



Initial Intake and Assessment Tool

Purpose

The Initial Intake and Assessment Tool (Tool) was developed after Hurricane Katrina to assist with the identification and placement of individuals in shelters. The Tool assists shelter staff with 1) identifying functional needs that, if addressed, will permit individuals to remain in a general population shelter or the most integrated shelter setting, and 2) ensuring proper and safe placement of individuals whose medical or functional needs may be beyond the scope and expertise of care offered in general population shelters.

History and Development

The Tool was developed in 2006 by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the American Red Cross (ARC), and several disability organizations in a coordinated effort to develop a mechanism to improve the safety and security of shelter residents. This new tool was designed to help shelter staff quickly and properly determine the most appropriate shelter setting for an individual.

The use of the Tool was formalized with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between HHS and ARC. The purpose of the MOU was to endorse the utilization of the Initial Intake and Assessment Tool to facilitate triage for functional support at ARC shelters and HHS Federal Medical Stations (FMS) during an incident of national significance or a response to a public health emergency.

The early implementation of the Tool took place in 2007 when it was pilot-tested by Red Cross volunteers during the Washington/Oregon flooding disaster. It was also tested during multiple shelter training exercises by Red Cross chapters around the country. Initial feedback indicated the Tool met its intent but needed improvement to meet the constraints of a disaster environment. Revisions were made and the current version was released in June of 2008. The revised version of the Tool was used during the 2008 hurricane season and it received positive feedback from Red Cross volunteers, shelter residents, and local public health departments.

The Initial Intake and Assessment Tool

The Tool has two sections, the first of which is the Initial Intake form. This section has nine core questions that help staff determine if an individual has any basic functional needs, health concerns, or psychosocial needs that must be addressed. If this initial evaluation is unclear or indicates any specific needs, the individual is referred to a disaster health services professional to complete the second portion of the Tool. The Assessment section covers issues related to special medical needs, medications, hearing and vision, activities of daily living, nutrition, and mental health.

The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), in conjunction with ARC, has developed a web-based training on the Initial Intake and Assessment Tool. This training takes less than 15 minutes to view.

The Tool and the web-based training can be found in the Resources and Related Documents section on the Initial Intake Assessment Tool page at:

<http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/initialintakeassessmenttool.aspx>