to the shelter and sign out when leaving. This helps track their presence and ensures accountability.
2. **Confidentiality**: Volunteers commit to not sharing any information related to shelter guests or shelter operations verbally, electronically, or in writing. Maintaining confidentiality is a top priority.
3. **Media Restrictions**: Volunteers are prohibited from taking still or video photographs on-site and recording audio. This protects the privacy of shelter guests.
4. **Personal Information**: Volunteers should not share any personal information with shelter guests. This helps maintain a professional and respectful relationship.
5. **Valuables**: Volunteers must refrain from providing anything of value to shelter guests to avoid potential conflicts or favouritism.
6. **Physical Contact**: To ensure safety and comfort, there should be no physical contact between volunteers and shelter guests.
7. **Arrangements Outside the Shelter**: Volunteers are discouraged from making arrangements to meet shelter guests outside the shelter. This helps maintain appropriate boundaries.
8. **Transportation**: Volunteers should not offer transportation to shelter guests in personal vehicles.
9. **Evangelization and Solicitation**: Volunteers are not permitted to engage in evangelization or solicitation activities with shelter guests.
10. **Financial Arrangements**: Volunteers must avoid entering into any financial arrangements with shelter guests to prevent potential conflicts.

Establishing robust training and clear guidelines for volunteers in homeless shelters is essential for maintaining a safe and respectful environment. By adhering to these principles, shelters can enhance their support services and contribute to the well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, volunteers are the backbone of support in homeless shelters, dedicating their time and energy to create safe and welcoming spaces for shelter guests. However, to ensure the best outcomes for both volunteers and guest, comprehensive training and clear guidelines are paramount.

The training process equips volunteers with crucial skills, including understanding confidentiality, establishing boundaries, ensuring safety, and navigating legal frameworks. This foundation enables them to effectively assist individuals experiencing homelessness.

Transparent communication with shelter guests about volunteer presence and activities fosters trust and understanding. Clear identification of volunteers further enhances safety and accessibility for guests seeking assistance.

The confidentiality and behaviour agreement sets clear expectations for volunteers, ensuring a professional and respectful environment. It covers critical provisions, including confidentiality, media restrictions, and appropriate conduct.

By prioritizing volunteer training and adherence to guidelines, shelters can create a safe and supportive environment for all. This not only benefits those experiencing homelessness but also strengthens the overall integrity of the shelter. Volunteers, armed with the proper training and clear guidelines, play an invaluable role in addressing homelessness and providing person-centred, trauma-informed care.

Consent to Release Information

Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of shelter guests is a top priority in homeless shelters. This chapter delves into the principles and guidelines surrounding information sharing, underscoring the critical importance of obtaining explicit and informed consent before disclosing any guest information to third parties. It outlines the essential steps and considerations that shelter staff must adhere to when seeking consent from shelter guests for information sharing.

Consent to Release Information to a 3rd Party

Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of shelter guests is paramount in homeless shelters. This chapter delves into the principles and guidelines regarding information sharing, emphasizing the critical importance of obtaining explicit and informed consent before releasing any guest information to third parties. It outlines the key steps and considerations shelter staff must adhere to in seeking consent from shelter guests for information sharing.

Obtaining Consent for Information Sharing

One of the fundamental principles in homeless shelters is that staff will not release any guest information to third parties without explicit and informed consent. This chapter emphasizes the steps and considerations shelter staff must follow when seeking consent from shelter guests:

1. **Explain the Purpose and Need for Consent**: Staff must provide a clear and comprehensive explanation of what consent to share information with a third party entails and why it may be necessary. This ensures that shelter guests fully understand the implications of providing consent.
2. **Revocable Consent**: Shelter guests must be informed that they have the right to revoke their consent, either in full or in part, at any point in the future. This empowers guests to maintain control over their information.
3. **Specify Information to be Shared**: Staff should outline the specific information intended for sharing, identify the third party/parties involved, explain how the information will be shared, and clarify the intended use by the third party.

4. **Provide Ample Time for Review**: Shelter guests should be given sufficient time to read and review the consent form. This ensures they have the opportunity to understand the content and ask any questions they may have.

5. **Encourage Questions**: Instead of paraphrasing or interpreting the content of the consent form, staff should ask shelter guests if they have any questions or need further clarification about the consent.

6. **Address Violations of Consent**: Shelter guests should be informed of the process to follow if they believe that the substance of the consent has been violated. This provides a clear pathway for addressing potential breaches.

7. **Explain Information Security Measures**: Staff should generally explain the measures the shelter takes to safeguard consent forms and guest information, instilling confidence in the security of their data.

8. **Tailored Consent Forms**: Consent forms should be designed to allow guests to select which third parties they wish to share information with. This customization ensures that guests have control over the scope of information sharing.

9. **Access to Services Not Conditioned on Consent**: Importantly, access to shelter services should not be denied to individuals who choose not to sign a release of information. This upholds the principle of voluntary consent.

Examples of Third Parties

Family members, friends, community organizations, healthcare providers, government assistance programs, cultural supports, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, program monitors or evaluators, and property management entities are all examples of third parties.

Specific Consent for Partnered Programs

In cases where shelters partner with external entities to provide specific programs or services, consent forms should explicitly name these entities, clarify the purpose of information sharing, specify the method of sharing, allow guests to opt out of certain information sharing, define the duration of consent, outline the process for revocation, and provide a grievance process for any perceived breaches.

Conclusion

In homeless shelters, safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of guests is of utmost importance. This chapter has provided a comprehensive exploration of the principles and guidelines surrounding information sharing, emphasizing the critical need for explicit and informed consent before divulging any guest information to third parties.

This chapter has underscored the fundamental principle that staff in homeless shelters will not disclose guest information to third parties without obtaining explicit and informed consent.

GUEST REFERRALS/EXTERNAL CASE MANAGEMENT AND CARE PLANS

Navigating the complex landscape of services and support is a critical aspect of trauma-informed care, person-centred care, and housing-focused services. This chapter explores three essential components in this journey: referrals, transitions to external case management in housing, and the implementation of case conferences with external organizations. Each of these elements is crucial in ensuring that shelter guests receive comprehensive and person-centred care.

Referrals form a bridge to essential services beyond the shelter's walls. This section outlines guidelines for making referrals, emphasizing the importance of obtaining written and informed consent from the guest. It also highlights the significance of communicating only relevant and factual information during the referral process.

Transitioning from shelter-based case management to an external case manager in a housing setting signifies a significant milestone for a guest on their journey towards stability. This section provides considerations for a smooth transition, including establishing clear communication channels, obtaining written consent, sharing relevant information, and facilitating a positive introduction between the guest and the external case manager.

Case conferences serve as a pivotal platform for aligning services and supports around a shelter guest. Involving external organizations in these conferences requires transparency and clear communication. This section emphasizes the importance of inclusive participation, outlines guiding principles for staff, and sets expectations for third parties.

Throughout these processes, the shelter guest's autonomy and preferences remain central. By adhering to these principles and guidelines, shelters can uphold the rights of their guests while facilitating access to essential services and support. Together, these components contribute to a holistic and empowering approach in the journey towards stability and independence for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Referrals

Ensuring that referrals are made with transparency and the informed consent of shelter guests is a crucial aspect of maintaining their dignity and person-centred care. The following delves into the principles and guidelines for making referrals, emphasizing the importance of obtaining written and informed consent from the guest. It also highlights the importance of communicating only relevant and factual information when making referrals.

1. **Transparent Explanation of Referrals**: Before making a referral for a guest, shelter staff must transparently explain the purpose of the referral. This empowers the guest with knowledge about the intended outcome.
2. **Written and Informed Consent**: Referrals should only be made with the guest's written and informed consent. This ensures that the guest is an active participant in the decision-making process.
3. **Limited Information Sharing**: When communicating with a third party about a guest's needs during the referral process, staff should only share information for which they have explicit permission from the guest. Irrelevant information should not be disclosed.

4. **Factual and Accurate Information**: Staff should provide only factual and accurate information during the referral process. Speculation, conjecture, or uninformed opinions should be avoided, especially in sensitive areas like mental health.
5. **Professional Expertise in Diagnoses**: Staff should refrain from providing mental health diagnoses unless they are trained mental health clinicians with expertise in the field. Providing diagnoses without proper training is inappropriate and can be misleading.

Involving Case Managers in Referrals

If the referral is part of the case management services being provided in the shelter, it is recommended for the case manager to offer to engage in communication about the referral with the third party in the presence of the guest during a case management session. This allows for transparency and ensures that the guest is aware of the information being shared.

Follow-Up Communication

After a referral has been made and information has been shared with the third party, it is good practice for the staff member to follow up with the guest. During this follow-up, staff should inform the guest about the nature of the information shared and outline the next steps in the referral or service connection process. This ensures that the guest is kept informed and involved in their own service provision.

Transparent referrals and informed consent are integral components of maintaining a person-centred service for guests. By adhering to these principles and guidelines, shelters can uphold the rights of their guests while facilitating access to essential services and support.

Transfer to a Non-Shelter Case Manager that is Providing the Case Management Supports in Housing

Transitioning from shelter-based case management to an external case manager in a housing setting marks a significant milestone for a guest on their journey towards stability.

Considerations for a smooth transition include:

1. **Establishing Clear Communication Channels**: Effective communication between shelter-based case managers and external case managers is paramount. A detailed transition plan, including contact information and preferred methods of communication, should be established.
2. **Written Consent and Informed Choice**: The guest must provide written consent for the transition to an external case manager. This ensures that they are making an informed choice and are aware of the change in their support structure.
3. **Sharing Relevant Information**: The shelter-based case manager should compile and share relevant information about the guest's history, needs, goals, and progress with the external case manager. This information transfer should be comprehensive but respectful of the guest's privacy.

4. **Setting Clear Objectives**: Both case managers, along with the guest, should collaboratively establish clear and achievable objectives for the transition. This includes outlining specific housing-related goals and determining how the guest's progress will be monitored.

5. **Facilitating Introduction and Relationship Building**: The shelter-based case manager should facilitate an introduction between the guest and the external case manager. Building a positive and trusting relationship is crucial for the guest's continued success.

