

Preparing for departure

- ❑ Conduct a “Know Your Rights” seminar and provide factsheets/pamphlets. Explain asylum process and any documents that guests have signed. The seminar should be conducted by a JFON volunteer or someone else trained in the area (though it does not necessarily have to be a lawyer).
- ❑ Provide information about available services in destination cities (CWS affiliates, JFON sites, etc.) with phone numbers. Provide CWS asylum hotline phone number.
- ❑ Post maps of the region and the United States on the walls of the shelter. Show guests where they are on the map. Provide approximate travel time (by bus, with stops) to various cities. Inform guests who are traveling north about the colder temperatures. If you provide clothing, make climate-appropriate clothing and footwear available.
- ❑ Orient guests who are traveling by air to air travel/TSA processes.
- ❑ Issue every departing family a backpack containing a blanket, hygiene kit, feminine hygiene products, bottles of water, healthy snacks, etc. Let each child choose a (new) stuffed animal and a story book.
- ❑ Remain at bus station/airport until you are sure guests have boarded their bus or gone through security and are safe.
- ❑ Clean facility thoroughly following established cleaning protocol. Use bleach and pay special attention to any items that are frequently reused. Do not forget small handheld items, like phones, writing utensils, etc. Sanitize door handles.
- ❑ Conduct regular facility safety inspections. Consider obstructed emergency exits, broken or damaged items and equipment, sign legibility, plumbing leaks, fire hazards, and anything else that may cause injury or harm.



Tips for United Methodist-Affiliated Transitional Shelters along the U.S.-Mexico Border

Preparing for Guests

Staff/Volunteers

- Vet all staff and volunteers. Perform background checks and driver's license checks if applicable.
 - Consider limiting interaction with guests to only the most vetted/experienced staff/volunteers.
- Have volunteers sign a liability waiver. Gather emergency contact information for staff /volunteers.
- Conduct an orientation session to align your staff/volunteers with your organization's mission and goals; train staff/volunteers on policies and procedures and explain the staff/volunteer management system (scheduling, check-in and check-out, direct supervisor, problem reporting, etc.).
 - Conduct monthly refresher trainings. Potential topics include, but are not limited to: safety, guest interaction, cleaning, etc.
 - Consider providing a handbook for staff and volunteers.
 - Assess capabilities and skills of staff/volunteers (versus what they claim they can do) and assign them to roles that appropriately utilize their skills.
 - Recruit staff/volunteers who speak Spanish, French, and/or the language of your guests.
 - Consider intercultural training for your staff and volunteers.
- Encourage everyone to stay up-to-date with migration-related current events or policy that may affect operations. Triangulate your news to avoid misinformation.

- Prioritize food safety. Practice food safety basics. Regularly inspect food items for expiration dates, leaks and mold, especially those that are donated. Do not recycle leftovers with questionable shelf-life or temperature compliance. More information here: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/keep-food-safe-food-safety-basics/CT_Index
- Ask staff/volunteers and guests about food allergies and notify all staff of anyone who self-identifies as having a food allergy.
- Serve nutrient-dense, culturally-appropriate, hot meals as much as possible. Include plenty of vegetables, colorful fruits, whole grains, healthy protein, healthy oils, and, preferably, water. Focus on whole food options. Avoid sugary snacks. More information about healthy meals here: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-plate/>
- Do not pray with guests unless it is requested by the guest. Likewise, do not ask if you can pray with guests. Bibles may be made available, but do not distribute Bibles or other religious materials unless requested. More information on the international humanitarian principle of impartiality here: https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf
- Do not take identifiable pictures of guests.
- Rotate staff and volunteers to avoid burnout. Provide resources to staff/volunteers for their own mental health.

