



# RESPONSE TO BED BUGS IN COMMUNITY AGING PROGRAMS

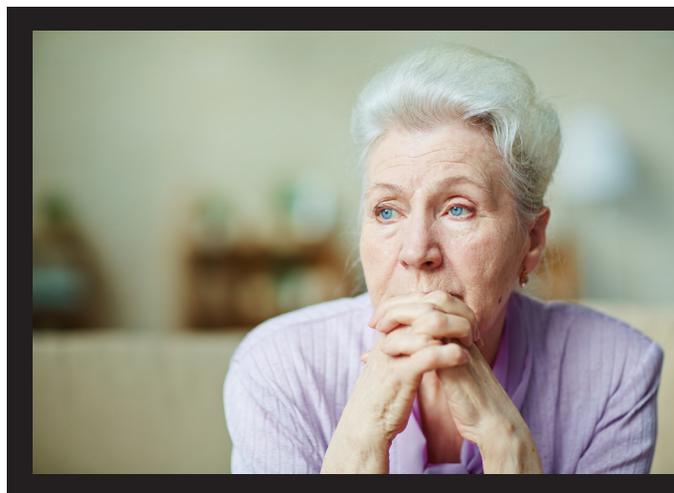
As more homes are infested with bed bugs, the bugs may be carried by participants or staff into community aging program centers. The issue of bed bugs in public agencies can generate anxiety, or other negative emotions for participants and staff. Successful control of the situation is challenging, since the locations of bed bugs are unpredictable because there are no sleeping areas where bed bugs concentrate. The following protocol includes guidelines to help program staff deal effectively and reasonably with a bed bug incident.

## THINGS TO AVOID

- **OVERREACTING.** Typically, one or a few bed bugs hitchhike into a center on clothing, bags, or other possessions and then spread, looking for a host or another hiding place. A breeding infestation of bed bugs in a community building is rare.
- **CLOSING THE CENTER.** There is no need to close the center or send participants home.
- **ALLOWING UNTRAINED STAFF TO APPLY INSECTICIDES TO CONTROL THE BED BUGS.** Widespread insecticide applications are not necessary.
- **STIGMATIZING PARTICIPANTS.** Avoid isolating someone you suspect having brought bed bugs to the center from home.

## BE PROACTIVE

- Develop a written “bed bug action plan” before problems occur, detailing specific procedures and responsibilities for responding to a bed bug incident.
- Educate staff on:
  1. Basic bed bug biology and habits.
  2. Recognizing bed bugs and evidence of their presence.
  3. Their responsibility and roles regarding bed bugs, and program response including the agency’s Termination of Services Policy.
  4. Actions to reduce the risk of bed bug spread.



## RESPONDING TO A BED BUG INCIDENT

If bed bugs are found in a room or other location in the center, do the following:

- Get specimens, if possible, for professional identification.
- Check the surrounding area thoroughly for more bed bugs, and arrange for an inspection as soon as



possible by an in-house or outside pest management professional with bed bug experience.

- Consider the use of a certified bed bug scent detection canine team to locate all bed bug sites.
- Map out bed bug sightings and confirmed findings.
- Use control tactics consistent with agency's pest management guidelines and regulations.
- Include nonchemical approaches, such as steam-treatment, cleaning and vacuuming, heat treatment, reducing clutter, trapping and monitoring.
- All areas serviced for bed bugs should be inspected and monitored until no additional bugs have been found for at least two months.

## PARTICIPANTS AND BED BUGS

- If a bed bug is found on a participant or on a participant's belongings, it suggests but does not prove the participant may be living in a home with bed bugs. Similarly, "bites" or bite-like marks on the skin are not reliable indicators that the participant has bed bugs.
- Participants suspected of having bed bugs should be discretely removed from the program so an authorized staff member can check for bed bugs in clothes and possessions. (Bed bugs are very

seldom found on the body, but may be in clothing or personal items, such as handbags.)

- If bed bugs are confirmed, the participant and their family/emergency contact should be notified.
- Provide guidance to the participant who is known or suspected of having bed bugs.
- When bed bugs have been confirmed in the facility, the administration should consider notifying the other participants in the same room or even the entire facility. Participant confidentiality should be maintained.

## BED BUG PREVENTION

- For participants in community programs experiencing problems with bed bugs, consider regularly inspecting clothing, bags, wheelchairs and transportation services vehicles.
- Provide information to all participants on bed bugs, the importance of eliminating bed bugs at home, guidance for choosing a pest control company or requesting service from landlords, and how to avoid bringing the bugs to community programs.
- Reduce clutter. Avoid storing jackets, bags and other personal items in close contact with those of other participants.
- Encourage participants to limit the items they take to the program.
- Consider a dedicated commercial dryer or heating unit to selectively disinfest clothes, bags, and other items suspected of harboring bed bugs or eggs.
- If bed bugs are a common problem in the center, a pest management professional may recommend passive or active monitoring or periodic inspections, and possibly include the use of a certified canine bed bug scent detection team.



Ageing and Adult Services  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

State of North Carolina | Department of Health and Human Services | [www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov)  
N.C. DHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. 08/16

For additional information, please go to: <https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/pdf/bedbugs-infested%20items.pdf>