



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**ROY COOPER** • Governor

**MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH** • Secretary

**SUSAN OSBORNE** • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for  
Human Services

April 24, 2020

**Dear County Directors of Social Services**

**Attention:** Directors and County Department of Social Services Emergency/Disaster Coordinators

**Subject:** Planning for weather-related disasters - Congregate Sheltering during Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)

As we are all responding and doing our part for our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also need to take steps to plan if the unthinkable should happen – a natural disaster that would cause evacuation and the need for sheltering. Hurricane season is approaching on June 1, and tornados, flooding, and other hazardous weather could happen at any time.

If a weather-related incident leads to a need for congregate sheltering, the counties will need to heighten coordination and collaboration with County Public Health to determine whether standard sheltering plans are still safe for the community and workforce during the widespread outbreak of COVID-19.

American Red Cross guidance "*Operating in a COVID-19 Environment within Congregate Sheltering*" encourages events with less than 50 people utilize hotel/motel rooms, contract plans to be established, and contracts be signed ahead of time.

It is recommended for County Department of Social Services (DSS) working with County Emergency Management consider the following points of information to prepare DSS to operate congregate shelters managed by the county, or support congregate shelters operations managed by the American Red Cross if a weather-related incident happens while the nation responds to COVID-19:

- Review and update the County DSS Emergency/Disaster Operation Plan including the Shelter Operation Plan. County DSS and all staff should be aware of their county plan.
- Follow the prevention guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal and local health agencies, such as the "*Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), to protect the health and safety of the workforce*". (See Link <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> )
- Review and consider the American Red Cross "*Sheltering in COVID-19 Affected Areas*", "*COVID-19 Operational Decision-Making / Shelter Facility Opening Checklist*", "*Feeding in COVID-19*", and notification letter to any persons entering a Congregate Shelter. Also contact the Local Red Cross Chapter for annual training by using the attached Red Cross Local Contact List. (See Attached.)

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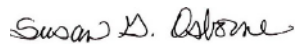
LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603  
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Take the time now to be sure your county is prepared should a weather-related incident happens during COVID -19.

If you should have questions, please feel free to contact Carlotta Dixon at 919- 527-6421 or by email: [Carlotta.Dixon@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Carlotta.Dixon@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,



Susan G. Osborne  
Assistant Secretary for County Operations for Human Services

PC-01-2020

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