



Creating a Plan for Preventing and Managing Bed Bugs: Guidelines and Template

Bed bugs are pests that require thoughtful planning to avoid an infestation. If you only address bed bugs when they show up, you're not preventing the problem. The solution to preventing and managing bed bugs is a comprehensive plan that addresses the needs of your building and its users.

This document outlines the steps that can be used to develop a comprehensive bed bug prevention plan whether you're managing a large rental residential housing facility, special needs residence, condominium complex, or other public service-oriented spaces.

This guide is adapted from the City of Chicago's "Sample Plan for Preventing and Managing Bed Bugs in Condominium or Cooperative Buildings," at

https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/food_env/Feb272014BedBugCondoFinal.pdf

This document is for reference only. It does not purport to represent every housing or workplace scenario. Any bed bug control plan will only be as good as the baseline assessment of the current bed bug problem, potential future issues, and resources available. Use this document in combination with the other resources referenced to create a comprehensive bed bug plan designed specifically for the buildings or facilities being managed.



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Baseline Assessment

Before developing a comprehensive bed bug management plan it's important to complete a baseline assessment to understand the needs of the building and its users. Begin with a thorough initial assessment regarding the needs of each facility. The assessment should include a review of the following:

1. **Operations:** What operational systems are currently in place to address bed bug issues and can be considered a resource to build a plan from? Operational resources might include building policies, rental agreement requirements, maintenance activities, sanitation activities, training, and other tenant/building engagement that impacts pest control.

2. **Tenant, client, and staff needs:** Who are your residents/clients? Understanding the capabilities of residents and clients will help guide you to the types of services and training required to help control a pest problem. Be specific about each client's capabilities, limitations, and training needs. For example, a building that caters to seniors or those with physical limitations may not be able to assume residents can move heavy objects.

3. **Capability of the organization to respond:** What resources does your organization have? The resources required to prevent and control a bed bug problem can be considerable. Knowing what expertise is in house, equipment available, and a good understanding of your budget will help with planning. Think about staff with expertise or licensing, staff training needs, equipment availability, and budget.

4. **Current levels of infestation:** Can you get a general idea of the current level of bed bug infestation at your building? You may want to hire an experienced pest control operator to help with this step, but maintenance staff and management may have a general idea of the level of infestation. This can be used as a starting point.

Once an assessment has been concluded, a baseline can be established to develop a comprehensive plan from which all the following bed bug control activities will start.

Maintenance

Maintaining a clean, safe, and well-functioning facility will go a long way to keep bed bugs under control. There are many routine maintenance activities that facility management can institute prior to reports of problems to prevent bed bugs from spreading. Coupled with staff training on pest control responsibilities, proper building maintenance is management’s best defense against incurring unexpected expenses for bed bug control.

Suggestions for a Maintenance Plan

1. **Routine Inspection:** Maintenance staff can help with routine bed bug inspections. Describe how they will be incorporated into regular maintenance activities.
 - What staff can help with inspection, and what training will be needed?
 - What are key dates and times for inspections: during routine maintenance, quarterly on a rotating basis for all units/building areas, and/or at lease renewal/apartment turnover?
 - Where do you need to inspect: common areas, targeted units, other?
 - How will residents/staff/clients be notified, if needed?
 - What are the next steps if bed bugs are identified? (see “Reporting and Response” section)



2. **Periodic Intensive Inspection:** There is a need for more thorough inspection to find low-level, returning, or early infestation that may not be reported or found during routine inspection activities. This can help with containing a problem early. It’s important to update this section with information on primary areas of concern before intensive inspection occurs to direct activity.
- Follow the same basic questions as above, but take more time.
 - Who will do the inspection: staff, pest control operator, bed bug sniffing dog, etc.?

3. **Monitoring:** Monitoring through placement of passive or active monitors will aid inspection. Staff can be trained to place and check bed bug monitors as part of regular maintenance activities. Create a map or list of locations where monitors are placed and create a schedule for checking monitors.
- Which monitors should you use: sticky traps/monitors, pitfall traps/monitors?
 - Will you monitor in all reporting units, common areas, recently treated units, or sample of units?
 - What are the potential or previously “problem units” that you want to specifically monitor?