6. **Providing Ongoing Support and Guidance**: During the transition period, the shelter-based case manager should remain available to offer support and guidance to both the guest and the external case manager. This ensures a smooth handover of responsibilities.

7. **Monitoring Progress and Adjusting Plans**: Regular check-ins between case managers and the guest will help monitor progress and address any challenges that may arise during the transition. Adjustments to the support plan should be made as needed.

8. **Respecting the Guest's Autonomy**: Throughout the transition process, it is essential to respect the guest's autonomy and preferences. Their voice should be central in decision-making regarding their housing and support.

Transitioning to an external case manager in a housing setting signifies a positive step towards stability and independence for the guest. By prioritizing clear communication, informed consent, and collaborative goal setting, the transition process can be an empowering experience.

Implementing a Case (Care) Conference with External Organizations

Case conferences play a pivotal role in providing comprehensive support to shelter guests. The following emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participant-centred case conferences, highlighting best practices for effective communication, collaboration, and empowerment.

The Purpose of a Case Conference

A case conference is a structured conversation aimed at aligning services and supports around a shelter guest, ultimately fostering their success in meeting their needs and achieving their goals. When involving third-party organizations, transparency and clear communication with the shelter guest are paramount.

Inclusive Participation

1. **Transparent Communication**: Inviting third parties to the case conference should be communicated clearly to the shelter guest. The rationale behind each invitation should also be explained, ensuring transparency and trust.

2. **Supporting Guest Participation**: The shelter guest's active participation is welcome. They should be encouraged to voice their preferences regarding the location of the case conference, creating a safe and comfortable environment.

3. **Preparation and Consent**: If the guest prefers not to attend the case conference in person, staff must seek their consent to share information with the participating third parties. Additionally, staff should assist the guest in preparing for the conference if they choose to attend.

Guiding Principles for Staff

1. **Comprehensive Summary**: Staff should provide a written summary of the guest's housing stability journey, highlighting strengths and progress towards their goals.
2. **Strength-Based Approach**: Focusing on the guest's strengths empowers them and fosters a positive environment.
3. **Barriers and Solutions**: Staff should address barriers that need collective attention, emphasizing collaborative problem-solving.

Expectations for Third Parties

1. **Confidentiality**: All conversations within the case conference should be held in confidence.
2. **Supportive Atmosphere**: The case conference is not a platform for complaints or demands. It should be supportive, and solution focused.
3. **Innovation and Understanding**: Encourage innovative and understanding approaches to address challenges.

Role of Guest Advocates and Peer Support Workers

1. **Support and Advocacy**: Guest Advocates and Peer Support Workers play a vital role in advocating for the guest's needs and ensuring they feel supported throughout the process.

Debriefing and Review

1. **Post-Conference Debrief**: After the case conference, staff should debrief with the guest using open-ended questions to understand their feelings and next steps.
2. **Review of Action Items**: Guests should be offered the opportunity to review the written summary of action items arising from the case conference.

By prioritizing inclusive participation, transparent communication, and participant-centred approaches, case conferences can be powerful tools for empowering shelter guests.

Conclusion

The processes of referrals, transitions, and case conferences are pivotal in ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness receive the comprehensive and person-centred care they deserve. These components represent critical junctures in a guest's journey towards stability and independence.

Referrals are a pathway to essential services beyond the shelter, and it is imperative that they are made with transparency and the informed consent of shelter guests. This chapter has outlined clear guidelines, emphasizing the importance of obtaining written and informed consent, as well as communicating only relevant and factual information during the referral process.

Transitioning from shelter-based case management to an external case manager in a housing setting is a significant milestone. By establishing clear communication channels, obtaining written consent, and respecting the autonomy of the guest, this transition can be an empowering experience, setting the stage for continued progress towards stability.

Case conferences serve as a powerful platform for aligning services and supports around a shelter guest. Involving external organizations requires transparency and clear communication, with the guest's active participation at the forefront. By adhering to inclusive and participant-centred principles, case conferences become invaluable tools for empowering shelter guests on their journey towards stability.

Throughout these processes, the dignity, autonomy, and preferences of the shelter guest remain central. By prioritizing these values and adhering to the principles and guidelines outlined in this chapter, shelters can uphold the rights of their guests while facilitating access to essential services and support. Together, these components contribute to a holistic and empowering approach in the journey towards housing and independence for individuals experiencing homelessness.

ENGAGING EXTERNAL CULTURAL AND/OR SPIRITUAL SERVICES

Engaging external cultural and/or spiritual services underscores the importance of recognizing and respecting the diverse cultural and spiritual backgrounds of shelter guests. It emphasizes voluntary participation in external cultural and spiritual services while providing recommendations for their implementation within the shelter environment.

Connecting Guests to Cultural and Spiritual Services

1. **Voluntary Participation**: Guests should be informed about the availability of external cultural and spiritual services as part of the intake process and case management services. Participation in these services should always be voluntary.
2. **Guidelines for External Services**:
   - A set schedule of service availability should be communicated through visible schedules.
   - Simple signs on the day(s) of service availability can remind guests of the presence and location of the service.
3. **Designated Location**: A specific area within the shelter, not readily visible to other guests, should be designated for these cultural and spiritual engagements.

Engaging with External Therapists and Trauma Specialists

1. **Formalizing Partnerships**:
   - Shelters are encouraged to partner with therapists specializing in trauma and mental health.
2. **Options for Engagement**:
   - Guests should be empowered to choose between off-site or on-site engagements with therapists or trauma specialists.
3. **Creating a Supportive Environment**:
   - When therapists or trauma specialists are on-site, they should engage with guests in a discrete location with minimal external stimuli.

Emphasizing Housing Focus

1. **Clarifying Objectives**:
   - Therapists and trauma specialists should understand the housing-focused approach, aiming to support guests in transitioning from shelter to stable housing.
2. **Post-Departure Support**:
   - It should be emphasized that access to therapeutic resources may be crucial even after the guest leaves the shelter.
3. **Introducing Housing First**:
   - Providing an overview of Housing First principles and sharing relevant literature can be helpful, particularly for professionals oriented towards housing readiness.

Conclusion

This chapter stresses the importance of respecting the diverse backgrounds of shelter guests, including their cultures and spiritual beliefs. It encourages guests to participate in cultural and spiritual services voluntarily and offers suggestions for how to incorporate these services in the shelter.

When it comes to external services, it suggests that guests should have a choice in whether or not they want to take part. It also provides guidelines to make sure these services are introduced in a way that respects everyone's privacy.

The chapter also talks about getting professional help for trauma and mental health. It suggests working. with experts in these fields and giving guests the option to receive this help on-site or off-site. Additionally, it emphasizes focusing on helping guests find stable housing. This means supporting them in their transition from shelter to a more permanent living situation. It also suggests continuing to provide support even after a guest has left the shelter.

In summary, the chapter promotes offering services that respect guests' cultural and spiritual backgrounds, as well as providing support for trauma and mental health. It encourages a focus on finding stable housing for guests and continuing to support them on their journey.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS, FIRST RESPONDERS AND RESPECT FOR COLLEAGUES

This chapter focuses on how shelters address concerns from the community while safeguarding guest privacy. It outlines steps to uphold confidentiality, provide a general response to concerns, and avoid making commitments to actions outside shelter property.

Additionally, this chapter emphasizes the importance of building positive relationships with first responders. It highlights strategies such as participating in recruit training, conducting training sessions, and establishing clear guidelines for first responder interaction.

Furthermore, this chapter advocates for collaborative responses to larger-scale incidents, formalizing agreements with first responder groups, and regular reviews to ensure effective alignment.
Lastly, this chapter underscores the significance of mutual respect and understanding among colleagues from different organizations. It encourages training sessions, leadership collaboration, and staff shadowing to collectively address homelessness.

By following these approaches, shelters can create a safer and more supportive environment for guests, foster unity in the pursuit of ending homelessness.

Community Concerns or Complaints

Maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of shelter guests is paramount. The following addresses the approach shelters should take when receiving concerns or complaints from community members about shelter guests.

> **1. Confidentiality and Respect for Privacy:** The shelter must uphold the confidentiality of its guests. This means that the shelter cannot and will not confirm whether an individual referenced by a concerned community member is indeed a shelter guest. Protecting the privacy of those being served is of utmost importance.
> **2. Generalized Response to Concerns:** In response to concerns or complaints from housed neighbours, local businesses, or individuals utilizing public spaces near the shelter, it is recommended to provide a generalized acknowledgment, such as, "Thank you for bringing that to our attention." This response neither confirms nor denies the person's affiliation with the shelter.
> **3. Avoiding Commitments to Actions:** The shelter should refrain from making commitments to specific courses of action, including investigations or follow-up conversations with shelter guests, if the concern or complaint pertains to an incident that occurred off shelter property. This helps to maintain clear boundaries and prioritize the safety and privacy of guests.

By providing a general acknowledgment and refraining from confirming guest identities, the shelter ensures that privacy is protected while still acknowledging community concerns.

Engagements with First Responders

Shelters should establish and maintain healthy relationships between shelters and first responders. It advocates for a collaborative approach that benefits both parties and ultimately enhances the safety and well-being of shelter guests.

Building Relationships with First Responders

1. **Recruit Training Involvement**:
   - Shelters should actively participate in the training of new recruits, fostering an understanding of the shelter environment and its unique challenges.
2. **Training Initiatives**:
   - Shelters should provide training sessions for first responder groups on critical topics such as Trauma-Informed Care, Person-Centred Care, and an overview of shelter services.

Guidelines for First Responder Interaction

1. **Meeting and Escorting First Responders**:
   - First responders should be met by shelter staff at the facility entrance and escorted while on the property, ensuring a supportive and secure environment.

Memorandum of Understanding or Standard Operating Procedure

1. **Development and Implementation**:
   - Shelters should establish formal agreements, such as Memoranda of Understanding or Standard Operating Procedures, with each first responder group. Collaborative efforts among shelters in the area can lead to a unified document.
2. **Inclusion of Key Components**:
   - The document should encompass critical elements, including Trauma-Informed Care techniques, Harm Reduction overview, service limitations or restrictions, response protocols, referral or drop-off procedures, access to CCTV, information sharing protocols, legal procedures, grievance procedures, and contact information.
3. **Regular Review and Meetings**:
   - The document should outline a schedule for routine meetings and reviews to ensure ongoing alignment and effectiveness.

