**Emergency Assistance Shelters: Recommended Action Steps for Districts –** *updated 10.11.23*

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| **Action Step** | **Best Practices from Colleagues** |
| **Establish communication lines with other representatives from your municipality** | * *Our Town Taskforce consists of all public safety partners (Police and Fire Chief), public health officials (Deputy Chief and Public Health Nurse), Town human services department (Director of Human Services and Board of Health Director, Town Social Worker), Town officials (Acting Town Manager), School Department (Superintendent, Nurse Leader and Business Manager), and State Reps.*
* *We actively participate in municipal task force meetings, collaborating with various stakeholders and agencies. This coordination ensures a well-orchestrated approach to welcoming new migrant families, streamlining efforts, and maximizing available resources.*
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| **Create a cross functional team within your district and for each impacted school** | * *Identify one point of contact in the district for services and coordination.*
* *Connect with state shelter coordinator for the shelter to ensure updated information (including communication with the national guard).*
* *Identify a point person to manage communications, including creating a running “FAQ” document to continue to address stakeholder questions and concerns.*
* *Have your team review DESE’s Emergency Homeless Guidance Document,* [*Homeless Ed Trifold*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/mv/brochure/brochure.pdf)*, and* [*Enrollment Flyer.*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/mv/flyer/flyer.pdf)
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| **Address basic needs through wraparound supports** | * *We gave new migrant students backpacks with all school needed supplies. Every day students leave with a bag of fresh fruit, sandwiches, and extra food for their families. We make sure students received dental hygiene supplies.*
* *Staff have set up donations for appropriate clothing, backpacks, and school supplies.*
* *We currently partner with another district on a monthly evening community clinic. We use medical students under the direction of a doctor to provide physicals to Newcomer students. We recently added a dentist who volunteers his time and a vaccination nurse. There are clothing and school supply donations available during these clinics.*
* *We currently provide wraparound services (via three contracted providers) onsite at the hotels to ensure their needs are being met.*
* *Establish a partnership with community partners such as food pantries, churches, etc. To identify a process for gathering and distributing donations so you don’t have to coordinate at the school level.*
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| **Establish a plan for enrollment and EL assessment process**  | * *My team has organized a weekly meeting at the local hotel to register, do a health services review, administer EL assessments and troubleshoot transportation.*
* *When our shelter opened, we were able to send a team to the hotel which was very helpful. Utilizing a mobile hot spot left over from COVID, we were able to set up a "command center" at the hotel and conduct registrations at the hotel. This allowed us to speed up the registration and remove the transportation barrier.*
* *MAKE SURE you are entering student demographic information correctly as this will impact transportation and other reimbursement in the near future! (Pro Tip: Address for each shelter entered in the student management system exactly the same. Utilize a separate field with hotel room number to distinguish families).*
* *We created an alternative day program to accompany our alternative evening program. Many of our Newcomer/Homeless students work after school. By adding an alternative day program with a later start, has had a positive impact on attendance.*
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| **Solidify systems for translation and interpretation** | * *We used some of the FC344 money immediately to purchase 'pocket talks' /other translation devices and embedded Haitian Creole translators in the schools for the first few weeks.*
* *Invest in staff that speak the language at the school level. Find more information* [*here*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/language-access/interpreters/default.html)*.*
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| **Understand and coordinate transportation**  | * *If you have a student with a school of origin, have your transportation director contact the receiving school to arrange for transportation (see* [*homeless ed trifold*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/mv/brochure/brochure.pdf)*).*
* *Ensure your transportation department codes students appropriately to support funding reimbursement.*
* *Be sure that in-district transportation is comparable to district transportation provided to all students within the district*.
* *For larger shelters contact your transportation vendor to discuss the additional routing of the shelter site.*
* *Make sure you have emergency contacts listed that live at the sam shelter in case families are not available for drop-off. Additionally, consider expanding bus monitor roles to support with this as well.*
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| **Connect newcomers to behavioral and mental health and wellness supports and services**  | * *Look for upcoming DESE grant to support building integrated, multi-tiered systems of support and increasing access to community provider services (SEL & Mental Health grant) will include a competitive priority for districts with an emergency expansion site.*
* *Additional* [*Mental and Behavioral Health and Wellness Supports*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/mental-wellness/default.html) *resources are available as well, including professional development and coaching opportunities (details to be announced this fall). Participate in DESE’s* [*Safe and Supportive Schools, Rethinking Discipline, and SEL & Mental Health Equity and Anti-Racism focused professional development*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/pd-calendar.docx) *opportunities.*
* *Employ* [*culturally and linguistically sustaining practices*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-sustaining/default.html) *that actively draw upon and explicitly support students’ diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges.*
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| **Welcome and engage new families** | * *Have patience and compassion. Send out a welcoming letter to the community prior to site opening if time allows or as soon possible. Consider utilizing the DESE supports for written translation to translate the letter into other languages.*
* *Notify school committee chair & enlist their support in welcoming families.*
* *To foster a sense of belonging, we host welcoming receptions where families can connect with key district personnel. These receptions feature food from their countries of origin, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that encourages relationship-building and cultural exchange.*
* *This experience has helped with inclusivity in our low-incidence district; we consistently message that everyone belongs, and we are welcoming to all.*
* *We offer adult English Classes - beginner and intermediate - to help parents engage with the school district.*
* *Last year, we implemented monthly newcomer orientation sessions at some of our schools to support families and students with the transition. Our EL Coordinators and our Family Liaisons have been instrumental in training and supporting school leaders with this process. We are expanding this year to other schools.*
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| **Be Aware of Additional Funding Opportunities** | * *Apply for the* [*Fund Code 344*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2024/344/) *which provides a one-time distribution of $1,000 per student for immediate needs.*
* *Stay updated on the $104 quarterly reimbursement - more details to come.*
* *Track school of origin transportation costs closely to report on end-of-year report due the following September to ensure reimbursement.*
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