**Age and Dementia Friendlier Emergency Shelters**

**Age and Dementia Friendlier Emergency Shelters –** Focus more on older adults, those with medical issues, adaptive equipment, mobility issues, hearing issues, and those living with cognitive issues, which are not well addressed by ADA.

**Wherever possible use Universal Design strategies** and equipment that meet the needs of everyone, making the shelter function with fewer staffing resources needed to help those who require additional assistance, don’t know where to go, or how to take care of their personal needs in this stressful environment.

See the Age and Dementia Friendly Design Considerations for Physical Infrastructure [download (mass.gov)](https://www.mass.gov/doc/af-df-design-considerations-for-physical-infrastructure-0/download).

**OVERALL LAYOUT BEST PRACTICES**

* Welcoming, uncluttered entry with a greeter off the path of traffic, especially for those who might need additional assistance.
* Safe location to store coats, personal belongings, and adaptive equipment near users (walkers, canes, tissues, glasses, hearing aids, water, etc.)
* Use of art and color as landmarks to assist orientation.
* Smaller more sheltered common spaces off the main path with less commotion.
* Quiet area possibly with a door with low light for dealing with crisis.
* Door closers if needed adjusted to accessible force and if possible, power assist door openers.
* Lever or pull handles if necessary for opening/accessing common spaces.

**FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT**

* Upholstered furniture that are at appropriate height, depth, and level of firmness for ease of getting in and out.
* Armchairs - for those who have trouble getting out of chairs.
* Charging outlets at waist height for those who can’t lean over.

**ORIENTATION AND WAYFINDING**

* Signage – Simple, eye level, consistent, universal, appropriate contracts between text and background.

**INTERIOR SURFACES, FINISHES, AND CONTRAST**

* Avoid trip hazard changes in flooring thickness – flush transitions.
* Nonglossy floors, without contrast colors adjacent to each other on the floor.
* Colors – contrasting to call attention to
  1. self-help resources,
  2. switches, and alarms
  3. handrails and grab bars
  4. plumbing fixtures
  5. functional areas, etc.
* Patterns – on floors, walls and furniture - muted to be less distracting or confusing.

**ACCOUSTICS AND LIGHTING**

* Lighting- not to bright, not too dim – even
* Some task lighting where tasks need to be performed – filling forms etc.
* Simple light controls switched or simple dimmers.
* Noise levels muted in common areas, but especially sleeping areas. If possible, provide a quiet separate room for those who are confused by sounds.
* Avoid PA systems for announcements if possible. They are hard to understand and can be disorientating.
* Warn people before testing alarm systems.

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Source: Prepared on behalf of the Age and Dementia Friendly Physical Infrastructure Team of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer’s Disease and All Other Dementias, June 2024