Fostering strong partnerships with first responders is crucial for creating a safe and supportive environment within shelters. By advocating for comprehensive training, clear protocols, and collaborative approaches to ensure the well-being of shelter guests in various situations, from routine interactions to more complex incidents.

Respect for Colleagues from other Organizations

To bolster this collaborative spirit, it is imperative to develop training sessions that involve staff from various organizations. These sessions are designed not only to educate participants about the diverse range of programs and services available, but also to dispel any potential misconceptions that may hinder the collective effort.

Leadership Collaboration and Regular Meetings

Leadership from different organizations should meet regularly to foster formal collaborative working relationships. These meetings provide a platform for open communication, idea exchange, and joint planning. By aligning visions and strategies, organizations can amplify their impact on ending homelessness.

Staff Shadowing and Mutual Respect

Encouraging staff to shadow colleagues from other organizations is a powerful way to build mutual respect and understanding. This experience offers valuable insights into the challenges and dedicated efforts of each organization. It reinforces the notion that everyone is engaged in the demanding, yet immensely rewarding, work of addressing homelessness.

This emphasizes the importance of unity in the pursuit of ending homelessness. Regardless of organizational affiliations, it is the collective goal that unites individuals in this field. By fostering respect, forming meaningful relationships, engaging in cross-organizational training, and promoting leadership collaboration, we can create a powerful force for positive change in the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive framework for shelters to effectively address community concerns while upholding guest privacy. It emphasizes the importance of confidentiality, offering a general response to concerns, and refraining from making commitments outside shelter boundaries.

Furthermore, it highlights the crucial role of cultivating positive relationships with first responders. Strategies such as engagement in recruit training, hosting training sessions, and establishing clear interaction guidelines have been emphasized.

The chapter also advocates for collaborative approaches to significant incidents, formalizing agreements with first responder groups, and conducting regular reviews for optimal coordination.

Moreover, it underscores the value of mutual respect and understanding among colleagues from diverse organizations. Encouraging training sessions, promoting leadership collaboration, and facilitating staff shadowing are essential components of the collective effort to address homelessness.

By implementing these strategies, shelters are poised to create an environment that is not only safer and more supportive for guests but also fosters unity in the mission to end homelessness. Through these concerted efforts, positive transformations can be realized in the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

FOSTERING ETHICAL PARTNERSHIPS, ADVOCACY, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Partnership Agreements

There is a pivotal role of inter-organizational relationships in creating enhanced program offerings, services, and support for guests. It advocates for the formalization of agreements through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure transparency, protection of information, and accountability in providing services to mutual program participants.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a Framework

The preferred practice is to establish written MOUs to delineate the terms of collaboration between organizations. These agreements should clearly outline how information will be safeguarded and shared concerning individuals participating in mutual programs. Moreover, the MOU serves as a mechanism to uphold accountability, preventing the dissemination of false promises to program participants.

Inclusion of Lived Experience Perspectives

Where feasible, individuals with lived experience should play a role in the review and design of partnership agreements. Their insights are invaluable in shaping services that are responsive and attuned to the real-life experiences of guests.

Housing-Focused Model Considerations

When crafting these agreements, it is imperative to adopt a housing-focused model. This involves a thoughtful assessment of the following:

1. *Community vs. Shelter Service Delivery*: Evaluate if the service can be extended to guests in the community as opposed to confining it within the shelter environment.
2. *Barrier Reduction*: Determine if the program or service helps in removing barriers to obtaining stable housing.
3. *Program Duration*: Define the length of the program or service, ensuring it aligns with the goal of facilitating a transition to secure housing.

Trauma-Informed and Person-Centred Commitments

Agreements should explicitly incorporate the organizations' commitment to trauma-informed and person-centred care. This ensures that the services provided are sensitive to the experiences of trauma and prioritize the individual needs and preferences of each program participant.

Partnerships play a crucial role in enhancing person-centred care in several ways:

1. **Holistic Understanding:** Partnerships bring together different perspectives, expertise, and resources. This comprehensive understanding of an individual's needs, preferences, and goals helps in tailoring care to their unique circumstances.

2. **Collaborative Decision-Making:** When multiple stakeholders, such as healthcare providers, family members, social workers, and community organizations, collaborate, they contribute valuable insights that inform care plans. This ensures that decisions align with the person's wishes and values.

3. **Coordination of Services:** Effective partnerships facilitate seamless coordination of services across various providers and settings. This reduces the risk of fragmented or duplicated care, leading to a more streamlined and efficient experience for the person receiving care.

4. **Access to a Range of Resources:** Partnerships often expand the pool of available resources, including medical expertise, social support, financial assistance, and community services. This enables a more comprehensive approach to addressing the person's needs.

5. **Cultural Competence:** Engaging partners from diverse backgrounds and disciplines helps in understanding and respecting cultural, linguistic, and other unique aspects of a person's identity. This promotes care that is culturally sensitive and responsive.

6. **Empowerment of the Person:** Collaborative partnerships empower the person to actively participate in their care. By involving them in discussions and decisions, they gain a sense of ownership over their health and well-being.

7. **Innovation and Problem-Solving:** Partnerships often foster creativity and innovation. Different perspectives and expertise can lead to the development of new approaches, interventions, or technologies that better serve the person's needs.

8. **Enhanced Advocacy and Support:** Partnerships can serve as advocates for the person, ensuring that their voice is heard, and their rights are respected. This is particularly important in navigating complex healthcare systems.

9. **Continuity of Care:** Through partnerships, care providers can work together to ensure that transitions between different levels of care or settings are smooth. This reduces disruptions in care and maintains focus on the person's individualized plan.

10. **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** Partnerships enable ongoing feedback loops, allowing for regular evaluation and adjustments to the care plan. This ensures that care remains person-centred and responsive to changing needs.

Voices of Lived/Living Experience & Expertise (Guest Advocates)

The voices of people with living experience are helpful in understanding how to improve shelter services as they exist in the present.

The voices of people with lived experience are helpful for longer-duration engagement and deeper feedback such as improving shelter governance, improving policies, or designing new programs.

The Guest Advocate position is a person(s) with lived experience that demonstrates expertise in understanding not only their own experience of shelter use, but is connected to others that have comparable experiences, expresses empathy and compassion, and serves as an active voice in formal processes to help the shelter continuously improve. Moreover, the Guest Advocate can be a supportive voice and insightful voice when considering the likes of barring or service restrictions.

Key Points:

> **Role of the Guest Advocate:** A Guest Advocate serves as a champion for the rights of individual shelter guests and the entire shelter population. They mediate conflicts, negotiate program access, and monitor equity and social justice considerations within the shelter system.

> **Accountability and Improvement:** The Guest Advocate helps hold shelter staff and administration accountable to the shelter's stated values and mission. They work to enhance processes and procedures in the shelter environment.

> **Creating Safe Spaces for Feedback:** The Guest Advocate provides a safe and confidential space for shelter guests to share their frustrations, difficulties, or negative experiences related to shelter operations or staff.

Involvement of Researchers/Academic Institutions

Research endeavours within a shelter setting must prioritize the well-being and dignity of the individuals being served. This chapter emphasizes the importance of ethical practices when engaging shelter guests in research initiatives.

1. **Prioritizing the Well-being of Shelter Guests:** Shelter guests are not to be treated as research subjects for the sole purpose of advancing academic or institutional agendas. The primary consideration must be whether participating in the research is in the best interest of the individuals served and aligns with the shelter's core values.
2. **Transparency in Ethics Review:** While universities and research institutions typically have robust ethics review processes, it is imperative that shelter guests are informed about this procedure if they may be involved in the research. This transparency ensures that guests are aware of the protective measures in place to safeguard their rights and well-being.
3. **Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation:** When researchers conduct interviews with shelter guests, it is crucial to provide an appropriate and private location. Guests must fully understand the voluntary nature of their participation, knowing that they can withdraw at any point without facing negative consequences in their continued use of shelter services. Explicit consent should always be obtained before any contributions are made to the research.
4. **Advance Notification of Research Activities:** To maintain transparency and foster trust, shelter staff should inform guests in advance about the presence of researchers on-site. Details such as the location of the researchers and their expected hours of presence should be communicated clearly. Posters reiterating this information should be strategically displayed throughout the shelter.
5. **Protection of Identifiable Data:** Under no circumstances should a shelter disclose identifiable data to a researcher unless explicit consent was granted by the guest during their initial intake process, specifying that their data may be shared with third parties for research purposes.
6. **Scrutiny of Research Premise:** Even when researchers request aggregate or de-identified data, the shelter must critically assess whether the research project aligns with the goal of supporting individuals in their journey towards secure housing in a person-centred and trauma-informed manner.

Ethical considerations are paramount in any research involving shelter guests. By prioritizing their well-being, ensuring informed consent, and safeguarding their privacy, we uphold the dignity and rights of those we serve. This approach reflects the commitment to person-centred and trauma-informed care.

Student Internships

Shelters present valuable learning opportunities for college and university students across a range of academic programs. When managed ethically and transparently, student involvement can contribute positively to the shelter's operations.

1. **Learning Opportunities for Students:** Shelters can serve as vital training grounds for students in various educational programs. Their involvement can extend beyond learning, potentially aiding in tasks that paid staff may struggle to prioritize, provided that it is done with ethical considerations in mind.
2. **Comparable Orientation and Training:** Unpaid student internships should commence with an orientation similar to that of volunteers. Further training should be provided to enhance the student's understanding and application of Trauma-Informed Care principles. For paid student internships, an onboarding process equivalent to that of new staff members is recommended.
3. **Non-Disclosure Agreement:** To safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of shelter guests, students engaged in internships must sign a non-disclosure agreement. This legal document underscores the importance of discretion and respect for the sensitive information to which they may be privy during their time at the shelter.
4. **Classroom Sharing Guidelines:** Students must be advised on what information they can share about their experiences in a classroom setting without breaching the trust and relationships developed with shelter guests. Striking the right balance between education and privacy protection is crucial.

