

## Heat Wave Preparedness Checklists for Mental Health Service Providers

### Make Plans for Outreach During Heat Waves

During the spring, before it gets hot, flag consumers at highest risk for heat-related illnesses based on lack of access to or unwillingness to use air conditioning, health risks, current medications, ability to express thirst and obtain water for themselves, and ability to communicate being hot or uncomfortable. Direct staff to assess and record:

Check those that apply	Essential Questions	What to Do
	Is there a working AC in the dwelling unit?	<p>If yes, encourage consumer to use it during hot weather. If he/she does not like using AC, suggest a setting of 78°F (or low cool) to provide a comfortable but not cold environment.</p> <p>If not working (does not provide cooling to at least 78°F), or no AC at all, help resident to procure working AC if possible.</p> <p>If AC cannot be procured, help the consumer plan for where to go to stay cool on very hot days</p> <p>If possible, encourage consumer's family and/or contacts to plan to check in on them during heat emergencies.</p>
	Has the consumer received copies of Keep Cool or Beat the Heat brochures?	If not, provide a copy (call 311 or search "Beat the Heat" or "Keep Cool" on NYC.GOV for more info).

**Monitor Vulnerable People During Heat Waves**

During heat emergencies, check on at-risk consumers. Direct staff to maintain:

- A schedule for monitoring consumers
- A check list to document outreach and reinforce heat safety. Essential items for the checklist include:

Check those that apply	Essential Questions	What to Do
	Is the consumer using his/her air conditioner? (See below if no AC in dwelling unit)	If not, assess reason and provide assistance, (e.g. explain importance, demonstrate how to use it).  Note: If the person is using a fan, put it in or next to an open window. <b>Do not use a fan in a room with closed windows.</b> Warn consumer that <u>fans may not provide enough protection</u> in very hot weather.
	If no air conditioning in room or apartment, is the consumer able to spend some portion of the day in an air conditioned space (e.g. common room in building, cooling center nearby, other public place)?	Remind and encourage consumer to visit alternative location, especially during the hottest times of the day.
	Is there enough water to drink?	Provide water and encourage the person to drink.
	Is the person wearing too many clothes?	Encourage the person to remove excess layers of clothing.

**Signs of Heat Stress**

Check those that apply	Serious Signs	What to Do
	Hot, dry skin OR cold, clammy skin (no sweating)	Call 911. This is a medical emergency.  While waiting for help, move the person to a cool area. Remove extra clothes. Use water and a fan to cool the person externally. Do not give the victim fluids to drink.
	Weakness, dizziness	
	Nausea and/or vomiting	
	Change in mental status including: confusion, hallucinations, disorientation	
	Trouble breathing	
	Rapid, strong pulse	
	Unconscious or unresponsive	

Check those that apply	Warning Signs	What to Do
	Headache	Get the person to a cool place, encourage removal of extra clothes. Give the person water.
	Decreased energy	
	Loss of appetite, nausea	
	Lightheadedness, feeling faint	
	Heavy sweating	
	Muscle cramps	

## Helping Consumers to Prepare for Extreme Heat

*During routine contacts, provide information and help consumers plan for hot weather. Involve family and friends in preparation:*

- If an at-risk individual has an air conditioner, encourage them to USE IT during periods of extreme heat. Many people prefer not to use their air conditioners, either to save money or because they do not like cold air. Suggest tips to conserve energy, such as using air conditioning in the room consumers spend the most time in, closing off other rooms, and cutting down on light and other electronics use. Advise consumers to set the air conditioner's temperature at 78°F. Check the air conditioner to make sure it is in good working condition, clean the filter if needed, and insulate any spaces between the air conditioner and window to make sure there is a tight fit.
- If an at-risk individual does not have an air conditioner or access to a common room on-site with air conditioning, discuss any other options they may have during periods of extreme heat. Spending even a few hours in an air conditioned environment can be beneficial. Help them identify public spaces nearby that they can go to sit in air conditioning. Help them make a plan for how they will get to a friend, neighbor or relative's house, a library, shopping mall, or a Cooling Center in their neighborhood (call 311, TTY: 212-504-4115, or visit [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem) for more information).
- Advise consumers to wear light, loose-fitting clothing. Bathing or showering with cool (not cold) water can be helpful for those able to do so safely.
- Discuss medical conditions or medications that could increase risk during hot weather. Many people do not realize they have a high risk of heat illness. If necessary, check with the consumer's doctor or advise consumers to do so concerning precautions they should take during hot weather and whether self-monitoring hydration (e.g. using bodyweight measurement to ensure they are getting enough water) is recommended.
- Remind consumers to drink plenty of water both outdoors and indoors, even if they don't feel thirsty, during hot weather, and to avoid strenuous activity. If they are unable to communicate thirst, make sure they are given water at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Advise consumers that during periods of extreme heat, a fan alone may not be enough to keep them cool. When the room temperature is in the high 90s or above, fans will not prevent heat-related illness because they just blow the hot air around. Fans may be useful when used in conjunction with an air conditioner or at night to help circulate cooler air from open windows if air conditioning is not used.

- Educate family and friends about symptoms of heat illness and prevention tips. Encourage consumers to check in on family/friends/neighbors who may also need help at least daily during heat waves.
- Distribute the City's "Beat the Heat" and "Keep Cool" brochures. Call 311 or search "Beat the Heat" or "Keep Cool" on NYC.gov for more information.

*Updated April 2013*