4. **Cleaning Protocol:** Regular cleaning activities that lead to a clean and clutter free building can reduce bed bug numbers and prevent infestation. Purchase or use a HEPA vacuum regularly. Steam cleaners can treat problems on upholstered furniture in common areas. Provide access to and education on how a hot dryer can kill all bed bugs.



5. **Reducing Pest Conducive Conditions:** Reducing clutter and sealing cracks and crevices especially in areas near beds and other heavily inhabited areas will prevent the spread and make inspection and treatment easier and more effective. Plan to reduce pest conducive conditions:

- What areas in units and common areas are bed bugs are likely to be a problem? Ex baseboards, outlets, and wood trim near beds.
- What cracks and crevices can you seal?
- Where is there clutter that can be reduced? For some populations, decluttering may require firm policies regarding storage or regular clutter clean out days to encourage decluttering.

6. **Furniture Choices:** Choose furniture with fewer places where bed bugs can hide to help contain an infestation and make it easier to inspect.

- Can you replace upholstered furniture with molded plastic furniture or similar?
- Can you replace wall-to-wall carpet with hard flooring and area rugs that can be easily cleaned and/or replaced?

7. **Room Layout:** When under management control, the placement of furniture can be helpful such as placing beds away from window frames, storage, closets, dressers, etc.

8. **Equipment Choices & Availability:** Invest in equipment that can help staff and clients control bed bugs such as a dedicated HEPA vacuum cleaner; steam cleaner; lint rollers, monitors, hot clothes dryer.
- What equipment do you already have? What do you need to purchase?
 - What is within your budget?

Reporting and Response

Responding quickly to any reported bed bug problems will help minimize the further spread of bed bugs, contain costs, and ensure that bed bugs are eliminated quickly and effectively. Confirmation of a reported problem is a priority in establishing the extent of the problem and determining the appropriate response.

Suggestions for a Reporting Mechanism and Response Protocol

1. How will residents/clients/staff report a problem?
 - When? The Chicago Bed Bug Ordinance (CBBO) states that a bed bug problem should be reported within five days of suspecting a problem.
 - Who is the recipient of a report? Landlord, manager, maintenance staffer - be specific.
 - What form, if any, is to be used?
 - What information should be reported?
 - How will the report be delivered, e.g., email, mail, phone call?



2. How will your facility respond to a report of bed bugs? You may want to start with a staff visit for further assessment, or directly with an inspection/monitor check from a licensed pest control operator (PCO). The CBBO states that inspection by a licensed PCO should be within 10 days of a report. Work with the pest control company and residents/clients/staff to develop a schedule for inspection. Other recommendations:
- Discourage unit owners from treating for bed bugs on their own. Treating bed bugs inappropriately with “bug bombs,” chemicals or other means may spread the problem making them more difficult to treat or may cause harm to occupants.
 - Discourage unit occupants from discarding items. Discarding items before a pest control company has had a chance to inspect them may cause the owner to lose items that can be treated and may risk spreading bed bugs in the building.
 - Remind unit owners of simple steps that can be used to treat clothing, linens, and other items like 20 minutes in a hot clothes dryer, steam cleaning, deep vacuuming.

3. How will your facility define a confirmation that bed bugs have been found? Documentation and confirmation of a bed bug issue should include visual confirmation of the problem by trained staff or a licensed pest control technician prior to any treatment activities. Acceptable documentation or confirmation of a bed bug issue includes:
- Tenant evidence of captured specimen or photograph
 - Visual confirmation by staff via monitors or other inspection
 - Visual confirmation by PCO (CBBO required when a report is received from a tenant) with staff follow up
 - Bed bug sniffing dog



4. How will your facility respond after confirmation of a bed bug problem and acceptable documentation has been received? Remember, there should be **no treatment without confirmation that bed bugs are present**. Unnecessary treatment leads to bed bug resistance and unnecessary exposure of residents to pesticides.