Student involvement and internships in shelter settings can be mutually beneficial when conducted with ethical considerations at the forefront. By providing appropriate orientation, training, and guidelines ensures that students contribute positively to the shelter's mission while upholding the dignity and confidentiality of those served.

Conclusion

This chapter underscores the critical role of partnerships, ethical considerations, and educational initiatives in shelter management. By formalizing agreements through MOUs, shelters can ensure transparent, accountable, and mutually beneficial collaborations with other organizations.

Incorporating the perspectives of individuals with lived experience in the design of partnership agreements enriches the services provided, making them more attuned to the real-life experiences of shelter guests. Additionally, adopting a housing-focused model in these agreements emphasizes the shelter's commitment to facilitating a transition to secure housing.

Moreover, recognizing the invaluable role of Guest Advocates amplifies the voices of shelter guests, advocating for their rights and well-being within the shelter system. This advocacy ensures that shelter staff and administration remain accountable to the shelter's mission and values.

Involvement of researchers and academic institutions in shelter settings requires stringent ethical practices. Prioritizing the well-being of shelter guests, obtaining informed consent, and protecting identifiable data are crucial steps in upholding the dignity and rights of those served.

Student internships offer valuable learning opportunities and potential contributions to shelter operations. When managed ethically, these programs can enhance the shelter's capacity while respecting the privacy and confidentiality of shelter guests.

By adhering to these ethical principles, shelters can create environments that prioritize the well-being, dignity, and rights of individuals experiencing homelessness. These practices not only enhance the services provided but also contribute to a more compassionate and empowering shelter experience for all.

COLLECTING AND USING DATA

This chapter focuses on the ethical guidelines for collecting and managing administrative data in shelter settings. Transparency, consent, and security are key principles. Following these guidelines ensures responsible data collection and protects guest privacy and rights. This approach upholds a secure and trustworthy environment for all.

Ethical Data Collection and Handling

Ethical data refers to information collected, stored, and used in a manner that adheres to moral principles, standards, and guidelines. It involves treating data subjects (individuals whose information is collected) with respect, ensuring their privacy and rights are protected, and using the data for legitimate and transparent purposes. Ethical data practices also encompass obtaining informed consent, providing clear information about data handling, and implementing security measures to safeguard against unauthorized access or breaches. Additionally, ethical data practices may involve avoiding discriminatory or exploitative uses of data and being transparent about how data is used for decision-making or research purposes. Overall, ethical data handling aims to balance the benefits of data utilization with the protection of individuals' rights and dignity.

This outlines the ethical guidelines for collecting and managing administrative data within the shelter setting. Ensuring transparency, consent, and security is important in this process.

1. **Purpose of Data Collection:** Staff must clearly communicate the purpose behind collecting administrative data. This transparency fosters trust and helps guests understand the importance of the information being gathered.
2. **Essential Data Points Only:** Data collection should be limited to the information essential for shelter administration and program management, including any data required by contractual obligations.
3. **Informed Consent for Data Collection and Storage:** Guests should be provided with a clear explanation of data collection and storage processes, and they must give their explicit consent by signing relevant documents.

4. **Access to Identifiable Data:** Staff should detail who else within the organization has access to identifiable administrative data and under what conditions. This transparency ensures that guest information is handled responsibly and only by authorized personnel.

5. **Right to Review Data:** Guests have the right to review data collected about them. The process for doing so should be clearly outlined, empowering guests to take control of their own information.

6. **Privacy Breach Policies:** Staff members are expected to be well-versed in the shelter's policies regarding privacy breaches. This ensures that any potential breaches are handled swiftly and in accordance with established protocols.

7. **Analysis and Handling of Administrative Data:** Only designated and trained staff within the organization should conduct analysis of administrative data. Raw data should not be manipulated or analyzed by untrained individuals. Furthermore, it should not be stored on easily misplaced or removed devices like laptops or tablets. Access to administrative data must be password protected to safeguard against unauthorized access.

By adhering to these ethical guidelines, the shelter ensures that administrative data is collected, stored, and analyzed responsibly, respecting the privacy and rights of the guests. This approach reflects the commitment to maintaining a secure and trustworthy environment for all served.

Feedback Data and Continuous Improvement

Collecting and utilizing feedback is fundamental to maintaining a person-centred, trauma-informed, and housing-focused shelter environment. This emphasizes the importance of diverse and representative feedback, as well as methods for effective data collection.

1. **Purpose and Nature of Feedback:** Feedback should be a blend of both qualitative and quantitative data. This information is collected, analyzed, and used to make necessary adjustments to the shelter's implementation strategies at defined intervals.

2. **Role of Guest Advocates and Peer Support Workers:** Utilizing Guest Advocates or Peer Support Workers to lead qualitative data collection helps create a more comfortable and balanced dynamic for shelter guests. This approach fosters an environment of trust, making it easier for guests to share their experiences and insights.

3. **Diverse Voices and Representation:** When assembling focus groups or seeking feedback, efforts should be made to include diverse voices, ensuring that feedback is representative of the shelter population in terms of characteristics such as age, gender identity, sexual orientation, length of homelessness, and race.

4. **Anonymous Feedback Channels:** Suggestion boxes or electronic kiosks can offer an anonymous avenue for guests to provide feedback, promoting honest and open communication.

5. **Exit Surveys:** Conducting exit surveys when a guest is leaving the shelter provides valuable insights into their overall experience, helping identify areas for improvement.

6. **Evaluating Adherence to Trauma-Informed Care Tenets:** In feedback sessions, the shelter should specifically assess whether guests feel that the shelter adheres to the tenets of Trauma-Informed Care. This evaluation provides critical information about the effectiveness of the shelter's approach.

7. **Compensation for Guest Participation:** Guests participating in focus groups or similar activities should be compensated in alignment with the local living wage, recognizing the value of their time and input.
8. **Closing the Feedback Loop:** Guests should be informed of any changes made as a result of their feedback, reinforcing the importance of their contributions.
9. **Utilizing Quantitative Data:** Quantitative data, such as program outputs and outcomes, should be collected and compared to predefined targets. This helps evaluate whether the shelter is effectively achieving its housing-focused goals.

By prioritizing diverse feedback and using it to drive continuous improvement, the shelter ensures that its services remain person-centred, trauma-informed, and housing-focused.

Data Reporting and Impact Assessment

The following addresses the importance of distinguishing between output data and outcome data to assess the true impact of services provided by the shelter. Transparency in reporting to various stakeholders is crucial.

1. **Output Data:** Output data quantifies the volume of services provided, such as number of meals, bed nights, referrals, clothing, and laundry services. While this information is important for understanding service volume, it does not capture the true impact of the services on a guest's life.
2. **Outcome Data: Assessing Life Changes:** Outcome data delves deeper, assessing whether the services led to meaningful changes in a guest's life. This includes improvements in quality of life, changes in housing status, and progress towards achieving other life goals.
3. **Transparency in Reporting:** Both output and outcome data should be transparently reported to external partners, funders, staff within the shelter, and most importantly, to the shelter guests themselves. This ensures that all stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of the shelter's impact.

By distinguishing between output and outcome data and prioritizing transparency in reporting, the shelter can accurately measure its effectiveness in improving the lives of its guests.

Using Data Internally

This emphasizes the importance of utilizing data internally to support both staff and guests within the shelter. It outlines key practices and considerations for leveraging data effectively.

Using Data Internally:
1. **Informing Staff:**
   - Sharing successful outcomes with staff and guests fosters a culture of celebration and accomplishment.
   - Providing daily data, including occupancy numbers, incidents, and demographics, allows staff to stay informed and make informed decisions.
   - Identifying trends in shelter operations helps staff anticipate and respond to evolving needs.

2. **Program Review:**
   - Conducting annual reviews of programs ensures they continue to meet the evolving needs of shelter guests.

3. **Program Development:**
   - Analyzing data helps identify emerging trends, such as shifts in the demographic composition of guests, which informs program adjustments.
   - Monitoring external trends, like housing availability and costs, guides program development to align with the broader context.

4. **Safety Monitoring:**
   - Regularly reviewing and monitoring data ensures the safety and well-being of both staff and guests.

5. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I):**
   - Data analysis helps ensure that staff diversity is reflective of the guest population and that the agency itself is diverse and inclusive.

6. **Monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**
   - Tracking KPIs allows the organization to assess its performance against defined benchmarks and objectives.

7. **Quality Assurance/Improvement:**
   - Data serves as a critical tool for ongoing quality assurance and improvement efforts within the organization.

What Data Should Not Be Used For:

1. **Punitive Measures:**
   - Data alone should not be used for punitive measures against staff or guests. It is important to consider the context and underlying story behind the data.

By using data in these ways, the shelter can ensure that decisions are informed, programs are effective, and both staff and guests receive the support they need. Additionally, recognizing the limitations of data prevents its misuse for punitive purposes.

Empowering Narrative Sharing

It is important to empower shelter guests to choose if, when, and how they want to share their personal narratives. It also highlights ethical considerations for staff when involving guests in public events or media interactions.

Empowering Narrative Sharing:

1. **Guest Autonomy:**
   - Shelter guests should be supported in making their own decisions about whether they want to share their personal stories. This empowers them to control the narrative and share what feels comfortable and meaningful to them.
2. **Peer Support Models:**
   - Utilizing peer support models for narrative construction and sharing experiences can be a powerful way for guests to connect and find strength in their stories.

What Shelter Staff Should Avoid:

1. **Putting Guests on the Spot:**
   - Shelter staff should not pressure guests to share their stories at events like Annual General Meetings or fundraising events. Instead, there should be an open invitation for all guests to self-select if they wish to share.
2. **Emphasizing Outlying Results:**
   - Focusing only on guests with exceptional outcomes can create a skewed representation of the shelter's impact. All guests, regardless of their outcomes, should have the opportunity to share their experiences.
3. **Media Involvement:**
   - Shelter staff should not request guests to purposefully tell their story to the media, whether it's to highlight success stories or portray the hardships of homelessness. If a guest chooses to engage with the media, they should be accompanied by a staff member with media training, and guests should not be selected solely to advance the shelter's public relations agenda.

By respecting guest autonomy and avoiding pressure or selective representation, the shelter ensures that narrative sharing remains a meaningful and empowering experience for all guests.

