

Sample Policy:

Standard Precautions in the Shelter Setting

TITLE: Standard Precautions as it Relates to Infection Control

SCOPE: Homeless shelter staff and volunteers who may possibly face contact with bodily fluids or other potentially infectious materials as a result of performing their job duties

PURPOSE: To provide guidelines to agency management, staff, and volunteers regarding the use of Standard Precautions to minimize the risk of employees and volunteers coming in contact with bodily fluids which may contain blood-borne pathogens as well as other infectious agents

RESPONSIBILITIES

Agencies shall:

1. Provide opportunity for the staff to be trained in the control of infectious diseases (including blood borne pathogens) as it pertains to the shelter setting. Agencies may contact Health Care for the Homeless at (206) 296-5091 to arrange training free of charge.
2. Make every attempt to achieve levels of practice as outlined in the Basic Shelter Health and Safety Standards, Staff Health Policy, and other applicable Health and Safety Policies recommended by Public Health - Seattle & King County.
3. Provide all equipment needed to achieve appropriate hand washing (**hot and cold running water, soap, paper towels**). This equipment should be accessible to employees at all times.
4. Provide employees with reasonable access to **personal protective apparel** such as **latex gloves (nitrile gloves must be made available in all situations for employees with sensitivity to latex), goggles, protective gowns, and CPR shields**.
5. Have a plan in place for post-exposure to potentially infectious materials and employees will be trained in its use.
6. Outline basic procedures for all employee duties that may involve contact with bodily fluids or other potentially infectious materials. Such duties include but are not limited to: providing assistance with personal hygiene, handling soiled laundry, providing assistance to a sick client, providing first aid, providing CPR, and cleaning up after spillage of bodily fluids. In all such cases the agency will mandate a Standard Precautions approach, which is simply an infection control approach that treats all body fluids as potentially infectious. The agency may consult with a Health Care for the Homeless Public Health Nurse for assistance with outlining these duties (206) 296-5091.

Employees shall:

1. Agree to follow the procedures regarding duties which may involve contact with bodily fluids and other potentially infectious materials.
2. Immediately report any significant exposure incident to the supervisor. Contact of the employee's non-intact skin (chapped, cracked, scratched or otherwise open), eye, or mucous membrane with blood or other potentially infectious material is a significant exposure.

DUTIES WHICH MAY EXPOSE EMPLOYEES IN THE SHELTER SETTING TO POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS MATERIALS

First Aid and CPR:

Employees who are trained in First Aid and CPR may elect to assist clients needing these interventions. The agency should provide equipment to reduce the risk of infection while rendering such aid. Equipment that should be available and accessible to the employees includes:

- Latex gloves
- CPR masks
- disposable or cotton gowns that tie in the back
- safety goggles
- clean-up materials*

Assessment of wounds, skin conditions, scalp or hair problems:

Clients may ask staff to examine wounds, cuts, burns, injuries, skin conditions, or to check for the presence of lice or scabies. Staff should don latex gloves when asked to do any type of examination beyond visual. The agency should make latex gloves available for such occasions.

Assisting with personal hygiene or toileting:

Clients may request assistance by staff with hygiene (dental care, care of dentures or oral prostheses, assistance with bathing or cleaning up after a bowel movement or urination, changing diapers, cleaning up spill of menstrual fluid, assistance with removal of head lice or lice eggs, etc.) The agency should supply latex gloves for such purposes, and staff should be able to use gowns if they feel they need greater protection. Diaper changing areas should be equipped with a lined trash can, spray bottle of bleach solution, protective covering (such as old computer paper), paper towels, and gloves.

Assisting a sick client:

Clients who are vomiting, drooling, sweating profusely, or being incontinent of stool or urine may request assistance with cleaning up or changing clothes. The agency should provide latex gloves, reusable or disposable gowns and appropriate supplies for cleaning the environment as needed (mop, bleach, bucket, paper towels, etc.)

Assisting Clients Who Have Soiled Bedding or Laundry:

Refer to the sample policy on “Laundry” for details. As much as possible, have the client handle their own clothing and bedding. Wear gloves and a gown when handling soiled laundry. Encourage the client to discard any heavily soiled laundry. Heavily soiled linens should also be discarded or laundered separately and bleached.

* For information on supplies for cleaning the environment after contamination with bodily fluids (including vomit, excrement, urine, blood, saliva, mucous) please refer to the sample policy on “Blood/Bodily Fluids Clean-up Protocol”