



Bed Bug Prevention and Management Guidelines for Shelters and Group Housing

Prevention Screening

Homeless shelters, emergency housing facilities and group housing should incorporate bed bug screening into Intake and Assessment procedures-since bed bugs can travel from previous living arrangements. Bed bug exposure can be incorporated into medical questions related to other public health pests such as lice, scabies, and presence of cockroach allergies or asthma. It is possible that in some cases, bites will be evident, but the client may not know or be concerned that they have been exposed to bed bugs.

Questions should be phrased compassionately, as they may be the first educational experience a person has about bed bugs. Suggestions include:

- Have you stayed in a place where you think you may have been exposed to bed bugs in the past three months?
- Has anyone in your family been bitten by bed bugs or do they have bites or blisters on exposed skin that you are concerned about?
- Bed bugs, lice, scabies, and other pests can cause medical concerns. Do you need help with a bed bugs or any other pest issue?

If a client indicates they may have been exposed to bed bugs or currently have bed bugs, immediate help is necessary to avoid spreading them within the shelter home.

- Provide education to the individual or family about bed bugs and their management and prevention.
- Respond to bed bug complaints immediately.

It is important to never refuse shelter to clients with symptoms of bed bug infestations. Rather incorporate a bed bug policy and agreement to inspect belongings, laundering or

medical attention. Review shelter procedures regarding bed bugs with the client and hold the client responsible for following policies and procedures.

Agencies and facilities managers should have policies in place that will help prevent the spread of bed bugs. Suggested policy statements:

- Your belongings must be free of bed bugs, or you must be willing to work with facility staff to rid your belongings of bed bugs. *This will prevent the introduction of bed bugs into our facility, and will help the resident avoid future bed bug issues.*
- Do not bring - items collected from the street, discarded items, and donated furniture into the facility. *With the increased number of bed bug cases, items on the streets are - more likely to contain bed bugs (the reason for being discarded). Therefore it is not safe to bring discarded or abandoned items into our facility.*
- If you have possibly been exposed to bed bugs, or suspect that you may have bed bug bites, you must tell the facilities manager. *Early detection and management is very important for the control of bed bugs. Otherwise the number of bed bugs will increase rapidly.*
- The client must consult with a medical provider or social worker if bed bugs are suspected. *This is helpful for clients with mental, physical, and financial needs that limit their ability to deal with bed bugs.*
- You must **NOT** use spray, fog or dust pesticides on your person or belongings to treat for bed bugs or any other pests. *Foggers cause bed bugs to spread, over the counter sprays may be ineffective, and bed bug control requires experience to know where to place insecticides to be effective against bed bugs. Additionally, pesticides are dangerous chemicals and should only be used by trained individuals.*
- Residents may **NOT** store belongings under the bed when dealing with a bed bug infestation. *This provides plenty of hiding spots that are difficult to clean.*

Handling Complaints

Bed bugs and other pests sometimes elicit fear and panic in people. Most are unwilling to live with pests, especially those that bite. However, some individuals are resigned to living with bed bugs and may be the source of an infestation in an adjacent unit or room. Complaints about pests or bites must be handled IMMEDIATELY. Complaints should be addressed with concern, but also with a logical approach that relies on science and professional pest management expertise.

The typical course of events would be complaint, inspection (of one or many units), confirmation, pre-cleaning per PMP instructions, treatment, post cleaning per PMP instructions, future prevention strategies, and follow up to be sure the problem was handled adequately.

Designation of a pest management coordinator in your organization can streamline the handling of complaints and infestations. There should be one person in charge of overseeing the inspection and treatment process. Often this is the building or facility manager.

Encourage clients to speak openly about bed bugs and other pests and to ask for help. Be sensitive to their concerns. Use resources available to you, and gather the contact information of experts, such as your pest management company's staff entomologist, to ensure a quick response.

