



Creating Safe Family-Friendly Spaces in Emergency Shelters

For states, communities, programs, and emergency responders to learn how to create a family-friendly space within an emergency shelter that is tailored to the needs of families with infants and young children.

Accessible link: www.cdc.gov/nutrition/emergencies-infant-feeding/safe-spaces.html

Families often experience stress and uncertainty when displaced from their homes during an emergency. Providing family-friendly spaces within shelters can help reduce stress by providing a private, safe, and dedicated space for families to breastfeed, receive skilled infant feeding and nutrition support, and enjoy quiet time with their baby. There are many ways to create a safe, private, dedicated space for families. Depending on the facility or shelter, here are some ideas:



- Dedicate an unused office, classroom, or closet for this space. If a separate room is not available, a corner space with a partition or divider could also provide privacy.
- Set up portable areas such as tents.
- Set up screens or dividing walls. Hang some curtains, sheets, or tarps. Make use of classroom chalkboards or dry erase boards on wheels, if available.
- Provide diapers and wipes, as well as supplies to clean infant feeding items: a washbasin, soap, a

scrub brush, a mesh bag (to hang items to dry), and [instructions for proper cleaning steps](#). Chlorine bleach may also be needed if hot water or a heat source for sanitizing is not available to disinfect cleaning supplies. Each family will need their own set of supplies.

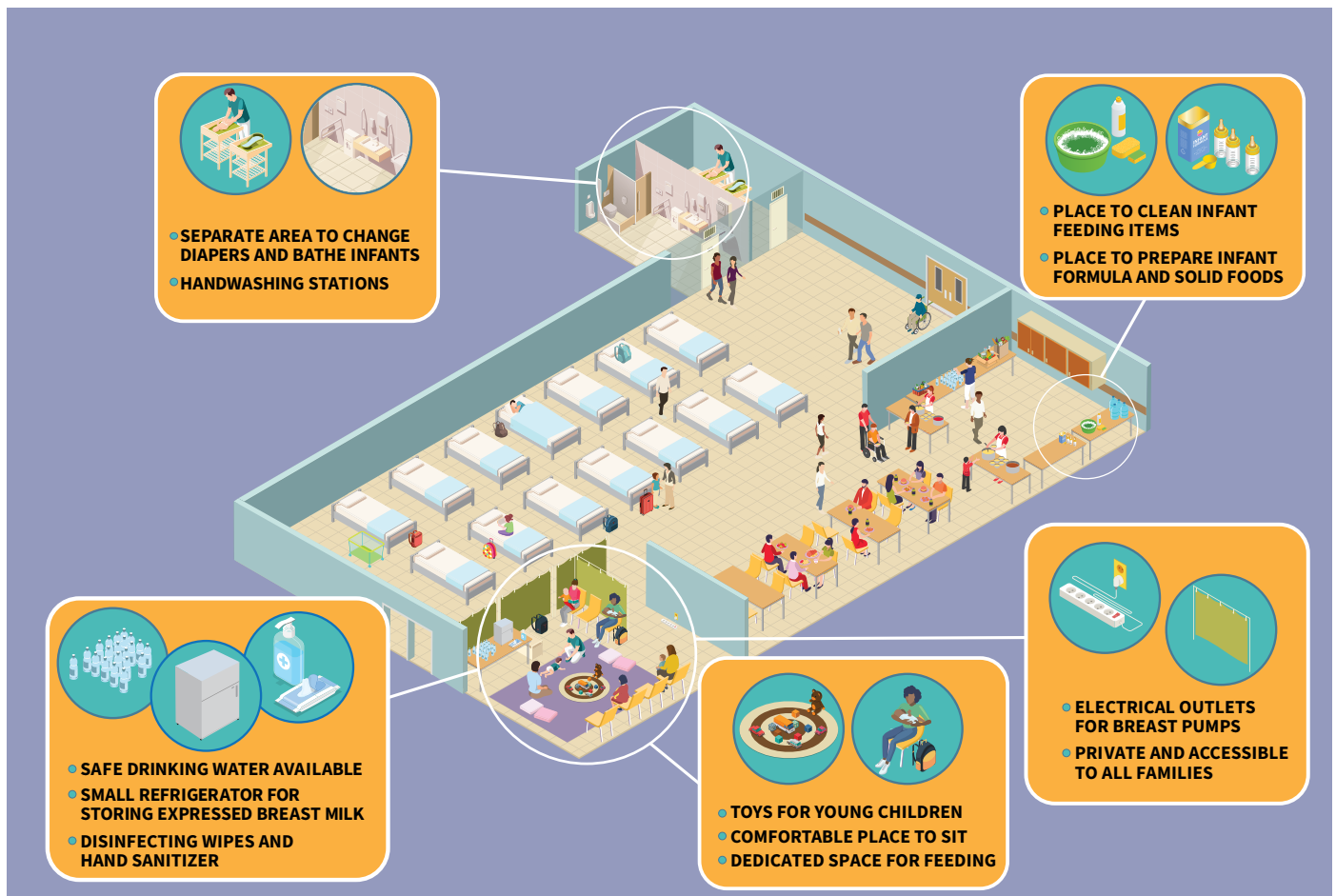
- If the space is large enough, set it up so that multiple families can use it comfortably.
- Families should not be forced to breastfeed their child in this space. Mothers can breastfeed anywhere; however, some mothers may feel more comfortable breastfeeding in a private area. A quiet, private area can also help settle an overstimulated baby.

IMPORTANT:

To prevent fecal-oral (stool to mouth) transmission of diseases, a bathroom should NOT be used as a designated private space for feeding infants, preparing feeds, or cleaning infant feeding items.

It is important that a family-friendly space:

- is private.
- is cleaned and disinfected frequently (at least every 4-6 hours for infection prevention and control).
- is easily accessible to all families, including those with disabilities or special health care needs.
- has a comfortable place to sit, such as a chair or cushions.
- has adequate lighting.
- has safe drinking water available within the family-friendly space; this is especially important for a lactating woman.
- has a small refrigerator that is dedicated to storing expressed breast milk, if possible.
- has an outlet for pumping breast milk (note: pumps should only be used if pump equipment can be properly cleaned and milk can be safely stored).
- contains toys appropriate for young children that can easily be wiped down.
- has appropriate and well-marked signage in both English and Spanish (or other languages used in the community) so that families can find the space.
- has easy access to safe water and areas for cleaning, food preparation, handwashing, and bathing.
- has a dedicated space for feeding that is separate from the areas to change diapers, clean infant feeding items, and prepare infant formula and foods for young children.



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