Living at the Emergency Shelter

G. Sleeping Areas

Each accessible sleeping area needs to be on an accessible route connecting it to other activity areas in the shelter, including toilet rooms and bathing areas. An accessible route with adequate circulation and maneuvering space provides access in the sleeping areas for people who use wheelchairs or scooters and this route serves each accessible bed or cot.

Interior of one section of a shelter's sleeping area. The shaded pathway indicates the accessible route, which provides access to accessible beds, cots, and other activity areas in the space plus the toilet rooms and other activity areas in the shelter.
Accessible cots have a sleeping surface at approximately the same height above the floor as the seat of a wheelchair (17 to 19 inches above the floor). When placed in several sections of the sleeping area, individuals who use a wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility device will be able to sleep near their family or other companions. An accessible route is needed to provide access to each accessible cot and a clear space at least 36 inches wide is needed along the side of the cot to make it possible to transfer between the mobility device and the cot. A preferred location for accessible cots is to have one side against a wall. This helps to stabilize the cot and the wall can act as a backrest when the person sits up on the cot.

An accessible cot positioned against a wall. Dashed lines indicate the accessible route and clear floor space next to the cot.

G1. Is there an accessible route, at least 36 inches wide, that connects each sleeping area with other shelter activity areas?  
Yes ___  No ___

Note: it may narrow to 32 inches wide for up to 2 feet in length.  
[ADA Standards § 4.3.2(3)]

G2. Is the accessible route free of steps and abrupt level changes over 1/2 inch?  
Yes ___  No ___

Note: level changes between 1/4 inch and 1/2 inch should be beveled.  
[ADA Standards §§ 4.1.3(1), 4.3.8]

Note: Although the facility survey cannot check the accessibility of the cots because they will not be installed until the shelter is in use, planning for setting up the sleeping area and for arranging the cots and mats should include providing space for an accessible route and clear floor space at each accessible cot. Cots used by people who are blind or who have low vision should be in an easily locatable area.
H. Restrooms and Showers

At least one set of toilet rooms serving the shelter must be accessible to individuals who use a wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility device. In large shelters where more than one set of toilet rooms is needed to serve the occupants, it may be necessary to provide additional accessible toilet facilities or to establish policies to assure that individuals with disabilities have access to the accessible facilities.

![Interior of an accessible toilet room showing accessible route, clear floor space at accessible fixtures, and the wide accessible toilet stall.](image)

**H1.** If a sign is provided at the toilet room entrance (e.g. Men, Women, Boys, Girls, etc.), is a sign with raised characters and Braille mounted on the wall adjacent to the latch? (ADA Standards § 4.30.6)

If No, install a sign with raised characters and Braille on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door and centered 60 inches above the floor and leave the existing sign in place on the door if removing it will damage the door.

*Note: an additional sign may be mounted on the toilet room door but this cannot be considered to be the accessible sign which must be mounted on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door.*
H2. Does the door to the toilet room provide at least 32 inches clear passage width when the door is open 90 degrees? [ADA Standards § 4.13.5] Yes _____ No _____

H3. Is the hardware (e.g., lever, pull, panic bar) usable with one hand without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist? [ADA Standards § 4.13.9] If No, can the door be propped open without compromising privacy, or can the hardware be modified by adding new accessible hardware, or adapting or replacing hardware? Yes _____ No _____

H4. On the pull side of the door, is there at least 18 inches clearance provided on the latch side if the door is not automatic or power-operated? [ADA Standards § 4.13.6, Fig. 25] Yes _____ No _____

H5. If there is a raised threshold, is it no higher than 3/4 inch at the door and beveled on both sides? [ADA Standards §§ 4.1.6(3)(d)(ii), 4.13.8] If No, replace threshold with one with beveled sides or add a sloped insert. Yes _____ No _____ NA____

H6. If the entry has a vestibule, is there a 30-inch by 48-inch clear floor space inside the vestibule where a wheelchair or scooter user can be outside the door swing? [ADA Standards § 4.13.7] If No, possible solutions include leaving the inner door open or removing the outer door. Yes _____ No _____
H7. Inside the toilet room, is there an area where a person who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device can turn around - either at least a 60-inch diameter circle or a "T"-shaped turn area as shown in the figures below? [ADA Standards §§ 4.22.3; 4.2.3]

Minimum spaces for turning

H8. If lavatories are provided, does at least one have at least a 29 inch high clearance under the front apron with the top of the rim no more than 34 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.19.2]

