



Guidance for the provision of residential services for Domestic Violence Providers

July 7, 2020

At the Division on Women, our highest priority is to ensure that survivors of domestic violence and their children are safe, healthy and connected. To achieve this goal, options for safe housing and access to supportive services are critical.

DCF oversees New Jersey's statewide network of domestic violence programs including domestic violence shelters. DCF recognizes the challenges inherent in communal living during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we are working to adjust usual operating requirements to preserve the quality of service for survivors and their families while balancing the implementation of measures to safeguard the health of survivors and the staff that serve them.

The following guidelines apply to all domestic violence lead agencies that provide residential services and are **effective immediately**. Circumstances are changing rapidly, and additional guidance will be released, as needed.

I. Expectation to use hotels or motels

Domestic violence programs operating under contract with the Department of Children and Families are required to use hotels or motels for overflow when their emergency safe houses are full or when a hotel better meets the needs of the survivor (accessibility, safety). Numerous domestic violence programs have had to adjust the number of individuals and/or families they can house in shelter to comply with social distancing guidelines. When safe shelter is requested and there is limited capacity, the domestic violence provider is expected to advocate for and safely house the survivor and their family in a hotel or motel facility until there is available space at the Safe House and/or the survivor has been able to secure safe and permanent housing. Providers may not deny shelter to a survivor due to capacity concerns.

II. Non-discrimination requirement

Federal and state grant obligations¹ require that funding subrecipients (domestic violence providers) extend the same or comparable services to all clients, and prohibit discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship status, language spoken, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation or health. Details regarding expectations for screening in survivors is detailed in section VI below.

¹ See Appendix E for the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Final Rule (2016).

III. Selecting appropriate hotels or motels

The domestic violence provider is encouraged to use a hotel or motel from the NJCEDV list, or another facility with which there is a pre-existing partnership and/or Memorandum of Agreement.

IV. Requirement to continue service for survivors receiving shelter in hotels or motels

The use of hotel or motel placements is considered an extension of the domestic violence provider's shelter program. It is expected that the domestic violence provider will provide comparable services available to other residents of the shelter program, including food, case management, safety planning, and advocacy. The domestic violence provider should have contact with the survivor at least once a day for either advocacy or case management. The domestic violence provider and survivor will determine how many nights the survivor will reside in the hotel (for example 7 days and on the 7th day determine if hotel is still the best option). This will continue until the survivor exits the program for safe and permanent housing.

V. Funding to support sheltering survivors in hotels/motels

The domestic violence provider can use agency funding from the support of state and federal funding sources and/or utilize the FEMA reimbursement program.

VI. Additional precautions for survivors sheltering in hotels/motels

Programs will often have to take extra precautions around safety, privacy and confidentiality. When survivors reside at a hotel or motel, the domestic violence agency staff cannot monitor and/or manage who enters or leaves the hotel or the possibility that others may reveal the survivor's location.

A. Screening-In Process²

The following procedures should be followed for screening:

1. Complete a full screening of the caller for safety issues (this is very important), in order to determine if the caller is a survivor of domestic violence.
2. Remember that "*imminent risk*" or how recent the violence occurred is not a standard the domestic violence provider should follow. Screening should be based on whether the caller is a survivor.
3. Once the domestic violence provider determines the person is a survivor, and therefore eligible for services, safety plan to assess their current need.
4. If the survivor expresses the need for safe housing, these options can be offered:

² Adapted from New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence Guiding Principles for Domestic Violence Shelter Admissions.

- a. Safe house/shelter placement;
 - b. If the domestic violence provider has space: offer a place in shelter;
 - c. If the domestic violence provider's safe house is full: safety plan to see if they can be referred to another program out of county. If that would not work for them - due to work, family needs, transportation, or other reasons - they should **be offered a hotel or motel placement; or.**
 - d. If the survivor would be at-risk (related to Covid-19 or other health conditions) or communal living would provide other difficulties (such as they or their children have special needs that would make communal living difficult) they should **be offered a hotel or motel placement.**
5. The domestic violence provider must continue to engage with and advocate for the survivor to determine the best location for them and their family.
 6. Mental health concerns, substance abuse concerns, language barriers, citizenship status, being differently abled, and/or being male or transgender are not appropriate reasons to deny shelter placement. Denial for these reasons violates federal grant requirements.

B. Hotel or Motel Check-In and Check-Out Process

The following procedures should be followed when assisting a survivor to access the hotel space:

1. The domestic violence provider must contact the hotel/motel to register the survivor, in doing so, adhering to all federal and state statutes and regulations on confidentiality.
2. The domestic violence provider will accompany the survivor and their family to the hotel/motel for check-in. This should include ensuring safe entrance to their room and that all accommodations were received.
3. When arriving at the hotel/motel, the agency designated staff person should display their identification at check-in.
4. The domestic violence provider must engage with and advocate for the survivor to receive any special accommodations (crib, extra bed, etc.)
5. Immediately after safe check-in, the domestic violence provider must connect the survivor with an agency counselor and provide all contact information for the local program.
6. The domestic violence provider must provide the survivor and their family the same services made available to survivors that reside in a safe house. This includes but is not limited to, providing or arranging for meal delivery and/or providing gift cards so

that the survivor can purchase food.

7. If transportation is a barrier to accessing services, the domestic violence provider must provide comparable service delivery as if they are non-residential providing daily contact.
8. Remind the survivor that daily contact is how the program determines if there is a need for an extended stay.
9. Exiting the hotel will be done in the same manner as residential services.
10. In the event, a survivor exits the hotel, without notifying the domestic violence provider, the domestic violence provider must make every attempt to locate the survivor to ensure safety and to explore if further services are needed.

Questions regarding this guidance should be sent to Division on Women Program staff at:

Nooge Hartsfield nooge.hartsfield@dcf.nj.gov

Theresa Daniels margarett.daniels@dcf.nj.gov

Appendices:

- Appendix A: List of hotels/motels utilized by NJ Coalition to End Domestic Violence (not public)
- Appendix B: [Domestic Violence Agency Annex A 2.2](#)
- Appendix C: [New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence Shelter Guidelines](#)
- Appendix D: [National Network to End Domestic Violence Safety Considerations when using Hotels](#)
- Appendix E: [Family Violence Prevention and Services Act \(FVPSA\) Final Rule \(2016\)](#)