Furniture and Room Guidelines

Bed bugs thrive under certain conditions which are enhanced by the availability of hiding spots close to their human hosts. Bed bugs have a strong preference for paper, cloth and wood, over items made from metal and plastic. Porous surfaces provide more humidity and egg-laying locations. Furniture choices can greatly contribute to the control of bed bugs. Guidelines for furniture include:

- Use metal frame beds and cribs to discourage bed bug hiding and egg-laying. If bed frames are wooden and cannot be replaced, fill gaps in frames, cracks, crevices, and holes with silicone caulk. This will allow for better inspection and reduce need for treatment. Painting furniture white will also allow for better inspection.
- Eliminate head boards completely. Bed bugs hide and develop in the cracks and crevices afforded by head boards.
- Use only white or light colored sheets. This will allow for better inspection.
- Pull the beds away from the wall and make sure the linens are not touching the floor.
- Use a monitoring device on each leg of the bed in order to keep the bugs from crawling up onto the bed. Monitoring devices can be purchased or you may use double-sided tape. **Note:** monitoring devices are designed to confirm the presence of bed bugs at all stages not manage an infestation.
- Avoid all –material, fabric furniture. Instead utilize items made from metal or plastic.
- Use of small, launderable cushions is one way to make residents more comfortable. Cushions should be dried on a hot setting for 20 minutes.
- Use laboratory-tested, bite-proof encasements on mattresses **and** box springs (they also have bed bug couch encasements). Encasements are zippered

enclosures that cover bed components. Encasing both mattress and box spring eliminates the need to discard bedding.

- Don't buy or accept wicker furniture donations. Wicker provides harborage to bed bugs and is almost impossible to treat effectively.

Other Room Guidelines

- Prior to an infestation, moldings and joints around the room perimeter (floor, doors, cabinets and windows) should be sealed with an appropriate silicone product to eliminate hiding spots for both bed bugs and other pests (e.g., cockroaches).
- Prior to an infestation seal penetrations through walls, floors, and ceiling.
Note: If an infestation is suspected or has occurred, do not seal before the treatment. Consult your PMP for advice.
- Residents should store permitted belongs in sealed plastic bags in a place provided.

Facilities should adopt policies and protocols as to how to manage and communicate with residents or visitors that may be uncooperative with facility bed bug policies.

Detection

- If a bed bug is seen, capture and secure in a vial or specimen container (tape lids to container) for identification. You can add rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer to the container which will kill the bug.
- Notify facility maintenance of the possible bed bug issue, - contact- a laboratory for identification and/or a pest management company for identification and extermination.
- When possible, close the room off and leave room undisturbed for the pest management professional (leave linen and room items).
 - ✓ Place two-sided tape in the room in the doorway.
 - ✓ If the pest management company verifies that live bed bugs are present, the room should be treated and remain closed until treatment by a pest management company.

Transfer of Resident

- Each resident and situation will have its own set of circumstances and should be handled on a case-by-case basis. A resident may need to be transferred to a different room and the following steps must be taken prior to said transfer:
 - ✓ Request the resident place all clothing items, purses, luggage or backpacks in a sealed plastic bag. The bagged clothing items and backpacks can be washed on the hottest temperature and/or dried on the hottest temperatures for 20 minutes.
 - ✓ When possible, close the room off and leave room undisturbed for the pest management professional leave room as is – do not remove furniture or linens).
 - ✓ Place two-sided tape in the room in the doorway.
 - ✓ If the pest management company verifies that live bed bugs are present, the room should be treated and remain closed until treatment by a pest management company.
 - ✓ Consult your pest management professional for further instructions.

Donation of Clothing and Other Household Items

The following steps will help avoid the introduction or spread of bed bugs in your facility.

- Do not accept donations in cardboard boxes. Insist on the usage of plastic bags.
- Sort and inspect donations carefully on clean linoleum floor and in a separate room from already sorted and inspected items. Prevent the escape of bed bugs from the sorting room into your facility by sorting inside a perimeter of carpet (double-sided) tape placed around the working space. This creates a sticky barrier that bed bugs cannot cross. See Polk County Manual for Prevention and Control of Bed Bugs, Inspection section.
- Clean area after sorting. Vacuums can be used to suck up bugs and their waste. To prevent bed bugs from getting into the vacuum cleaner, insert a knee-high nylon stocking in the end of the vacuum hose then insert the crack and crevice attachment to hold the nylon in place. The bed bugs will be captured in the toe of the nylon stocking. When you are finished vacuuming, remove the stocking, tie a knot in the top and place in a tightly sealed plastic bag for immediate disposal in an outdoor trash container. If you do not use this strategy, vacuum containers should be cleaned with heat over 120° F. **Vacuuming alone may not eliminate bed bugs or manage an infestation. If you suspect an infestation contact a pest management professional immediately.**

- Keep sorted and laundered items tightly sealed in plastic bags from items that have not been checked or treated.
- Before distribution of clothes, backpacks, coats, linens, blankets and soft stuffed toys, wash and/or dry on the highest heat setting.
- Do not receive or sell used mattresses or box springs.

**Polk County Health Department
Polk County Bed Bug Task Force**