H9. Are the drain and hot water pipes for this lavatory insulated or otherwise configured to protect against contact? [ADA Standards § 4.19.4]
H10. Does this lavatory have controls that operate easily with one hand, without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist? [ADA Standards § 4.19.5]  
Yes ___  No ___

H11. If mirrors are provided, is the bottom of the reflecting surface for the mirror at this lavatory no higher than 40 inches above the floor or is a full length mirror provided? [ADA Standards § 4.19.6]  
Yes ___  No ___

H12. For at least one of each type of dispenser, receptacle, or equipment, is there clear floor space at least 30 inches wide x 48 inches long adjacent to the control or dispenser (positioned either parallel to the control or dispenser or in front of it)? [ADA Standards §§ 4.23.7; 4.27.2; 4.2.5 and Fig 5; 4.2.6 and Fig 6]  
Yes ___  No ___

H13. Is the operating control (switch, lever, button, or pull) of at least one of each type of dispenser or built-in equipment no higher than 54 inches above the floor (if there is clear floor space for a parallel approach) or 48 inches (if there is clear floor space for a front approach)? [ADA Standards §§ 4.23.7; 4.27.3; 4.2.5 and Fig 5; 4.2.6 and Fig 6]  
Yes ___  No ___

H14. Are all built-in dispensers, receptacles, or equipment mounted so the front does not extend more than 4 inches from the wall if the bottom edge is between 27 inches and 80 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards §§ 4.23.7; 4.27; 4.4.1; Fig. 8]  
Yes ___  No ___
Toilet Stalls

H15. Is at least one wide toilet stall provided with an outswinging door, side and rear grab bars, and clear space next to the toilet? [ADA Standards § 4.17]
If No, check to see if another toilet room provides a wide accessible toilet stall, note its location for shelter planners, and answer all toilet room questions with respect to that toilet room.

H16. Is the toilet stall at least 60 inches wide and 56 inches deep (wall mounted toilet) or 59 inches deep (floor mounted toilet)? [ADA Standards § 4.17.3]
If No, note the width and depth of the stall.

H17. Is at least 9 inches of toe clearance provided under the front wall and at least one side wall of the toilet stall? [ADA Standards § 4.17.4]

H18. Is the centerline of the toilet 18 inches from the adjacent side wall? [ADA Standards § 4.16.2; 4.17.3]
H19. Is the top of the toilet seat 17 inches to 19 inches above the floor?  
[ADA Standards § 4.16.3]  
Yes ___  No ___

H20. Is the flush valve located on the wide side adjacent to the lavatory or is an automatic flush valve provided? [ADA Standards § 4.16.5]  
Yes ___  No ___

H21. Is a horizontal grab bar at least 40 inches long securely mounted on the adjacent side wall 33 to 36 inches above the floor with one end no more than 12 inches from the back wall 33 to 36 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.16.4; 4.17.6]  
Yes ___  No ___

H22. Is a second horizontal grab bar at least 36 inches long securely mounted on the back wall with one end no more than 6 inches from the side wall 33 to 36 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.16.4; 4.17.6]  
Yes ___  No ___

H23. Is the door to the toilet stall located diagonally opposite, not directly in front of, the toilet or on the opposite side wall from the wall with the long grab bar? [ADA Standards § 4.17.3]  
Yes ___  No ___

H24. Unless the wide stall is located at the end of a row of toilet stalls, does the door to this wider stall open out? [ADA Standards § 4.17.3]  
Yes ___  No ___
H25. Is the clear width of the door at least 32 inches (measured between the face of the door and the edge of the opening) when the door is open 90 degrees? [ADA Standards § 4.13.5]

Yes ____ No ____

H26. If there are 6 or more stalls in the restroom, is one of those stalls (in addition to the wider stall noted above) exactly 36 inches wide with an outswinging stall door that provides at least 32 inches of clear width? [ADA Standards § 4.22.4]

Yes ____ No ____

H27. Does this 36-inch wide stall have horizontal grab bars on both of the side partitions that are at least 36 inches long and 33 to 36 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.22.4]

Yes ____ No ____

H28. Is the surface of the toilet seat in this 36-inch-wide stall 17 to 19 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards §§ 4.16.3; 4.22.4]

Yes ____ No ____

H29. If a coat hook is provided is it mounted no higher than 54 inches above the floor for a side approach or 48 inches above the floor for a front approach? [ADA Standards § 4.25.3]

Yes ____ No ____
Note:
For many emergency shelters, evacuees are not expected to use shower or bathing facilities due to the short period they may stay at the shelter. If planning for the shelter operation includes offering shower or bathing facilities, then those facilities should be on an accessible route and checked for accessibility. For information on the requirements for accessible showers or bathtubs see the ADA Standards for Accessible Design which is available online at www.ada.gov.