Ethical Data Analysis and Labeling

The following addresses the potential consequences of data analysis, particularly the labeling of shelter guests, and emphasizes the need for sensitivity and respect in this process.

Data Analysis and Labeling:

1. **Potential Labeling Risks:**
   - Data analysis may result in labels like "frequent service user," "chronic high acuity," or "service resistant." While these labels can provide insights, they can also inadvertently otherize and potentially re-traumatize shelter guests.
2. **Avoiding Pathologizing Language:**
   - Staff should be cautious when using terms like "frequent service users." These terms should be used to describe service patterns, not to pathologize or stigmatize the experiences of guests.

Guidelines for Ethical Data Analysis:

1. **Focus on Understanding, Not Labeling:**
   - The primary goal of data analysis should be to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and needs of shelter guests, rather than attaching potentially stigmatizing labels.
2. **Use Labels Mindfully:**
   - If labels are necessary for data analysis, they should be used with careful consideration and respect for the individuals they represent.
3. **Avoiding Traumatization:**
   - Staff should be aware of the potential impact of labels on shelter guests and strive to create an environment that is sensitive to their experiences.

By approaching data analysis with sensitivity and a focus on understanding rather than labeling, the shelter can ensure that guests are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process.

Safe Storage of Key Documents

Shelters can emphasize the importance of secure storage for vital personal documents. The following outlines guidelines for offering this service to shelter guests.

Safe Storage for Key Documents:

1. **Essential Personal Documents:**
   - Government-issued photo identification, birth certificates, health cards, proof of income assistance, divorce papers, military service records, and legal documents are crucial for accessing services and benefits.
2. **Options for Safe Storage:**
   - Shelter infrastructure permitting, the shelter should offer both safe storage of hard copies and the option to scan and securely store digital copies in the shelter's database.

Guidelines for Offering Safe Storage:
1. **Informed Consent:**
   - Guests must be informed about the option to store their documents and provide explicit consent for the shelter to do so. They should also be aware that they can rescind this consent at any time without negative consequences.
2. **Access and Retrieval:**
   - Guests should be informed about how and when they can access their stored documents. This empowers them to retrieve their documents when needed.
3. **Ownership of Documents:**
   - Guests should be reminded that these documents belong to them, and the shelter is simply offering a service to safeguard them from loss, damage, or theft.

By providing safe storage options and ensuring informed consent, the shelter helps guests protect their vital personal documents.

Conclusion

This chapter underscores the importance of ethical data practices in shelter settings. Transparency, consent, and security are paramount for responsible data collection, ensuring guest privacy and rights are protected. By following these guidelines, the shelter creates a secure and trustworthy environment.

Ethical Data Collection and Handling: Ethical data practices involve treating data subjects with respect, protecting their privacy and rights, and using data transparently and for legitimate purposes.

Feedback Data and Continuous Improvement: Diverse and representative feedback is crucial for maintaining a person-centred, trauma-informed, and housing-focused shelter environment.

Data Reporting and Impact Assessment: Distinguishing between output data and outcome data is crucial for accurately assessing the impact of services provided by the shelter.

Using Data Internally: Leveraging data internally supports both staff and guests within the shelter.

Empowering Narrative Sharing: Respecting guest autonomy in sharing personal narratives is crucial.

Ethical Data Analysis and Labeling: Approaching data analysis with sensitivity and a focus on understanding, rather than labeling, helps ensure that guests are treated with dignity and respect.

Safe Storage of Key Documents: Providing safe storage options for vital personal documents, both in hard copy and digital formats, is essential for helping guests access services and benefits.

By upholding these ethical data practices, the shelter demonstrates a commitment to responsible data handling, guest well-being, and maintaining a secure and trustworthy environment for all.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Trauma-informed design focuses on creating supportive spaces for individuals who have experienced trauma. It recognizes the impact of physical environments on well-being and recovery. This chapter outlines key principles for designing shelter spaces.

Maximizing Natural Light

Maximizing natural light creates a welcoming atmosphere in shelters. Adjustable window coverings give guests control. This promotes well-being, regulates sleep patterns, and provides a connection to nature.

Electrical Lighting

Thoughtful lighting design considers practical needs and well-being. Adjustable ceiling lights, safety and night lights, and avoiding overly bright lighting contribute to a safe and comfortable environment.

Paints and Wall Designs

Colour choices and finishes play a crucial role in creating a soothing environment. Avoiding stark white, choosing matte finishes, and considering cultural designs help create a calming atmosphere for guests.

Bathroom and Shower Fixtures

Universal design principles ensure inclusive and functional bathroom facilities. This includes durable fixtures, non-gender specific bathrooms, sufficient showers and toilets, and accessible sinks.

Building Maintenance

Proactive maintenance fosters a culture of respect for guests. It leads to cost savings, improved energy efficiency, fewer repairs, increased safety, and longer-lasting facilities. Adopting proactive maintenance practices benefits both the organization and its guests.

Trauma-Informed Design

This is an overview of the principles and considerations of trauma-informed design, emphasizing its significance in creating environments that support individuals who have experienced trauma.

Understanding Trauma-Informed Design:

1. **Definition:**
   - Trauma-informed design involves purposeful planning of physical spaces, products, and environments, considering how they can provide support to individuals who have undergone traumatic experiences.
2. **Impact on Well-Being:**
   - Recognizing that the physical environment significantly influences a person's well-being and recovery journey.

Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Design:

1. **Safety and Comfort:**
   - Prioritizing features that enhance both physical and psychological safety, including well-lit spaces, secure entrances, and comfortable furnishings.
2. **Empowerment and Choice:**
   - Offering individuals options and choices within the environment, enabling them to regain a sense of control over their surroundings.

3. **Sensory Considerations:**
   - Being mindful of potential sensory triggers, such as noise levels, lighting, and colour choices, which may be distressing for those who have experienced trauma.
4. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:**
   - Ensuring that spaces are designed to be accessible for all individuals, including those with physical or sensory disabilities.
5. **Privacy and Dignity:**
   - Creating spaces that afford privacy and respect personal boundaries.
6. **Cultural Sensitivity:**
   - Acknowledging and respecting cultural variations in design choices, taking into account symbols, preferences, and sensitivities.
7. **Flexibility and Modularity:**
   - Designing spaces that can be easily adapted to meet evolving needs, accommodating the changing circumstances of individuals or groups using the environment.
8. **Nature and Biophilic Elements:**
   - Incorporating natural elements like plants, natural light, and views of nature, known to have positive effects on mental well-being.
9. **Trauma-Informed Signage and Wayfinding:**
   - Implementing clear and easily understandable signage to reduce confusion and anxiety in unfamiliar environments.

By integrating trauma-informed design principles, shelters can aim to create environments that foster feelings of safety, comfort, and empowerment for individuals who have experienced trauma, ultimately contributing to their well-being and healing process.

Maximizing Natural Light

1. **Enhancing the Environment:**
   - Natural light contributes to a positive and welcoming atmosphere within the shelter. It promotes a sense of well-being and connection to the outside world.
2. **Adjustable Window Coverings:**
   - Shades, privacy curtains, or blinds can be utilized to regulate the amount of sunlight entering the space. This allows for flexibility in meeting the preferences and comfort levels of guests.

Benefits of Natural Light:

1. **Mood and Well-Being:**
   - Exposure to natural light has been shown to enhance mood and overall well-being. It can help mitigate feelings of isolation or confinement.
2. **Circadian Rhythms:**
   - Natural light exposure helps regulate circadian rhythms, promoting better sleep patterns and overall health.
3. **Connection to Nature:**
   - Access to natural light provides a visual connection to the outside world, offering a sense of continuity and normalcy.

By prioritizing natural light and providing adjustable window coverings, the shelter creates an environment that supports the well-being and comfort of guests.

Electrical Lighting

Thoughtful lighting design within the shelter environment, considering both practical needs and the psychological well-being of guests.

Adjustable Ceiling Lights:

1. **Dimmable Lighting:**
   - Ceiling lights should be adjustable with dimmer controls. This allows for flexibility in creating different atmospheres based on the location within the shelter.
2. **Location-Based Adjustments:**
   - Lighting levels should be tailored to specific areas. For example, softer lighting may be appropriate in sleeping areas, while brighter lighting is practical in spaces like bathrooms.
3. **Addressing Flickering or Buzzing Lights:**
   - Lights that flicker or produce a buzzing sound should be promptly attended to. Consulting an electrician to replace fixtures or resolve issues is recommended.

Safety and Night Lights:

1. **Safety Lights:**
   - Illuminated signs indicating exit routes in case of emergencies contribute to a sense of safety and security.
2. **Night Lights:**
   - Night lights placed strategically, especially in sleeping areas, help guide guests to facilities like restrooms during the night.

Avoiding Inappropriate Brightness:

1. **Non-Weaponized Lighting:**
   - Brightness levels should be adjusted thoughtfully. Using maximum brightness as an initial wake-up tool can be inappropriate and potentially distressing for guests.

By considering both the practical needs and psychological well-being of guests, thoughtful lighting design enhances the overall environment within the shelter.

Paints and Wall Designs

Colours and finishes can support creating a soothing and trauma-informed environment within the shelter.

Choosing Colours and Finishes:
1. **Avoiding Stark White:**
   - Stark white walls can be avoided, as research in trauma-informed design suggests that cooler colours such as purple, green, and blue are more effective in promoting feelings of safety and comfort.
2. **Preference for Matte Finishes:**
   - Matte finishes are preferred over glossy or shiny surfaces, as they create a softer, more calming visual environment.

3. **Avoiding Over-Stimulation:**
   - Designs, including agency logos, should aim to soothe rather than stimulate. Bold and aggressive designs can be overwhelming for guests.

Cultural Designs:

1. **Authentic Representation:**
   - If cultural designs are to be incorporated, it is best to have them designed and implemented by a member of that culture. This ensures authenticity and respect for cultural significance.

By carefully considering colour schemes, finishes, and cultural representations, the shelter can create an environment that promotes a sense of calm and safety for guests.

Inclusive and Functional Bathroom Design

This focuses on the importance of adhering to universal design principles when planning bathroom and shower facilities within the shelter environment.