CBBO requires following the National Pest Management Associations Best Practices:

- Hire a Pest Control Operator (PCO) to inspect the reporting unit
- Complete a cloverleaf inspection if bed bugs are confirmed in the reporting unit
- Determine the treatment scope and options (see Treatment section)
- Provide free access to a hot dryer to treat bedding, clothing, and other items for bed bugs
- Provide plastic bags and other plastic sheeting for removing items for laundering/disposal/storage
- Install of monitors (see Monitoring section)

Monitoring

Monitoring for evidence of bed bugs will help identify any recurring or new infestation and if found, minimize the spread of bed bugs and help eliminate them quickly and effectively. Monitors can be placed in units at any time: before reporting, after initial inspections, or after treatment. They can be used to identify a problem early, confirm a reported infestation, and assess the effectiveness of treatment.

Monitoring is one the least expensive and most effective activities that can be done to control the spread of bed bugs and contain the cost of treatment.



Establishing a Monitoring Program

Which type of monitor is right for you? There are two types of bed bug monitors – passive and active. Both have pros and cons. Passive monitors are inexpensive and easy to use, and are best used in occupied units. Active monitors generate an attractant for bed bugs and are best used in unoccupied units or in common areas. Here are some guidelines for choosing and placing monitors:

- What monitors will be used and where?
- When do you want to begin monitoring at your facility? Before reported problem in at risk units, after reported problem, and/or after treatment (highly recommended)
- Where will monitors be installed and by whom? For example, will only certain occupied units receive passive monitors, while common areas and/or units being prepared for occupancy use active monitors? Will staff or a PCO install the monitors?
- Who will check the monitors? Staff/PCO
- When will monitors be inspected? Bi-weekly is recommended

Other Things to Consider

Other issues such as paying for services may become a stumbling block, especially in condominiums/cooperatives or rental units not governed by the CBBO or similar regulations. Creating leases or contracts that are punitive or require residents/owners to bare the entire cost of inspection and treatment will discourage timely reporting and has the potential to provide bed bugs with opportunities to spread into other units.

1. Who should be held responsible for paying for pest control services?
 - Should the tenant/owner pay for all or part of the treatment costs?
 - Will the cost of bed bug treatment be listed in condominium association bylaws and costs added to assessments?
 - What is the process for paying for maintenance actions recommended by the PCO? Is this part of the regular maintenance budget or an additional line item?

2. Managing tenant/owner refusal to access, or if the tenant/unit owner is unavailable to provide access.
 - What will the steps be for attempting access?
 - What will final notification look like? How many days? Format? Fines?
 - Punitive actions administration? Types and timeline?

3. Accommodating populations with compromised capacities, both physical and/or mental.
 - Who are the building occupants who may not be able to comply with reporting or helping with preparation and treatment?
 - How will management accommodate their needs? This might include adding routine staff inspection and/or monitoring for bed bugs to the lease or other binding agreements.

Treatment

Treating for bed bugs requires more than applying pesticides, as pesticides alone will not solve most problems. If a bed bug issue is identified, management should designate a lead person to coordinate next steps with the affected people (tenant, client, staff) and units, and the pest control company.

One of the first and most important steps for treatment is to create a **Request for Proposal (RFP)** for hiring a pest control operator (PCO). An RFP will outline the activities and treatment strategies expected of the PCO including all the decisions management has made in the previous sections of this template. By doing so, management can compare bids more effectively since the information received by all bidders will be given using defined guidelines. The information provided below gives a general outline of treatment, including what should be included in the proposal for treatment services.



Minimum Treatment Requirements for Bed Bug Control

1. In Chicago, the CBBO states that treatment must follow the [National Pest Management Association](#) best practices for bed bug control.
 - o Designate a person (Integrated Pest Management Coordinator or similar) as the primary person responsible for communicating with the Pest Control Operator.
 - i. The coordinator should read and understand the basics of effective bed bug control.

2. What will be required of the PCO for determining units and areas that need attention? This will include the extent of the problem, condition of the area, number of rooms with bed bugs, clutter, capacity of tenant/client to help, any previous treatment, etc.
 - o The inspection can be conducted by in-house staff that has been properly trained in the detection of bed bug activity or by a contracted party. This should be communicated and specified in the contract bid.