The following are figures illustrating some accessible shower features from the ADA Standards.
I. Public Telephones

When public telephones are provided, then one or more accessible public telephones should be provided in areas serving shelter activity and service areas. Whenever accessible telephones are provided, each should be on an accessible route. In shelters it is common to provide additional telephones on tables or desks and some of these telephones should be accessible.

A text telephone (also commonly known as a TTY) is a device that allows individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have a speech disability to communicate over a telephone. Having at least one TTY in any building that has at least four pay phones, provides access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

I1. If at least one public telephone or one bank of telephones is provided, does at least one of each type of telephone (e.g., pay telephone, intercom telephone, other telephone) have the following?  
   
   Yes ____  No ____

   I1a. For a side approach (clear floor space at least 30 inches long x 48 inches wide), is the coin slot no higher than 54 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.31.2, Fig. 44 (a)]

   Yes ____  No ____

   I1b. For a front approach (where clear floor space at least 30 inches wide x 48 inches long), is the coin slot no higher than 48 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.31.2, Fig. 44 (b)]

   Yes ____  No ____

I2. Does the phone have volume controls? [ADA Standards § 4.31.5]  
   
   Yes ____  No ____
13. **If three or more telephones are located in one bank serving the shelter, are a shelf and an electrical outlet provided at one telephone for use of a portable TTY?** [ADA Standards § 4.31.9 (2)]

   Yes ____ No ____

14. **If four or more pay telephones are provided on the site, is there a TTY (text telephone) provided at the shelter?**

   Yes ____ No ____
   If yes, location:
   ______________

15. **Is there a sign at each pay phone or pay phone bank for the shelter directing people to the nearest TTY?** [ADA Standards § 4.30.7 (3); 4.31.9(3)]

   Yes ____ No ____
J. Drinking Fountains

Approximately 50% of the drinking fountains serving the shelter must be accessible and located on an accessible route. Accessible drinking fountains must have enough space for a person using a wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility device to use the drinking fountain. The spout and controls of the drinking fountain must be near the front edge. The controls must be usable with one hand without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. The other 50% of drinking fountains serving the shelter must be configured for use by people who have difficulty bending or stooping while standing.

When an object, such as a drinking fountain, protrudes more than four inches into the circulation path, the bottom edge must be at 27 inches above the floor or lower so the drinking fountain is not a hazard to people who are blind or have low vision.

A person who uses a wheelchair is drinking from an accessible drinking fountain. Beside the accessible drinking fountain is a standard height fountain that is usable by people who have difficulty bending or stooping. The short wall beside the standard height drinking fountain is cane detectable to guide people who are blind or have low vision away from the standard height fountain which, otherwise, would be a protruding object hazard.
The following questions apply to 50% of the drinking fountains that are provided.

**J1.** If the drinking fountain is a wall-mounted unit, is there clear floor space at least 30 inches wide (36 inches if it is in an alcove) x 48 inches long in front of the drinking fountain and at least 27 inches high under the fountain so that a person using a wheelchair can get close to the spout and controls? [ADA Standards § 4.15.5 (1), Figs. 4(e) and 27(b)]

**J2.** If the drinking fountain is a floor-mounted unit, is there clear floor space at least 30 inches long x 48 inches wide (60 inches if it is in an alcove) for a side approach to the drinking fountain so that a person using a wheelchair can get close to the spout and controls even though the fountain has no clear space under it? [ADA Standards § 4.15.5 (2), Figs. 4(e), 27(c) and (d)]

**J3.** Is the top of the spout no higher than 36 inches above the floor and at the front of the fountain or water cooler? [ADA Standards § 4.15.2]

**J4.** Does the water rise at least 4 inches high when no more than 5 pounds of force is applied to the controls of the fountain? [ADA Standards §§ 4.15.3 and 4.15.4]

**J5.** Are the controls on or near the front of the unit and do they operate with one hand without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist? [ADA Standards § 4.15.4]

**J6.** Is the bottom of the apron of the fountain 27 inches above the floor so that it provides the space needed for a person who uses a wheelchair to pull up under it but is not a hazard to people who are blind or have low vision and use a cane to detect hazards? [ADA Standards §§ 4.15.5 (1) and 4.4.1]
K. Eating Areas

An accessible route, at least 36 inches wide and without steps or steep slopes, must be provided to and throughout the food service and eating areas of the shelter. The accessible route allows people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices to get to all of the food and drink items in the shelter and to accessible tables and seating.