While guests are in your care

- Provide guests the opportunity to select items of clothing from a clean, well-organized collection. Avoid situations that resemble a rummage sale. Undergarments can be rolled into other items of clothing or stashed in pockets if guests feel embarrassed.
- Involve guests in decision-making as much as possible. Allow guests to choose whether or not to participate in any activity, except when doing compromises safety/security or violates policy. Promoting autonomy/agency supports maintaining dignity.
- Encourage normal daily activities. Provide kitchen space for people to cook for their families. Give children a designated safe space to play.
- Remind guests about the importance of handwashing. Encourage handwashing after restroom use and before preparing food and eating.
- Designate separate shower space for women and men. Ensure guests feel safe to change and shower in privacy.
- Ensure 24-hour supervision of the facility by vetted staff. Be sure guests know who is in charge, so they know who to go to if they have a question or in case of emergency. Consider having person in charge wear a noticeable item of clothing, like a reflective vest.
- Know the risk factors and warning signs of suicide. Call 911 in the event that a guest appears suicidal or attempts suicide. More information here: <https://save.org/about-suicide/warning-signs-risk-factors-protective-factors/>
- Assure that drinking water is available at all times of day. Consider dedicating a refrigerator for healthy snacks to be available 24/7.

Policies/Partnership

- Stay local to promote program sustainability. Establish a local board of directors. Recruit local staff/volunteers. Utilize local resources and supplies. Network with local organizations and services.
- Develop agreements and partnerships with local bus station managers, grocery stores, other vendors, local congregations, health care providers, and even ICE/CBP officers.
- Establish policies for helping guests seek medical care. Have you connected with local healthcare providers? Is a trained healthcare provider on staff or on call?
- Work with the local health department to establish a plan for control of insects and other pests, and for containment and reporting of infectious diseases.
- Work with local health department to establish and enforce facility cleaning protocol. Staff and volunteers should perform cleaning tasks. Set up hand sanitizing stations. Conduct regular facility inspections.
- Establish strict handwashing protocol.
- Enforce a child safety policy, including but not limited to: ensuring there are always two unrelated adults present, ensuring children are always within eyesight of parents, and ensuring no child is transported without car seat. Do not use children as translators. More information about developing a child safety policy here: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/getting-started-safesanctuaries>
- Ensure the protection of vulnerable groups, including but not limited to: the elderly, persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA, pregnant women, and unaccompanied children.
- Consider posting signs for the National Human Trafficking Hotline in private, discrete locations (bathroom stalls, changing rooms). Printable signs here: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/get-involved/downloadable-resources>

- Document all policies in writing. During orientation, have staff/ volunteers sign a document stating that they received training on the organization's policies, that they understood the policies, and that they received a handbook (if one was provided).

Facility/Supplies

- Maintain a secured facility. Keep doors locked from outside. Do not accept walk-in, on-premises donations. Conduct a simple security check on anyone entering the facility (bag check, pocket check, etc.) and maintain a sign-in/sign-out sheet.
- Conduct ongoing fire safety inspections. Post exit route diagrams and label all emergency exits in English and Spanish.
- Firearms should not be allowed in the facility.
- Kitchens should adhere to all health department requirements.
- Post simple rules of behavior in English and Spanish.
- Label items in the facility in Spanish.
- Keep shelter tidy, cheery, and organized. Paint the walls bright colors.
- Install a commercial washer and dryer. Establish a protocol for handling old clothing (either washing or disposal).
- Keep it green. Establish a plan for recycling and trash disposal. Use energy-saving lightbulbs. Choose compostable and/or environmentally friendly options whenever possible.
- Use online gift registries so that donated items are new. Online registries can allow more control over donations received, allow the donor to add a bit of "touch" to what they choose to donate, hide the shelter location from the donor, and automatically create a donor base (donor emails are automatically stored). Inventory all donations. Consider unboxing donations in a separate facility.

Caring for Guests

Arrival

- Personally welcome everyone who enters the shelter. Explain who you are, who is doing the work, and who paid for it. Emphasize that the shelter is not a government program, nor any kind of detention center, but the work of the church.
- Collect only basic, deidentified information to track guests. Keep guests' information protected at all times.
- Designate a phone for guests to call relatives and/or sponsors. Do not allow guests to use the cell phones of staff or volunteers, nor the main business line of the shelter.
- Work with guests to make travel arrangements soon after they arrive at the shelter. Bus tickets should be prepaid by travelers or their relatives. Do not allow relatives to purchase bus/air tickets that depart more than 48 hours after arrival at the shelter. Do not give extra cash, etc. to travelers.
- Orient guests to U.S. cultural customs that may be different from their own, including but not limited to: bathroom use (toilet paper disposal and toilet use), breastfeeding, child supervision, cleanliness norms, and anything else that may be causing misunderstandings or tension.