Universal Design Principles:

1. **Durable and Functional Fixtures:**
   - Bathroom and shower fixtures should be built to withstand prolonged and frequent use, ensuring their durability while maintaining a non-institutional appearance.
2. **Avoiding Detention Center Aesthetics:**
   - Fixtures should not resemble those commonly found in detention centers or jails, as this can be distressing for guests and create an unwelcoming atmosphere.

Ensuring Adequate Facilities:

1. **Non-Gender Specific Bathroom:**
   - Each shelter must have at least one bathroom that is non-gender specific, providing an inclusive option for all guests.
2. **Shower Accessibility:**
   - There should be a minimum of one shower available for every 20 shelter users, ensuring access to this essential hygiene facility.
3. **Toilet Availability:**
   - To promote safety and decrease potential conflicts, there should be at least one toilet for every 15 shelter users. Urinals can be utilized for up to half of the toilets in facilities serving men.
4. **Sufficient Sinks with Proximity to Soap Dispensers:**
   - There should be at least one sink available for every 15 shelter users, with a soap dispenser located no further than 0.6 meters from each sink.

By adhering to universal design principles and ensuring adequate facilities, the shelter creates a safe, inclusive, and functional environment for all guests.

Building Maintenance

Shelters should adopt a proactive maintenance strategy within the shelter, highlighting the benefits it brings to both the organization and its guests.

Proactive Maintenance Defined:
1. **Strategic Approach:**
    - Proactive Maintenance focuses on identifying and addressing potential causes of equipment failure before they lead to actual breakdowns.

Fostering a Culture of Dignity and Respect:
1. **Guest-Centric Focus:**
    - Implementing Proactive Maintenance supports a culture of dignity and respect for the guests, as it ensures that facilities are consistently well-maintained and safe.

Benefits of Proactive Maintenance:
1. **Cost Savings:**
    - Proactive Maintenance leads to cost savings by reducing the need for major repairs and replacements, ultimately benefiting the organization's budget.
2. **Improved Energy Efficiency:**
    - Well-maintained equipment operates more efficiently, resulting in energy savings and reducing environmental impact.
3. **Fewer Repairs:**
    - By addressing issues before they escalate, Proactive Maintenance reduces the frequency of repairs, minimizing disruptions to guests.
4. **Increased Safety and Reliability:**
    - Regular maintenance ensures that facilities and equipment remain safe and reliable, enhancing the overall guest experience.
5. **Longer Asset Life:**
    - Proactive Maintenance prolongs the lifespan of assets, optimizing their value and reducing the need for premature replacements.

By adopting Proactive Maintenance, the organization not only experiences operational benefits but also cultivates an environment of care, dignity, and respect for its guests.

Conclusion

Trauma-informed design prioritizes creating supportive spaces for those who have experienced trauma. This approach recognizes the impact of physical environments on well-being and recovery. In this chapter, we've outlined key principles for designing shelter spaces.

1. **Maximizing Natural Light:** Welcoming shelters incorporate ample natural light. Adjustable window coverings give guests control, promoting well-being, regulating sleep, and fostering a connection to nature.
2. **Electrical Lighting:** Considerate lighting design addresses practical needs and guest well-being. Adjustable ceiling lights, safety and night lights, and avoiding overly bright lighting contribute to a safe and comfortable environment.
3. **Paints and Wall Designs:** Colour choices and finishes are pivotal in creating a soothing atmosphere. Avoiding stark white, opting for matte finishes, and considering cultural designs all contribute to a calming environment for guests.
4. **Bathroom and Shower Fixtures:** Universal design principles ensure inclusive and functional facilities. This includes durable fixtures, non-gender specific bathrooms, sufficient showers and toilets, and accessible sinks.
5. **Building Maintenance:** Proactive maintenance reflects a culture of respect for guests. It leads to cost savings, enhanced energy efficiency, fewer repairs, increased safety, and longer-lasting facilities. Embracing proactive maintenance practices benefits both the organization and its guests.

Creating a Fragrance-Free Environment

A fragrance-free environment is a space where individuals are requested or required to refrain from using scented products such as perfumes, colognes, lotions, and other scented personal care items. This is done to accommodate individuals who may have sensitivities or allergies to fragrances, which can cause adverse reactions or discomfort, or may be triggering. Creating a fragrance-free environment helps promote inclusivity and ensures that everyone can comfortably access and participate in the space without experiencing any negative effects from scented products.

Fragrance-Free Policy:
1. **Recommendation for Entire Facility:**
   - It is advised to implement a fragrance-free policy throughout the entire facility to create a safe and inclusive space for all guests.
2. **Limited Use in Designated Areas:**
   - If establishing a completely fragrance-free environment proves challenging, consider restricting the use of fragrances to specific designated areas within the facility.

Sensitivity to Triggers:
1. **Awareness of Trauma Triggers:**
   - Staff should be mindful of the fact that certain scents can serve as triggers, potentially reawakening memories of past traumatic events for guests.

2. **Avoiding Re-Traumatization:**
    - By maintaining a fragrance-free environment, the shelter aims to minimize the risk of re-traumatizing guests who may have sensitivities to certain smells.

Establishing a fragrance-free policy or designating specific areas for fragrances is a crucial step in creating a space that is considerate of guests' sensitivities and potential trauma triggers.

Safe Storage for Guests Belongings

In a shelter, providing secure storage options for guests' belongings is crucial for safety, de-escalation, and engagement. This chapter emphasizes the importance of respecting privacy and addressing potentially sensitive items. Safe storage not only promotes a sense of safety but also provides practical solutions for guests, contributing to a more inclusive and effective shelter experience.

Safe Storage for Guest Belongings
Shelters should offer safe storage options for shelter guests upon their entry to the facility, with a focus on promoting safety, de-escalation, and engagement.

Providing Safe Storage:
1. **Offering Safe Storage Upon Entry:**
    - Upon their arrival at the shelter, guests should be offered safe storage options for belongings that may be unwelcome within the facility.
2. **Respecting Privacy:**
    - Shelter staff do not need to be aware of the exact contents of the stored items. Respecting privacy is paramount in this process.

Addressing Sensitive Items:
1. **Understanding Potential Contents:**
    - It is acknowledged that some guests may choose to store substances, paraphernalia related to substance use, or even items that could be considered weapons.
2. **Promoting De-Escalation:**
    - Safe storage options contribute to de-escalating situations within the shelter environment, providing a practical solution for potentially sensitive belongings.

Benefits of Safe Storage:
1. **Decreased Over-Use of Substances:**
    - By allowing guests to store substances and access them the next day, it can lead to decreased over-use and binge use, contributing to improved personal health outcomes.
2. **Opportunities for Engagement:**
    - Safe storage, especially in cases like alcohol, provides daily opportunities for staff to engage in conversations about goals and progress towards finding stable housing.

Offering safe storage options at the shelter's entry not only enhances safety but also fosters an environment of respect and support for guests. This underscores the positive impact of providing practical solutions for potentially sensitive belongings, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and effective shelter experience.

Creating Spaces for Spiritual and Cultural Practices

Shelter should be providing dedicated private spaces within the shelter for meditation, prayer, smudging, and other spiritual or cultural practices that hold importance for shelter guests.

Dedicated Spaces for Spiritual Practices:
1. **Consideration for Shelter Configuration:**
   - Depending on the shelter's layout and available space, efforts can be made to allocate dedicated areas for meditation, prayer, smudging, and other spiritual or cultural practices.

2. **Promoting Safety and Respect:**
   - To ensure safety and respect, implementing a sign-up sheet and limiting the number of occupants at a time can be beneficial. This approach helps manage the use of the space effectively.

Respecting Privacy and Beliefs:
1. **Non-Invasive Approach:**
   - Staff should refrain from questioning or investigating the reasons behind a guest's desire to use the space. Respecting privacy and beliefs is paramount.

Fostering Inclusivity:
1. **Acknowledging the Importance of Spiritual and Cultural Practices:**
   - Providing spaces for spiritual and cultural practices demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and an understanding of the significance of these practices to shelter guests.

Multi-Faith, Interfaith or Inclusive Prayer Spaces

Multi-faith spaces, also known as interfaith or inclusive prayer spaces, are areas designed to accommodate individuals of different religious or spiritual backgrounds for worship, meditation, reflection, or other spiritual practices. These spaces are intentionally designed to be inclusive and welcoming to people of various faith traditions, allowing them to practice their beliefs and connect with their spirituality in a shared environment.

Key features of multi-faith spaces may include:

1. **Neutral Design:** The physical design and decor of multi-faith spaces are intentionally kept neutral to avoid favoring any specific religious tradition. This helps create an environment where people of different faiths feel comfortable.
2. **Flexibility:** These spaces are often designed to be adaptable, allowing for various religious practices and rituals. They may have movable or modular furnishings to accommodate different needs.
3. **Symbols of Various Faiths:** Multi-faith spaces may include symbols, artifacts, or images representing different religious traditions to provide a sense of inclusivity and recognition for all visitors.
4. **Prayer Mats and Religious Texts:** Facilities may provide prayer mats, copies of religious texts, or other materials relevant to different faiths to support individuals in their spiritual practices.
5. **Amenities:** Depending on the space, amenities like ablution facilities (for ritual washing), prayer rugs, meditation cushions, and other resources may be available.

6. **Privacy Options:** Some multi-faith spaces may offer areas for private prayer or meditation, allowing individuals to have a more intimate and personal spiritual experience.
7. **Accessibility:** These spaces are typically designed to be accessible to people with varying mobility needs, ensuring that everyone can participate comfortably.
8. **Respectful Atmosphere:** There is often an emphasis on maintaining a respectful and contemplative atmosphere, where individuals can practice their faith or engage in spiritual activities without interference or disruption.

By designating private spaces for meditation, prayer, smudging, and other cultural or spiritual practices, the shelter creates an environment that respects and supports the diverse beliefs and practices of its guests.

Providing Inclusive Spaces for All Shelter Guests

This highlights the importance of offering inclusive spaces within the shelter that cater to the diverse needs and experiences of guests, particularly concerning substance use.