A serving and eating area in a shelter are shown above. The shaded pathway illustrates the accessible route connecting the entrance, serving areas, accessible seats and tables, and the exit.
K1. Is there an accessible route, at least 36 inches wide, that connects each of the shelter activity areas with the food service and eating areas (it may narrow to 32 inches wide for up to 2 feet in length)? [ADA Standards § 4.3.2(3)]

K2. Is there an accessible route that is at least 36 inches wide that connects accessible tables with serving, condiment, and dispenser areas? [ADA Standards § 5.3; 4.3.8]

K3. In each eating area, if tables with fixed seats are provided, do at least 5% of each type of table with fixed seats have accessible locations with knee space at least 27 inches high, at least 19 inches deep, and at least 30 inches wide with a table top 28 to 34 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 5.1]

Note: If movable tables and chairs are used as shown, then locate at least 5% of the tables adjacent to an accessible route. Tables can be relocated as needed during operation of the shelter.

K4. If built-in food, drink, condiment, and tableware dispensers are provided, are dispensers and operating controls mounted no higher than 54 inches above the floor if clear floor space is provided for a side approach? [ADA Standards § 5.5]

K5. If the operating controls are set back 10 to 24 inches from the front edge of the counter or table are they no higher than 46 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 5.5]

K6. If food service lines are provided, is an accessible route provided (at least 36 inches wide) and are the tray slides no higher than 34 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 5.5]
OTHER ISSUES

L. Availability of Electrical Power

Emergency shelters should have a way to provide a back-up power supply when the electrical service is interrupted. The back-up power is needed to provide refrigeration of medicines, operation of supplemental oxygen and breathing devices, and for charging the batteries of power wheelchairs and scooters. Individuals whose medications (certain types of insulin, for example) require constant refrigeration need to know if a shelter provides supplemental power for refrigerators or ice-packed coolers. Individuals who use medical support systems, such as supplemental oxygen, or who require periodic breathing treatments using powered devices rely on a stable source of electricity. These individuals must have access to electric power from a generator or other source of electricity while at a shelter.

In general, in each community or area where a shelter is provided, a facility must have one or more back-up generators or other sources of electricity so that evacuees with a disability who rely on powered devices can have access to electrical power while at the shelter.

L1. Is there a backup source of electrical power for the facility? Yes ___ No ___

L2. Is there a refrigerator or other equipment, such as coolers with a good supply of ice, at the shelter? Yes ___ No ___
M. Single-User or “Family” Toilet Room

In many schools and large facilities where emergency shelters are often located, single-user toilet rooms may be provided for staff. In those facilities built or altered since the ADA went into effect, single-user toilet rooms should have accessible features that could be useful during shelter operation. These features include an accessible entrance and turning and maneuvering spaces. These rooms should also have been built to allow grab bars, accessible controls, and accessible hardware to be easily installed.

As part of the planning for operating an emergency shelter, facilities operators should consider using an available staff toilet room, if provided, as a single-user or “family” toilet room. When provided in addition to large accessible toilet rooms, this type of facility permits a person with a disability to receive assistance from a person of the opposite sex.

M1. If a sign is provided at the toilet room entrance (e.g. Men, Women, Boys, Girls, etc.), is a sign with raised characters and Braille mounted on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door and centered 60 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.13.16(a)]
Yes ___ No ___

If No, install a sign with raised characters and Braille on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door and centered 60 inches above the floor and leave the existing sign in place on the door if removing it will damage the door.

Note: an additional sign may be mounted on the toilet room door but this cannot be considered to be the accessible sign which must be mounted on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door.

M2. Does the door to the toilet room provide at least 32 inches clear passage width when the door is open 90 degrees? [ADA Standards § 4.13.5]
Yes ___ No ___

M3. Is the hardware (e.g., lever, pull, etc.) usable with one hand without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist? [ADA Standards § 4.13.9]
Yes ___ No ___

If No, add new accessible hardware or adapt/replace hardware.
M4. On the latch, pull side of the door, is there at least 18 inches clearance provided if the door is not automatic or power operated? [ADA Standards § 4.13.6; Fig. 25]
   Yes ____ No ____

M5. If there is a raised threshold, is it no higher than 3/4 inch at the door and beveled on both sides? [ADA Standards §§ 4.16(3)(d)(ii); 4.13.8] If No, replace threshold with one with beveled sides or add a sloped insert.
   Yes ____ No ____

M6. Inside the room is there an area for a person who uses a wheelchair to turn around - either a 60-inch diameter circle or a “T”-shaped turn area? [ADA Standards §§ 4.22.3; 4.2.3]
   Yes ____ No ____

M7. If the door swings into the room, does the door swing not overlap the required clear floor space for the toilet or lavatory? [ADA Standards §§ 4.22.2; 4.2.4.1]
   Yes ____ No ____
   Note: In the figure below the clear floor space for the toilet extends at least 66 inches from the back wall.

