

Social Worker Procedures and Bed Bugs



This information is intended to provide the social worker with facts about how to begin to help a person or family with bed bugs, whether homeless, independent, or living in a group home. Bed bugs may be one of the many challenges they face and a visit with a social worker may be the first compassionate educational experience a person has about bed bugs. The introduction sheet in this manual will give you more information about bed bug biology and habits. Even transient people can be greatly affected by these insects as they are good at hiding in personal belongings when people move. Bed bugs are small wingless insects that feed exclusively on blood and live in close proximity to (not on) people.

People living with bed bugs and their bites may suffer emotional distress, as well as financial burdens of discarding property, buying products and items to control bed bugs, and the costs and stress of possibly being displaced. The elderly are particularly at risk for being displaced as a result of bed bug problems because they may not be physically able to cooperate with pre-treatment requirements, or able to clean their homes as required. **The important thing to communicate is that bed bugs can be controlled, but it takes cooperation.**

Clutter is a major obstacle in bed bug control, and many who suffer with bed bugs are overwhelmed in other ways. However, preparation for bed bug control is very important. Those in need who are suffering with bed bugs will need specific things in order to cooperate in the process of eliminating bed bugs from their room or home.

These include:

- Instructions for preparing their belongings and rooms or apartments for bed bug treatment (provided in this guidebook and available elsewhere in Spanish).
- Plastic bags for storage of belongings and clothes. Bags must be tied tightly or sealed well to prevent transfer of bed bugs into or out of bags.
- Access to laundry, particularly a dryer, to clean clothing, linens, pillows, plush toys, coats, and shoes of bed bugs. Heat will kill all life stages. Access to laundry may require money for use of a laundromat.
- Cleaning supplies or services (may not be supplied by the management or a pest control professional).
- Some may need help in the form of physical labor for cleaning, moving furniture, sorting through personal belongings, organizing their homes, and reducing clutter.
- Emotional support may be required. Many bed bug sufferers describe post-traumatic stress disorder-type symptoms associated with the stress of their infestation.
- Access to basic necessities, such as clothes or children's toys, or even a bed, if the client has discarded their belongings due to bed bugs.
- Bed bug bites may require medical care.
- If displaced as a result of bed bugs, the client may need help, possibly legal help.
- A person or family with bed bugs may require an advocate to help them get fair treatment with housing, schools, and other services.
- Reinfestation may occur if clients are picking up bed bugs in another place.