

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND DISASTERS
REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SHELTER DESIGN AND OPERATIONS
HUBERT H. HUMPHREY BUILDING, ROOM 705-A
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The Subcommittee on Mass Care Shelter Design and Operation will investigate approaches, both internationally and domestically, which move the mass care shelter environment “forward” by thoughtfully integrating the needs of children into these environments; the subcommittee will work with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to build consensus around a set of minimum standards applicable to mass care shelters; the subcommittee will seek ways to encourage greater responsibility and accountability for the development and maintenance of safe, accessible and appropriate mass care shelters for children across all levels of government and non-governmental organizations.

Yesterday, the subcommittee heard a presentation by Trevor Riggen, who coordinates disaster relief services at the American Red Cross (ARC). Mr. Riggen provided a description of ARC’s role and responsibilities in designing and operating shelters.

ARC has developed documents to assist non-governmental organizations in the design and operation of shelter environments:

1. Common Standards of Care for Domestic Disaster Response
2. Shelter Operations Management Toolkit, that includes operational tips, checklists and best practices for shelter managers

Organizations voluntarily commit themselves to adhere to these Standards. In the event that these Standards are unattainable, organizations retain the obligation to continually strive to meet them.

The Common Standards have been presented to the Board of the National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters for adoption.

The subcommittee discussed the following concerns:

- What components of Sphere can be incorporated into ARC’s emergency shelter standards/guidelines/practices?
- Is the local community invited to participate in the development of shelter design and operations programs in order to ensure that the programs are equitable, effective and a balanced representation of the physical, mental and cultural needs of disaster victims?
- What are the trends in large-scale event mass shelter design models (e.g. Delaware is developing a “Community sheltering” model; FEMA is developing a “Congregate Care

Coordination” or multi-service center model, involving multiple NGOs) and how are the needs of children being incorporated into these models?

- How can technology be used to count and track the number of children in a shelter and sort the information according to age and special needs? How can participation in a universal data sharing system be encouraged to collect and analyze this data, in order to meet the needs of children? **Can technology be applied to analyze shelter assessment tools as well?**
- What steps can be taken to ensure that there is an adequate cache of child-specific supplies (medicines, food, diapers, clothing etc...) provided to shelters? How is the private sector engaged?
- Are the needs of children incorporated into the training of volunteers and shelter managers?
- How are professional medical (primary care physicians, nurses) and mental health staffing needs determined and met?
- Are there requirements to provide educational, child play and child care services in shelters? If not, should there be requirements mandated?
- How can shelters be designed and operated to ensure equal access for children with special needs and challenges, including the presence of their support network? **Can a set of minimum acceptable ADA compliance standards be set? How can families and local emergency managers “pre-plan” for the needs of children with special needs (e.g. shelter location, medical home)?**
- How do shelters currently handle unaccompanied minors, homeless youth or self-evacuated youth that present at shelters?
- What protocols are in place to ensure the security of children in shelters, particularly regarding the threat of sexual predators? Is there a need for a better system to protect children from sexual predators in shelters?

Recognizing that the number of sheltering options is diminishing, the subcommittee agreed that the development of minimum standards and guidelines must strike a careful balance.