M8. Is there at least 18 inches between the center of the toilet and the side of the adjacent lavatory? [ADA Standards § 4.16.2; Fig. 28]
   Yes ____ No ____

M9. Does the lavatory have at least a 29-inch-high clearance under the front edge and the top of the rim no more than 34 inches above the floor? [ADA Standards § 4.19.2]
   Yes ____ No ____

Plan view showing the minimum amount of space required between the toilet and the adjacent lavatory.
Plan view of a single-user toilet room showing the door swing not overlapping the dark toned area indicating the clear floor space for the toilet and lavatory. The door swing may overlap the turning space indicated by the circular area.

M10. Are the drain and hot water pipes for the lavatory insulated or otherwise configured to protect against contact? [ADA Standards § 4.19.4]

M11. Does that lavatory have controls that operate easily with one hand, without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist? [ADA Standards § 4.19.5]
M12. If a mirror is provided, is the bottom of the reflecting surface no higher than 40 inches above the floor or is a full length mirror provided?
[ADA Standards § 4.19.6]

M13. For each type of dispenser, receptacle, or equipment, is there clear floor space at least 30 inches wide x 48 inches long adjacent to the control or dispenser (positioned either parallel to the control or dispenser or in front of it)?
[ADA Standards §§ 4.23.7; 4.27.2; 4.2.5 and Fig 5; 4.2.6 and Fig 6]

M14. Is the operating control (switch, lever, button, or pull) for each type of dispenser or built-in equipment no higher than 54 inches above the floor (if there is clear floor space for a parallel approach) or 48 inches (if there is clear floor space for a front approach)?
[ADA Standards §§ 4.23.7; 4.27.3; 4.27.2; 4.2.5 and Fig 5; 4.2.6 and Fig 6]

M15. Are all built-in dispensers, receptacles, or equipment mounted so the front does not extend more than 4 inches from the wall if the bottom edge is between 27 inches and 80 inches above the floor?
[ADA Standards §§ 4.23.7; 4.27; 4.4.1; Fig. 8]

M16. Is the centerline of the toilet 18 inches from the adjacent side wall?
[ADA Standards § 4.16.2; 4.17.3]
M17. Is the top of the toilet seat 17 to 19 inches above the floor? Yes ____ No ____
   [ADA Standards § 4.16.3]

M18. Is the flush valve located on the side adjacent to the lavatory? Yes ____ No ____
   [ADA Standards § 4.16.5]

M19. Is a horizontal grab bar at least 40 inches long securely mounted on the adjacent side wall 33 to 36 inches above the floor with one end no more than 12 inches from the back wall? Yes ____ No ____
   [ADA Standards §§ 4.16.4; 4.17.6]

M20. Is there a horizontal grab bar at least 36 inches long securely mounted behind the toilet 33 to 36 inches above the floor with one end no more than 6 inches from the side wall? Yes ____ No ____
   [ADA Standards §§ 4.16.4; 4.17.6]

M21. If a coat hook is provided, is it mounted no higher than 54 inches above the floor for a side approach or 48 inches above the floor for a front approach? Yes ____ No ____
   [ADA Standards § 4.25.3]
N. Health Units/Medical Care Areas

In many schools, where emergency shelters are often located, nurses’ rooms or other types of health care facilities may be provided. These health care facilities should be on an accessible route and have accessible features, including an accessible entrance, an accessible route to the different types of services offered within the medical care unit, turning and maneuvering spaces, and cots or beds that are at a height to which people who use mobility devices can easily transfer.

N1. Is there an accessible route, at least 36 inches wide, that connects each of the shelter activity areas with the health units and medical care areas (it may narrow to 32 inches wide for up to 2 feet in length)? [ADA Standards § 4.3.2(3)]

Yes ____ No ____
O. Accessible Portable Toilets

Portable toilets are often used at emergency shelters to supplement permanent toilet facilities. When portable toilets are provided, at least one must be a unit with accessible features that is located on an accessible route connecting it with the shelter. For the entrance to an accessible portable toilet to be usable, there must either be no step or a ramp must be installed that extends from the hinge side of the door to at least 18 inches beyond the latch side of the door.

Accessible portable toilets should similar features to a standard accessible toilet stall including an accessible door, side and rear grab bar, clear space next to the toilet, and maneuvering space.