Accessible Spaces for All Guests:
1. **12-Hour Usage Model:**
   - Shelters should aim to provide spaces that are fully accessible to both individuals who have used substances in the past 12 hours and those who have not. This model prioritizes current state rather than categorizing guests based on sobriety or addiction labels.
2. **Flexible Approach:**
   - This approach allows for individuals to choose spaces based on their current situation and needs, offering options rather than imposing a single relationship with substances.
3. **Potential for Separate Locations:**
   - In larger shelters, it may be feasible to have separate spaces within the same building. In communities with multiple shelters, one could serve those who have used substances recently, while another serves those who have not.

Avoiding Labels:
1. **Steering Clear of Sobriety Labels:**
   - The approach avoids using labels like "sober living" or "wet shelter," recognizing that individuals' needs and circumstances may vary.
2. **Respecting Individual Journeys:**
   - It acknowledges that individuals may be at different points in their substance use journey, and their needs may change from day to day.

Dignified Accommodations:
1. **Consideration for Safety:**
   - Very low-barrier approaches should be considered, including providing more dignified sleeping arrangements such as mats on the floor, particularly for individuals who may be more vulnerable due to recent substance use.

Conclusion

By adopting a model that prioritizes current state over labels, shelters can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all guests. This emphasizes the importance of providing options and respecting individual journeys, ultimately contributing to a more effective and dignified shelter experience.

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND SAFETY THROUGH STAFF VISIBILITY

Shelters should place importance on ensuring that shelter guests are aware of the location of shelter staff within the facility, contributing to a sense of safety and transparency.

Enhancing Staff Visibility

1. **Strategic Staff Placement:**
   - Shelter staff may be in areas not readily accessible to guests for operational reasons. This strategic placement is essential for privacy purposes such as a case manager office where meetings with program participants take place.
2. **Utilizing Surveillance Cameras:**
   - Installing cameras in select "staff only" spaces provides an additional layer of safety. These cameras offer visibility into areas where staff may be situated.
3. **Providing Video Monitors:**
   - Placing video monitors in common spaces or outside restricted areas allows shelter guests to visually locate where staff are situated within the building. For example, a camera may display hallways where staff walk up and down in restricted areas, but do not allow viewing into a specific case manager office.

Fostering a Sense of Safety

1. **Transparent Operations:**
   - Knowing where staff members are located helps create an atmosphere of transparency, ensuring that guests feel safe and aware of the shelter's operational practices.

Conclusion

By implementing measures to enhance staff visibility, shelters can contribute to a greater sense of safety and transparency for their guests. This emphasises the importance of utilizing technology and strategic placement to ensure that staff presence is known and accessible to those utilizing the shelter's services.

SHELTER SECURITY AND CONCIERGE STAFF

Considerations should be taken for the employment of dedicated security or concierge staff within a shelter environment. Should a shelter require these positions the following recommendations should be considered.

Key Recommendations:

1. **Concierge Model for Security:**
   - Consider employing a concierge model for security staff, which may also include Peer Support Workers who can provide additional support to shelter guests.
2. **Distinct Apparel:**
   - Provide concierge staff with apparel that clearly distinguishes them from program or floor staff within the shelter.
3. **Avoid Law Enforcement Imagery:**
   - Avoid the use of utility belts and security vests that may project images comparable to law enforcement, as this can potentially create discomfort or fear among shelter guests.
4. **Integration Throughout the Building:**
   - Integrate concierge staff throughout the shelter building rather than confining them to back offices or behind tinted windows, promoting a more accessible and approachable presence.
5. **Enhanced De-Escalation Techniques:**
   - Ensure that concierge staff receive training in enhanced de-escalation techniques that prioritize non-violent approaches to conflict resolution.
6. **Trauma-Informed Care Training:**
   - Provide specific training on Trauma-Informed Care to concierge staff to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to interact sensitively with shelter guests who may have experienced trauma.
7. **Consider the Name of the Team:**
   - Often local jurisdiction dictates the naming convention for licenced security staff. If possible, it is recommended to not use the term Security and move towards a more trauma informed name like Safety Ambassador, Concierge, or shelter safer person.

Staff Rounds and Visibility.

Security cameras alone cannot replace the reassuring presence of staff, which helps foster feelings of safety and connection among shelter guests. Staff visibility also aids in conflict reduction, identifying potential hazards, and responding promptly to shelter guests in need.

Key Recommendations:

1. **Staff Visibility and Rounds:**
   - Prioritize staff visibility within the shelter, where staff are not confined to offices but actively move throughout the facility, including bathrooms, showers, common areas, sleeping areas, smoking areas, and the exterior perimeter.

2. **Connecting with Shelter Guests:**
   - Encourage staff to view rounds as an opportunity to connect with shelter guests while promoting safety and reducing potential conflicts.
3. **Identifying Hazards and Distress:**
   - Regular staff rounds help identify and address potential hazards (e.g., spills) and promptly detect shelter guests in medical or emotional distress.
4. **Predictable Staff Presence:**
   - Establish a set schedule for staff rounds in different areas of the shelter to improve the predictability of staff presence for shelter guests.

Staff rounds and engagement will foster a trauma-informed, person-centred care model.

Role of Peer Supports in Shelter

Peer Supports can play a critical function within a shelter environment. It emphasizes their unique ability to form connections with shelter guests through shared experiences of homelessness. As such, the intentions and roles of the position in a shelter setting is outlined here, but in conversation with people that perform these roles in the shelter a different job title or description of the role may be used.

Key Points:
1. **Defining Peer Supports:**
   - Peer Supports are individuals who have first-hand experience with homelessness and share similar life experiences with shelter guests. They play a vital role in providing empathy, support, and practical guidance based on their own journeys.
2. **Range of Engagement:**
   - Peer Supports can engage with shelter guests in various capacities, from informal conversations to more formal roles within clinical support teams. Their primary goal is to inspire hope and assist shelter guests on their journey toward improved well-being and housing stability.
3. **Support and Training for Peer Supports:**
   - Peer Supports benefit from having their own support network, adequate training on trauma, boundary setting, and self-care, and a valued role within the shelter. They are considered "experientially credentialed" based on their own experiences.
4. **Roles of Peer Supports in Shelters:**
   - Peer Supports play diverse roles, including providing emotional support, accompanying shelter guests in the community, participating in policy development, dispelling myths, reflecting diverse identities, assisting in goal setting, and more.
5. **Compensation and Documentation:**
   - Peer Supports should be adequately compensated for their roles, and considerations should be made regarding documentation based on the nature of their tasks.
6. **Avoiding Generalizations:**
   - While Peer Supports offer valuable insights based on their lived experiences, caution should be exercised in generalizing one person's experience to the entire shelter population, especially in diverse settings.

Engaging People with Current Living Experience

Recognizing and respecting the expertise and autonomy of each individual is at the heart of a person-centred, trauma-informed, and housing-focused approach. It shifts the focus from merely providing services to empowering individuals to actively participate in their own journey towards stability and housing. This philosophy fosters an environment of respect, trust, and collaboration, which is fundamental to creating a truly supportive and effective shelter.

Conclusion

Peer Supports play a pivotal role within shelters, forming meaningful connections with guests through shared experiences of homelessness. This chapter outlined their essential functions, recognizing that job titles and role descriptions may vary in practice. Peer Supports, drawing from personal experiences, offer empathy, support, and practical guidance to guests. Their engagement ranges from informal conversations to more formal roles within clinical support teams, aiming to inspire hope and facilitate progress toward well-being and housing stability. Adequate training, support networks, and a valued role within the shelter contribute to their effectiveness. While providing diverse forms of support, Peer Supports should be justly compensated, and documentation should align with the nature of their responsibilities. It is important to avoid making sweeping generalizations about the shelter population based on one person's experience, particularly in diverse settings. Additionally, the chapter emphasizes a person-centred, trauma-informed, and housing-focused approach, prioritizing individual expertise, autonomy, and active participation in the journey towards stability and housing. This philosophy fosters an environment of respect, trust, and collaboration, forming the foundation of a truly supportive and effective shelter.

The Facility

Responsible Use of Video Cameras for Safety and Transparency

Shelters should have policies and/or procedures that ensure the responsible use of video cameras within a shelter facility, emphasizing that their primary purpose should be to enhance safety and transparency rather than to monitor and police shelter guests.

Appropriate Use of Video Cameras:
1. **Monitoring Common Areas:**
   - Video cameras should be strategically placed in common areas to help staff and shelter guests have a visual understanding of activities in these spaces.
2. **Privacy Considerations:**
   - Video cameras should never be installed inside bedrooms, bathrooms, or shower areas, as these are private spaces that require protection.

Transparency and Inclusivity:
1. **Visual Access for Shelter Guests:**
   - To promote transparency, it is advisable to provide video monitors within the facility, allowing shelter guests to view activities in different areas, thus ensuring their inclusion in the visual monitoring process.

2. **Respectful Monitoring Avoiding Inappropriate Policing:**
   - Video cameras should not be used to police or catch shelter guests violating rules. Instead, they should serve as tools for maintaining safety and transparency within the shelter environment.

Controlling Access to the Building

The goal is to create a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

Controlled Access and Curfew Considerations

Where controlled access maybe a function of the shelter. There is a need for a balanced approach that prioritizes safety while respecting the autonomy and preferences of shelter guests.

Controlled Access Protocols:
1. **Streamlined Access for Registered Guests:**
   - Access for registered guests should be as straightforward as possible, with minimal staff contact to ensure efficiency and convenience.
2. **Sign-In for Third-Party Service Providers and Volunteers:**
   - Third-party service providers and volunteers should be required to sign in and out of the building, allowing for accountability and clear documentation of visits.
3. **Limiting Visitors for Safety and Security:**
   - Except for designated areas like dining halls serving community members in need, limiting access to the building helps maintain a sense of safety and security for shelter guests.

Balancing Safety and Autonomy:
1. **Nighttime Access Considerations:**
   - During nighttime hours (e.g., 10pm to 6am), there may be more controlled access, especially for existing shelter guests leaving the facility. However, imposing a strict "hard curfew" may not align with person-centred or trauma-informed approaches.
2. **Balanced Approach to Nighttime Exit Permissions:**
   - Shelter staff are encouraged to consider allowing a small percentage of existing shelter guests to sign out for short intervals during the overnight period. This respects individual preferences for activities like taking a short walk or having a moment of fresh air.

