

Draft - Homeless Shelter: a facility that provides temporary shelter and basic services to individuals or families experiencing homelessness, without requiring leases or occupancy agreements.

Section 86.X – Conditional Use Permit Requirements for Homeless Shelters

To protect the health, safety, and general welfare of both shelter occupants and the surrounding community, the following minimum standards shall be required as part of any Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application for a Homeless Shelter. These items must be submitted with the application prior to consideration by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors to demonstrate responsible operations, minimize impacts on adjacent properties, and avoid undue burdens on County services.

1. Ancillary Use Requirement

A Homeless Shelter shall only be permitted as an ancillary or accessory use to an otherwise approved principal use. Stand-alone shelters are prohibited.

Why it's a minimum standard:

Requiring shelters to be secondary to another principal use prevents large-scale or stand-alone shelters that may overwhelm site infrastructure or surrounding neighborhoods. It reduces the risk of land use incompatibility while ensuring shelter operations remain integrated and context-sensitive.

2. Separation from Daycare and Child-Centered Facilities

A Homeless Shelter shall not be located on a parcel that contains, or is proposed to contain, a daycare center, preschool, or any facility providing care, supervision, or instruction to minors.

Why it's a minimum standard:

Children are a legally protected class, and facilities that serve them are considered sensitive uses. Separation ensures there is no real or perceived threat to child safety, avoids operational conflicts, and reduces liability concerns. This standard also supports parental trust and helps prevent land use disputes.

3. Continuous Supervision

A trained staff member or authorized representative must be physically present and responsible for onsite supervision during all hours of shelter operation.

Why it's a minimum standard:

On-site supervision ensures order, provides accountability, and allows for immediate response to emergencies or conflicts. It protects shelter residents and the community, reduces the need for law enforcement intervention, and is essential to maintaining safe operations.

4. Intake and Screening Requirements

Shelter operators shall establish a structured intake process that includes:

- Defined intake hours and protocols;
- Verification of identification for all clients;
- A screening policy to assess client suitability and ensure safe housing assignments;
- A written policy stating whether background checks are conducted, and if so, what criteria (e.g., violent felony convictions, active warrants) would disqualify an individual from entry.

This policy must be submitted with the CUP application and updated upon any change in procedure.

Why it's a minimum standard:

A consistent intake and screening process helps ensure the safety of all residents, staff, and nearby properties. Background checks and ID verification are tools to manage risk responsibly and maintain a secure, structured environment, a basic standard for any group living situation with vulnerable populations.

5. Facility Layout and Security Requirements

A facility layout and operations plan shall be submitted with the CUP application and include:

- Controlled entry and exit points;
- Adequate outdoor lighting for safety and visibility;
- Security measures such as surveillance or monitoring systems;

Why it's a minimum standard:

Physical site design directly impacts safety and perception. Proper lighting, controlled access, and security systems help deter crime, increase resident security, and ensure compatibility with neighboring properties.

6. On-Site Services and Partnerships

The shelter must demonstrate partnerships with at least one qualified provider of supportive services (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, housing navigation). A written plan for service delivery and client referral is required.

Why it's a minimum standard:

Homelessness is often tied to health, economic, and social challenges. Ensuring connections to support services is critical for stabilization and transition. Requiring partnerships also demonstrates the operator's capacity and readiness to manage complex needs effectively, reducing pressure on County resources.

7. Parking, Circulation, and Access

The facility must provide:

- Sufficient off-street parking for staff and visitors;
- Clearly designated drop-off and pick-up areas;
- A transportation plan for clients, including public transit access where available.

Why it's a minimum standard:

Adequate parking and traffic management prevent congestion, ensure emergency access, and address neighborhood concerns about increased activity. Drop-off/pick-up planning protects pedestrian safety and helps integrate the facility with existing infrastructure.

8. Community Impact and Service Burden Statement

The CUP application shall include a narrative explaining how the shelter will:

- Avoid adverse impacts to surrounding properties and uses;
- Minimize or offset reliance on County emergency or public safety services;
- Provide a responsible framework for managing shelter operations and resident behavior.

Why it's a minimum standard:

This requirement promotes transparency and accountability. It ensures the applicant has considered and planned for how the shelter might impact County services (e.g., law enforcement, EMS, Parks and Rec.) and neighborhood quality of life. It provides a factual basis for CUP evaluation and condition-setting.

9. Good Neighbor Policy

The operator shall maintain a publicly available Good Neighbor Policy, including:

- A primary contact for community inquiries or complaints;

- Procedures for responding to concerns;
- Community outreach and education efforts.

Why it's a minimum standard:

Open communication between shelter operators and the community helps prevent misunderstanding, reduce friction, and resolve issues proactively. This fosters mutual trust, allows for complaint resolution outside of enforcement channels, and reflects good governance principles.

10. Review and Enforcement

The Board of Supervisors may impose additional reasonable conditions to address site-specific impacts. Periodic reviews, compliance inspections, and reporting requirements may be included as CUP conditions.

Why it's a minimum standard:

Some uses require ongoing oversight to ensure long-term compliance. The ability to review, inspect, or reauthorize shelters ensures continued adherence to CUP conditions and operational standards, essential for land uses that may evolve or change based on population or funding.

11. Regulatory Compliance

All Homeless Shelters must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, including but not limited to the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), the Virginia State Fire Marshal, the Virginia Department of Health, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and any other relevant accessibility, life safety, or public health regulations.

Why it is a minimum standard:

Homeless shelters must meet health, safety, building, and accessibility laws to ensure safe and lawful operations. Compliance with the USBC, ADA, Health Department, and Fire Marshal requirements protects shelter residents, staff, and the surrounding community. This standard affirms that zoning approval does not exempt operators from mandatory regulatory oversight.