

FAQ:

Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form

ABOUT THIS FORM

1. Who created the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form?

The Shelter Directors' Group, which is a longstanding networking group made up of Shelter Directors from comprehensive domestic violence programs throughout the state, initiated the development of the form in collaboration with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV).

2. Why was the form developed and what is its purpose?

The Shelter Directors' Group recognized a need for greater transparency when one shelter refers residents to another shelter. This form was developed with the following purposes:

- 1) To promote victim safety by facilitating the safe relocation of victims to another shelter when they are in danger.
- 2) To foster improved coordination, collaboration, and trust across programs by providing a consistent way to refer victims to other shelters when it is necessary for their safety and well-being.

3. How can I obtain copies of the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form?

You may request a hard copy of this form to be mailed to your program, or you can request to have this form emailed to you electronically by contacting Amber Guthrie at aguthrie@mnadv.org. In the top right hand corner of the form, there is a box where you can opt to add your organization's name or logo so the shelter to which you are referring can quickly determine the origin of the referral.

HOW TO USE THE FORM

4. How should I use this Form?

This form can be used by your program's shelter staff to refer a shelter resident to a domestic violence shelter in another county. By using this form, it communicates to the shelter on the receiving end that the request for transfer is for a valid and serious reason. It should only be used if the resident is in imminent danger in your shelter, or if there are extenuating and specific circumstances why relocating to the other county would be beneficial. Specific examples include:

Examples of appropriate referral:

- Their abuser has shown up at your program's shelter to threaten or attack the victim.
- The victim is being stalked, the abuser knows where the shelter is, and the victim has reason to believe s/he is in danger.
- The victim's immediate family, employer, school, or children's daycare or school are located in the other county and the victim has concrete, specific plans to permanently relocate to this other county.

Examples of inappropriate referral:

- The resident has no history of domestic violence.

- The resident is being exited from your program's shelter for being violent and would pose a threat in another domestic violence shelter environment.
- The shelter staff no longer wants to work with this person.
- The resident is almost ready to leave shelter, but their length of stay has been maximized.
- There is no room at your program's shelter

Shelter staff should complete the form with the victim, obtain a release of information from the victim, and send the form and signed release to the other shelter.

5. Do I have to use the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form?

No, the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form is voluntary and meant to be an additional tool for shelter staff. Programs are encouraged to utilize the form and incorporate it into their existing referral and request for transfer procedures.

6. Does a release of information need to be filled out by the victim?

Yes. To maintain confidentiality while coordinating service provision and to protect victim safety, a release of information must accompany the form. A sample information release form from the National Network to End Domestic Violence is included for your convenience. However, you may substitute this form with your own agency's release form. In keeping with the best practice of time-limited, specific, and survivor-informed releases, we recommend keeping the form effective for no more than 48 hours.

HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS FORM

7. What should I do if a shelter sends me this form?

If another shelter sends this completed form to your program, please review the form and communicate with the referring shelter promptly. We recognize that every shelter's policies vary on when and how to accept someone into shelter. If it is possible that the person being referred may be eligible for your shelter services, then follow-up with the program to initiate your normal screening and intake process and to discuss logistics, transportation, coordination of services, etc. To prevent re-traumatization, you may wish to obtain an additional information release so the referring program can share additional details about the situation without having the victim recount all of the details again. If the victim is ineligible for your shelter program, please promptly let the referring shelter know so they can inform their resident and move on to alternative options.

8. Does receiving the form mean that we are expected to accept the person being referred?

No, the form is intended to be a starting point for communication and collaboration with the other shelter, eliminating the need for multiple phone calls. Accepting the referral is done at the discretion of each program, following normal protocol and procedures for each program.

9. Does using the Shelter-to-Shelter Domestic Violence Referral Form mean we must accept out-of-county residents?

No. The form does not require that an out-of-county resident be accepted into your program. We recognize that each shelter's policies and philosophies vary with regard to county residency. We also recognize that most shelters will accept out-of-county residents at least occasionally due to extenuating circumstances such as those listed in Question 4 above. Even if your shelter is unable to accept the referral (based on residency, the circumstances, capacity, etc.), please communicate this to the referring shelter promptly.

THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO!