

Tips for Programing in Non-traditional Spaces

“Children and youth are at heightened risk in disasters and public health emergencies. Children and youth under the age of 18 have “unique vulnerabilities that must be addressed in disaster management activities and policies,” as the National Commission on Children and Disasters noted in its 2010 final report.

For youth affected by a disaster, **Clubs** provide a stable and secure environment, offering structure and supports to help them overcome the trauma they may have experienced and regain their social and emotional footing. **Clubs** are a place where youth can feel safe even during a time of great change and the unknown. Even in a temporary or non-traditional space, **Clubs** can uphold the youth development principles and practices that ensure a **High Quality Club Experience**.

Here are some tips to consider when adjusting to a new non-traditional space with your youth and staff:

A Safe, Positive Environment

- Give each youth and parent/caregiver a tour of the facility to ensure they know and feel familiar with the space.
- Assure youth that even though they are in a new space, the Club is still committed to providing a fun, safe, positive environment.
- Allow youth to decorate the space. Use flip chart and have youth draw pictures that represents themselves and things they love.
- Give and model consistent, clear rules and limits to follow to ensure safety.

Supportive Relationships

- Reassure youth that the Club is here to support them and their family during this time of transition and possible changes.
- Talk to youth about their feelings and thoughts. Times of transition can evoke fear, insecurity and anxiety and youth may need to share more during this time.
- Encourage youth to express their hopes fears, and anxieties through music, movement, creative arts, storytelling activities, drama.
- Have small group emotional check-ins when youth arrive to Club or before activities/programing to get a sense of how each youth is doing.

Opportunities and Expectations

- Be consistent when enforcing Club expectations and rules. Youth will feel a sense of security when the Club continues to provide them with structure and clear limits.
- Write Club expectations on flip chart paper and post them around the new space.
- Provide visual images to help youth understand schedules, transitions, and the passage of time and post the schedule in the front for youth to see as they enter the Club.
- Model positive self-talk with comments such as “I’ve never done this activity in a space like this, but I know we can be flexible and we will be able to do it just fine.

Recognition

- Acknowledge youth's willingness to try something new.
- Encourage and acknowledge when youth are owning the new space and making it their own.
- Acknowledge the youth's ability to be flexible with changes such as "I see you are helping adjust the game to work in this new space" or "I see you decided to do it differently."
- Help youth become aware of the strengths they bring to situations with comments such as "It takes courage to move into a new community."

FUN!

- Clearly mark where Club materials are located so youth can easily access them –designate an area for art supplies, gym equipment, board games, etc.
- Continue facilitating regular programming as much as possible by designating program spaces throughout the new space.
- If your space is confined to one room, use cones or tape to section out different areas for different activity stations or programs.
- Celebrate the new space by allowing the youth to vote on a theme and decorate the space with images, pictures, drawings that reflect their theme.
- Consider adding a quiet corner or chill zone for youth to hang out.

Consider additional support:

When disasters or displacement occurs, additional resources may be needed to support youth and families.

- Families in need of housing, food, clothing
- Youth and Families in need of Medical care
- Youth who are traumatized and need mental health services

To plan for these circumstances, Clubs should strive to secure partnerships with support and relief organizations to develop a plan to address the needs of their youth and families. By having plans in place to provide additional support services, Clubs can play an important role in providing protective measures to stop or reduce the impact of an incident.

- **American Red Cross** - <http://www.redcross.org>
The American Red Cross provides relief Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Displaced by Disasters: Youth on Their Own 6 services to communities affected by disasters, including food, water, short-term shelter, counseling support, and assistance with family reunification.
- **The Salvation Army** - <http://www.Salvationarmyusa.org/>
The Salvation Army addresses many of the typical needs of a disaster survivor and provides disaster relief, as well. Its services are adapted to the specific needs of individuals and communities and scalable according to the magnitude of the disaster.
- **Save the Children, Emergency Response** - <http://www.savethechildren.org/>
Save the Children supports victims of disasters. Save the Children is committed to reducing the impact of disasters on children through effective Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Advocacy