

NEST FAQ

What is NEST?

The Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST) has been in operation for 30 years. It is a coalition of faith organizations founded in 1990. Over the years, it has served sites in Norfolk, Chesapeake and Virginia Beach. NEST typically operates in the coldest months, late November through the end of March.

The people of NEST.

NEST provides homeless men and women a warm, safe spot during winter months and connects them with resources and support systems. It is not a shelter for women and families and it is not a permanent shelter.

Why is NEST necessary this year?

The city of Norfolk through federal grants and other programs found housing for many of our homeless when the pandemic started through now. The city projects that there are 40 people in our area without housing - as winter approaches they need a place to sleep overnight.

How is NEST different from years past? How does NEST work during the pandemic?

This year is different than any other year. FPC and the city of Norfolk determined that this invaluable program had to continue even in the midst of a pandemic. As NEST planning started for 2020, many buildings were unavailable to host. FPC has the space, systems, etc in place to help and is willing to host with the help of others. Other NEST churches will volunteer and serve several weeks at our site.

We are working closely with the Community Services Board, the Health Department and the city of Norfolk to provide the best care possible and keep folks safe as we help our community this winter.

What are the meals served?

In years past, NEST provided hot meals to guests at a community style table. With COVID procedures in place, we will serve to-go style meals in disposable packaging to each guest at their socially distant space. This will eliminate many touchpoints. Volunteers will prepare and package the meals ahead of time.

NEST COVID

What COVID mitigation procedures are being practiced?

All volunteers will have their temperature checked and be asked screening questions each time they report for a shift and sign-in with the coordinator. Volunteers will wear masks at all times during their shift and will also be provided access to other PPE, including gloves, additional face masks and face shields as needed.

All guests will have their temperature checked and be screened as well and are required to wear a mask except when eating. Any guest with a potential infection will be transported to the hospital for testing and will not be permitted to enter the building.

We are working with the Health Department to make COVID testing available for guests and volunteers.

All guests and volunteers are required to wear a mask while in the parking lot and in the building.

How will we maintain social distancing while operating an overnight shelter?

The city projects that there are 40 people in our area without housing. In prior years, NEST would serve upwards of 70+ people a night per site. FPC will designate its First Hall area for NEST this year. With the reduced number of guests needing shelter, there is adequate space in First Hall to distance sleeping maps. Additionally, sleeping mats will be separated physically by a clear plastic barriers provided by the City of Norfolk.

What is being done to sanitize the space and the building to keep people safe?

First Presbyterian Church is equipped with bi-polar ionization devices in the heating/cooling system. This equipment is extremely effective in neutralizing and removing particles from the air, including bacteria and viruses.

Each morning a team will sanitize all spaces used by NEST volunteers and guests with electrostatic backpack chemical sprayers.

Multiple hand sanitizing stations will be available at the check-in area, throughout First Hall and the restrooms.

The guests will use designated portable restrooms to limit building exposure and allow for easy sanitizing between each use.

ROLES

I signed up to work the check-in, what can I expect?

As guests arrive, you and the check-in team will greet them in the parking lot and form an orderly line. After checking temperatures and asking COVID screening questions you will register each guest and direct them to their space for the evening. There will be a uniformed police officer on site to help with the check in/check out procedure.

I signed up to help with meal service, what can I expect?

As the guests are checking in, you and your team will serve a meal to each guest at their sleeping area. After the guests finish eating, the meal team will move through First Hall with trash cans to clean up after dinner, before lights out at 10pm.

I signed up for an overnight shift, what can I expect?

Overnight volunteers will monitor First Hall in order to maintain a safe environment for the guests. This volunteer opportunity is for folks 18 and older.

I signed up for a breakfast service and clean-up shift, what can I expect?

This team will serve guests breakfast at their individual sleeping area and help them check out in the morning. They will also clean up and sanitize after the guests leave.

VOLUNTEER

Who can volunteer?

Anyone with a heart for the city can volunteer. We have jobs for every age and there's no previous experience needed. There are jobs available on site and there are opportunities to serve from home or in other capacities. If you are interested in learning more, contact Joel at joel@fpcnorfolk.org.

How can my organization help?

Your organization can support with material donations of toiletry kits (a gallon sized ziplock bag with travel sized soap, shampoo, deodorant, tooth brush, toothpaste, washcloth, etc.), socks, gloves, hats and other cold weather clothing. Volunteer organizations can also provide meals for NEST or sign up to serve for a night or even a week. If your organization would like more information, contact Joel at joel@fpcnorfolk.org.