

# **Allegany County Health Department Workplace Bed Bug Policy and Procedure**

## ***Background***

Bed bug infestations are spreading rapidly within the United States which puts healthcare providers that conduct visits in the client home setting are at risk of contacting bed bugs. Except in the case of severe infestation, the risk of picking up and transporting bed bugs during a home visit is relatively low. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease and are not fatal to humans or animals but they are a nuisance. They can leave inflamed welts on the body, are difficult to eradicate and are not welcome guests in anyone's home. Employees must be conscious of bed bugs to avoid transporting them in their cars, to the office or home settings or from one client to another.

This protocol is designed to increase awareness of possible infestation and to provide guidance to employees in an effort to reduce the risk of transporting bed bugs.

## ***What are Bed Bugs?***

Bed bugs are small, brown insects that feed on human and animal blood. Adult bed bugs are ¼ inch long with reddish brown, oval bodies. They hide in crevices of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, furniture, floors or walls. They can be seen and are sometimes mistaken for ticks. Bed bugs are not selective, they do not care if a residence is clean or dirty, nor do they care about the income level of the occupants.

## ***Bed Bugs and Home Visiting***

At the initial referral, or as part of the intake process, employees should assess any environmental concerns within the home, including any known bed bug infestations in the previous 2-3 months. Explain to the client, "Our employees make several visits in the work day and we are asking in efforts to keep from taking bed bugs to other client's homes."

If a client/family describes a possible bed bug infestation, the employee is to identify an alternative location for evaluations and/or services. If alternate arrangements cannot be made, employee will take steps to minimize the possibility of transporting bed bugs out of the client's home.

Those employees making home visits have priority for the use of a State car. Every attempt should be made to take a State car for home visits including signing out cars from other locations. If there are not enough cars for those making home visits, the following visits take priority for a State car:

- Known infestation;
- High rise apartments;
- Any other congregate type housing;
- Cluttered homes/apartments.

If at any time bed bugs are detected in a State car or on yourself after operating a State car, notify your supervisor. The car will need to be cleared for use.

**Bed Bug Prevention Kits** will be provided to keep in State or employee trunks. These may include:

- Clear, medium to large plastic storage bin with tight sealing cover to place items taken in the home following a home visit;
- Clear sealable Ziploc bags to place items such as a laptop following a home visit;
- Large disposable trash bags for the disposal of items;
- A small plastic or metal portable chair or stool;
- A plastic tablecloth for spreading on the floor;
- A sticky lint roller, wet wipes, mirror and flashlight to aid in self-inspection;
- Snack size bags to place bugs using a wet wipe;
- Spray bottle with 70% to 90% isopropyl alcohol for treating non-disposable items such as stethoscope.

**General Recommendations for Home Visiting:**

- Wear simple, light colored clothes without cuffs. If possible, wear clothes without buttons or pockets. Scrubs are strongly recommended. If dress clothes are worn, they must be able to withstand a 30 minute cycle in a hot dryer;
- Wear simple, light colored shoes without laces such as slip-on shoes preferably that can be dried in the dryer;
- Avoid accessories such as scarves, jewelry and handbags;
- If possible, leave coat, purse, etc. in the car. Purses should be kept in the trunk;
- Carry only those items with you that are essential to the home visit; Clipboards can be provided to allow for minimal papers taken in the home;
- Laptops should remain in the lap and not placed on surfaces. Laptops should be placed in large Ziploc bags following home visits to allow for inspection;
- Avoid sitting on or placing items upon upholstered furniture, bedding or carpeted floors. Consider taking a plastic chair or stool in each home visit;
- If the visit requires sitting on the floor, take a plastic cover to sit on;
- Work in well-lit areas;
- Do not carry items in the home in any type of cloth bag. Use plastic, sealed containers, a Ziploc bag or a “fanny type pack” if possible;
- After leaving each home visit, perform a self-check using sticky lint roller, wet wipes for shoes, a comb, mirror and flashlight;
- Check all materials carried into the home by placing them in the large tote or Ziploc bags and observe.

**If bed bugs are discovered:**

- Return to the Health Department. Park the car in the outside lot. Leave contained items in the locked car and notify your supervisor for assistance in addressing these items. Proceed 1<sup>st</sup> to the designated room to change into spare clothes and place the clothes worn in the client’s home in the dryer on hot for 30 minutes;
- The clothes can then be taken home for normal laundering;
- Spray all service items that will not be damaged with isopropyl spray and place in a sealable plastic bin prior to visiting another client’s home.

## ***Known Bed Bug Infestation in the Home***

### **Arrange for the visit to be made in an alternate site.**

#### **If unable:**

- Consider coveralls and booties; if worn, remove by turning inside out and discard immediately after the visit into plastic garbage bag and secure. Throw the garbage bag away at an outdoor receptacle. The Health Department has a dumpster located behind the Brooke Building;
- Take a plastic chair/stool and/or plastic floor covering (if getting on the floor with a child is required) in the home setting with you;
- After leaving each home visit, perform a self-check using sticky lint roller, wet wipes for shoes, a comb, mirror and flashlight;
- After leaving the home, place all materials taken in the home in the clear, plastic container with fitted lid and/or a large Ziploc bag. Observe for bed bugs;
- If bed bugs are found, return to the Health Department. Park the car in the outside lot. Leave contained items in the locked car and notify your supervisor for assistance in addressing these items. Proceed 1<sup>st</sup> to the designated room to change into spare clothes and place the clothes worn in the client's home in the dryer on hot for 30 minutes;
- The clothes can then be taken home for normal laundering;
- Spray all service items that will not be damaged with isopropyl spray and place in a sealable plastic bin prior to visiting another client's home.

### **Bed Bugs in the Worksite**

- Notify your supervisor;
- Confirm with Environmental Health the bugs are indeed bed bugs;
- If indicated, an experienced pest control company will be consulted for prompt removal.

Some ACHD programs may adhere to other or additional guidelines for bed bugs such as the Allegany County Board of Education or the Department of Juvenile Justice.

### **Other steps to keep bedbugs out of the workplace or employee's homes:**

- If possible, use designated sites for in-house client visits;
- Use designated areas for in-house client visits that are known to have bed bug infestation in the home;
- Minimize the number of items brought into and out of the workplace;
- Keep personal items off the floor;
- Eliminate clutter;
- Keep cars and areas clean and vacuumed.

