

# American Red Cross

## Disaster Services Program Guidance

Instructions for Use of the  
American Red Cross–Health and Human Services  
Initial Intake and Assessment Tool  
June 20, 2008

### Purpose

The main purpose of the *Initial Intake and Assessment Tool* is to enable Red Cross staff to decide if simple accommodations can be provided that will enable individuals to stay in general population shelters. The secondary purpose is to ensure proper and safe placement of those clients with medical or functional needs beyond the scope and expertise of care offered in Red Cross shelters. The Red Cross, and its partner, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), are determined to maximize the use of this tool in order to minimize stress and emphasize the safety and well-being of those we serve during times of disaster.

### Top Section of the Tool

Shelter workers meet with clients and legibly record pertinent information in the top of the tool and questions 1 through 9. The remaining questions are only to be filled out by Disaster Health Services (HS) and Disaster Mental Health (DMH) workers. Only *one form* is used for *each family*<sup>#</sup>. Questions in the early part of the tool are designed to identify language barriers, separated families and other important information to be passed onto the shelter manager. The top section of the tool asks for basic demographic information in addition to:

- DRO stands for Disaster Relief Operation (enter name and number of DRO)
- List *all* of the names of the family members in the shelter
- The shelter worker initials that he/she has notified the shelter manager when a child under the age of 18 is unaccompanied in the shelter

### Questions 1 - 9

The shelter worker asks the head of the family the first nine “yes/no” questions, except for questions 4 and 9 which are questions to the interviewer. You should not ask the client questions 4 and 9. All 9 questions pertain to all family members listed on the form. Where there is a “yes” answer, the worker notes **ONLY** the name of the relevant family member, discontinues the interview and refers the client to HS or DMH. **(Do not write confidential information anywhere in the first 9 questions!)** Only HS and/or DMH, *in conjunction* with the shelter manager, will make decisions regarding shelter accommodation.

If there is a need for a language interpreter or if the client needs assistance in understanding or answering the questions, end the interview and contact the shelter manager. Questions 3, 4 and 9 refer to emergency situations and/or urgent referrals to HS or DMH.

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<sup>#</sup> Although the intake tool is designed for the entire family, there could be a need to use more than one form if the family has several individuals with different needs.

**Question 3:** In cases of illness or emergency do not continue the interview. A call to 911 must be made in any life-threatening emergency (such as chest pain, heavy bleeding or multiple injuries. HS will take over at this point). If the client has an illness, medical condition, or if you are unsure or confused as to the client’s answer to question 3, refer to HS or DMH immediately. Escort the client to HS or DMH when necessary and hand the HS/DMH worker the tool. (*Do not give the tool to the client*)

**Observation 4:** This is NOT a question to the client. Document your observation as the interviewer. If the client appears to be a threat to self or others, call 911. If you answer “yes” to observation 4 or are unsure, refer immediately to DMH or HS.

**Question 9:** This is NOT a question to the client. Refer the client to HS or DMH if you think the client would benefit from a more detailed health or mental health assessment or if the client is unsure or confused about any of his/her answers.

**STOP the Interview**

Place your initials on the tool and indicate whether you’ve referred the client to HS or DMH. Do not answer any questions beyond this point (they are for HS and DMH workers only). If you answered “no” to all questions, attach the intake tool to the shelter registration form. If you answered “yes” to any questions or were unsure, refer the client to HS or DMH.

**Where to Put the Initial Intake and Assessment Tool**

If you answered “no” to all of the first 9 questions and were sure the client did not need a referral to HS or DMH, then attach the tool to the shelter registration form. If you answered “yes” or were unsure as to any question and referred the client to HS or DMH, the HS or DMH worker will attach the tool to the Client Health Record (F2077). (*Do not give the tool to the client*).

**FOR HS and DMH ONLY**

Pre-existing conditions, both physical and psychological, are frequently exacerbated during times of extreme stress. HS and DMH workers should be aware of the potential for a client to decompensate or decline in health. Previously healthy individuals may have new medical/mental health needs due to the disaster.

- Once a client has been referred to HS/DMH, **all information is confidential** and will only be seen by licensed health care providers. Initiate a *Client Health Record (F2077)* for the client and attach the tool.
- In situations where a client has both physical and psychological concerns, he/she should be seen by both a DMH and an HS worker.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions or concerns about using this form contact your supervisor and/or a Disaster Health Services or Disaster Mental Health worker.