By adopting controlled access protocols that balance safety with individual autonomy, shelters can create an environment that supports the well-being and preferences of their guests.

Restricted Areas

It is entirely appropriate for some areas of the shelter to be off-limits to shelter guests.

Designated Restricted Areas:
1. **Examples of Restricted Areas:**
   - Restricted areas may include food preparation and storage spaces, offices with sensitive information, rooms housing IT and building infrastructure, and healthcare service areas.
2. **Notification of Restricted Areas:**
   - Posting notices near restricted areas is a helpful practice to inform shelter guests about the restricted status of certain spaces and provide a brief explanation of the restriction.

Balancing Confidentiality and Transparency:

1. **Incorporating Windows in Restricted Area Doors:**
   - Where confidentiality is not compromised, it is beneficial to have windows in doors leading to restricted areas. This allows shelter guests to observe activities on the other side, promoting transparency and demystifying the functions of those areas.

Managing restricted areas in the shelter requires a thoughtful approach that prioritizes safety, confidentiality, and transparency. By clearly designating restricted areas and implementing practices like informative notices and windows in doors, shelters can strike a balance between safeguarding sensitive spaces and providing opportunities for understanding and transparency.

Areas that Can Feel More Confined

Some waiting areas and offices within the shelter can feel more confined than other areas of the shelter such as the lounge or dining area.

Empowering Shelter Guests in Meeting Space Selection:

1. **Active Voice for Shelter Guests:**
   - Shelter guests should be empowered to choose their preferred meeting locations whenever possible. This promotes a sense of agency and comfort during interactions with staff.

Enhancing Privacy and Safety in Confined Spaces:

1. **Unobstructed Views through Windows:**
   - When using more confined meeting spaces, ensure windows provide unobstructed views of the exterior. This helps maintain a sense of openness and safety.
2. **Furniture Arrangement for Safety and Accessibility:**
   - Arrange furniture to create a safe and accessible environment for both staff and shelter guests. Consider easy access to exits and ensure a clear path.
3. **Seasonal Considerations:**
   - In seasonally appropriate weather, consider opening exterior windows to improve ventilation and create a more comfortable meeting environment.
4. **Door Management for Privacy:**
   - Depending on the desired level of privacy, adjust the door position. It can be kept slightly or fully ajar to align with the needs of the meeting.

Providing shelter guests with choices in meeting spaces and implementing practices to enhance privacy and safety in confined areas contribute to a more respectful and empowering environment. This creates spaces that prioritize the comfort and agency of shelter guests during interactions with staff.

Bed Arrangement and Space Considerations

Bed arrangement in sleeping areas cand enhance feelings of safety, reduce conflict, and minimize disease transmission. Many jurisdictions with have standards for the required separation. These are considered best practice.

Key Bed Arrangement Recommendations:
1. **Space Allocation per Person:**
   - Ensure that each sleeping area provides a minimum of 3.5 square meters (m²) per person. This allocation supports comfort and personal space.
2. **Bed Separation:**
   - Maintain a minimum separation of 0.75 meters (m) between the edge of one bed and the next bed in sleeping areas with multiple beds. This separation helps create a sense of personal space and reduces potential conflicts.
3. **Bunk Bed Considerations:**
   - If bunk beds are utilized, ensure there is a vertical separation of at least 1.1 meters (m) between the beds. Additionally, maintain this same separation between the top bunk and the lowest hanging fixture or ceiling.
4. **Configuring Beds for Safety:**
   - Arrange beds in a manner that allows for easy egress from the room in case of emergencies. Beds should not obstruct windows, air vents, doorways, or access to building infrastructure like control panels. They should also not be placed underneath shelving or non-anchored furniture.

Implementing these bed arrangement recommendations supports a safer and more comfortable sleeping environment for shelter guests. By ensuring adequate space and separation between beds, conflicts can be minimized, and the risk of disease transmission reduced.

Private Spaces for Changing Clothes

Shelters should be providing privacy for shelter guests when changing clothes. It stresses that no guest should be placed in a situation where they have to partake in public nudity, and they should not be subjected to the nudity of others.

Key Privacy Recommendations:
1. **Private Changing Spaces:**
   - Ensure there are dedicated spaces within the shelter, such as changing areas or designated stalls, where guests can change their clothes in private.
2. **Partitions or Curtains:**
   - Install partitions or curtains in sleeping areas or bathroom areas to provide privacy for individuals changing clothes. These partitions should effectively reduce or cease visibility of nudity for other shelter guests.

By implementing these privacy measures, shelters can create an environment where guests feel respected, comfortable, and secure when changing clothes.

Mirrors for Visibility

Shelters may incorporate the use of mirrors in blind corners to enhance safety and reduce surprises. It emphasizes that mirrors can be valuable tools for both staff and shelter guests to see if there is someone around the corner, thereby preventing accidental physical contact.

Key Recommendations:
1. **Strategic Placement of Mirrors:**
   - Install mirrors in blind corners, particularly in areas with 90-degree turns, to provide visibility around corners.

By strategically placing mirrors in blind spots, shelters can improve safety and awareness within the facility. This measure helps to minimize unexpected encounters and promotes a more secure environment for both staff and shelter guests.

Use of Plexiglass for Safety

While plexiglass is often installed to enhance staff safety, it can inadvertently impact the feelings of safety for shelter guests. Plexiglass should be considered as a last resort, to be used only if other safety measures are insufficient.

Key Recommendations:
1. **Consider Alternative Safety Measures:**

   - Prioritize alternative safety measures that do not involve the use of plexiglass, especially if they do not compromise the well-being and dignity of shelter guests.

Shelter Furniture Selection and Arrangement

The following provides things to be considered when selecting and arranging of furniture within a shelter environment. It emphasizes the importance of choosing durable and high-quality furniture while avoiding the use of institutional-style furnishings often associated with places of institutional care or incarceration.

Key Recommendations:
1. **Durable and Non-Institutional Furniture:**
   - Select furniture that is durable and in good condition but avoids the institutional style that may re-traumatize a shelter guest.
2. **Consider Accessibility:**
   - Choose furniture with consideration for accessibility, ensuring that individuals with mobility challenges can easily get in and out of chairs, couches, or dining tables. This includes accommodating individuals who use walkers, canes, or wheelchairs.
3. **Optimal Furniture Arrangement:**
   - Arrange furniture in a way that avoids clutter and provides easy navigation for shelter guests and staff.
   - Ensure that the placement of furniture does not obstruct means of egress and complies with safety standards.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on strategies to ensure safety and respect the preferences of shelter guests. We discussed controlled access protocols, emphasizing streamlined entry for registered guests and proper sign-in procedures for third-party service providers. Balancing safety with autonomy, especially during nighttime hours, is crucial for a person-centred approach.

Additionally, we addressed restricted areas within the shelter, emphasizing the importance of clear communication through notices and, where possible, windows in restricted area doors. This promotes transparency while maintaining confidentiality.

In spaces that may feel more confined, empowering shelter guests to choose meeting locations enhances their sense of agency. Implementing measures like unobstructed views, thoughtful furniture arrangement, and considering seasonal needs further contribute to a respectful and safe environment.

By incorporating these practices, shelters can prioritize the comfort and agency of their guests, fostering an environment that promotes well-being and dignity in all interactions with staff.

DESIGNING AND CONSTRUCTING A TRAUMA-INFORMED, PERSON-CENTRED, HOUSING-FOCUSED SHELTER

How space is utilized and configured can have a significant impact on an individual's perception of space and safety and have a profound impact on mood and behaviour. If space is perceived as "open", with clear sightlines and few barriers, it will increase the sense of safety and mitigate a perceived sense of crowding and chaos. There are many aspects of the physical environment that can be triggering and/or potentially re-traumatizing for people. While it's impossible to address all possible triggers, there are some changes that might be easy to make or important to consider when working with specific populations. Below are suggestions regarding trauma informed approaches to building/space.

Designing and building a new shelter must involve experts in trauma-informed design, cultural sensitivity, and the direct input of current and former shelter guests, as well as service providers, during the planning and construction phases of new shelter facilities or renovations.

Key Recommendations:
1. **Engage Knowledgeable Architects/Designers:**
   - Work with architects/building designers who have expertise in trauma-informed design and cultural sensitivity to ensure these principles are integrated into the new construction, addition, or renovation of the shelter.
2. **Cultural Appropriateness:**
   - Ensure that all design elements are culturally appropriate, taking into consideration the diverse backgrounds and needs of shelter guests.
3. **Consultation with Stakeholders:**
   - Seek input from current and former shelter guests, direct service staff, and third-party organizations providing services in the shelter to gather ideas and perspectives on creating a trauma-informed, person-centred, and housing-focused environment.

4. **Limit Shelter Capacity:**
   - Consider limiting the capacity of new shelters to no more than 100 people to maintain an environment conducive to engagement, trauma-informed care, and person-centred support.

CONCLUSION

The creation of this comprehensive guide was fuelled by the hope to assist other shelter providers in exploring the fundamental elements essential for the design and operation of shelters that prioritize the well-being and uphold the dignity of their guests. As has been experienced at the DI, by integrating trauma-informed practices, adopting a person-centred approach, and maintaining a housing-focused perspective, shelters can significantly enhance their capacity to support individuals on their journey towards stability and secure housing. Although perfection may not be possible for any service or program, a commitment to continuous improvement dedicated to incorporating evidence informed approaches and the wisdom of lived experience, progress will be witnessed in the effort to prevent and reduce sheltered homelessness.

It is important to acknowledge that every shelter and the community it serves possesses its own distinct characteristics, challenges, and strengths. Therefore, the ability to adapt and customize these suggestions to suit specific needs and circumstances is paramount. This adaptability ensures that shelters are not only effective but are also attuned to the unique requirements of their guests.

By placing empathy, dignity, and empowerment at the core of their operations, shelters have the potential to become more than just places of refuge. They can transform into spaces that inspire positive change, offering guests a genuine opportunity for growth, recovery, and ultimately, a pathway to long-lasting stability and housing security. This commitment to personalized, respectful care sets the stage for a truly transformative experience for all those who seek shelter and support within these vital community resources.