- 3. Determine the process to notify residents/clients/staff of the problem, and steps being taken to address it.
 - Who will be responsible for development and distribution of communicating the process and educational materials?

- 4. Provide preparation instructions to residents/clients/staff with recommendations of the PCO to prepare for treatment.
 - What type of preparation can be effectively executed by residents?
 - i. Are there special accommodations that will be needed? Include all requirements in the RFP such as the need for minimal preparation as per the NPMA guidelines.
 - Who will provide preparation training and education to residents?

- 5. Create guidelines for working with residents/clients/staff to develop a schedule for treatment.
 - Detail the expectations, for example giving a two-day notice for access, listing who to contact, and the supervision requirements.

- 6. Detail treatment options, such as the requirement that no pesticides should be applied unless a bed bug problem is confirmed.
 - Any proposal from a PCO should list all treatment options available and be reviewed for alignment with facility needs and policies. For example, if an option of heat treatment is desired, make sure the PCO provides that option.
 - Any treatment options should address all units/areas with confirmed bed bugs (not just the unit reporting the problem). Demand cloverleaf inspection and treatment.



- Keep in mind the required tools, e.g., HEPA vacuum and tools for proper application of dusts such as diatomaceous earth or similar. Explicitly state facility requirements for all treatment options and equipment.

7. Continue follow up treatment as required, repeating steps 2 to 6 as needed. You may also want to consider post-service inspection and monitoring, and follow-up treatment.

8. Monitor to assess effectiveness of treatment (see Monitoring section).
- Monitoring can be conducted by in-house staff that has been properly trained in monitoring or by a contracted party. This should be communicated and specified in the contract bid.

9. Maintain written records of any pest control measures and any report prepared by the pest control company. If required by the pest control operator, specify it in the RFP.
- The CBBO requires these records to be maintained either on-site or at the property management office for three years.
 - Pest Control Operators often provide a binder or similar resource for documenting activities.
 - Determine who will be responsible for records and record retention.

See [Let's Beat the Bed Bug's](https://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/pest-management-professionals/hiring-a-pmp) site for more information on how to hire a pest management professional for bed bugs at <https://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/pest-management-professionals/hiring-a-pmp> and <https://www.stoppests.org/stoppests/assets/File/Housing%20RFP.pdf>.

Education

Putting a robust bed bug management plan in place is a good start. Now it's time to educate staff, residents, and/or clients. Education will help prevent bed bugs from occurring, encourage reporting confirmed or suspected bed bug problems, facilitate the inspection and treatment of bed bugs, and minimize the blame and stigma so often associated with bed bugs. Details for the specific needs of the facility must be included in the plan. Chicago's Bed Bug Ordinance offers guidance for rental and condominium/cooperative buildings located in Chicago.



Creating an Education Plan

Building management should provide information about bed bugs to all staff, clients, and/or residents. [Elevate](#), [City of Chicago](#), [U.S. EPA](#), [Let's Beat the Bed Bug](#) and others have great information (see "Additional Resources" on page 12). Information can be shared through flyers in common areas, email, newsletters, or other means, and discuss bed bugs during meetings with staff, clients, and/or residents.

1. Include information regarding the system for reporting, inspecting, and treating a bed bug problem relevant to the facility.
 - How do residents report pest sightings?
 - How often will inspections for bed bugs and other pests occur?
 - What are the treatment options for bed bugs?
 - i. Who will be responsible for treatment?

2. Include information relevant to the legal obligation to report a bed bug problem including expected responses and cooperation requirements.
 - In Chicago, for rental housing use [Chicago's Bed Bug Ordinance](#) and the [Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance](#) as a guide.
 - Distribute Chicago's bed bug brochure to all residents.



- Outside Chicago, use any relevant housing ordinances or other local/state laws to inform actions. Most municipalities require landlords to keep a pest free environment for renters.
- Post signage.

3. Outline in your Education Plan the education that will be delivered including the subject, date/time, and location. Go into detail for residents, staff, and clients (if applicable).

Examples of education tactics for residents:

- Provide the [CBBO bed bug brochure](#) or other general bed bug education resource at the time of lease signing for new or renewed leases.
- Send quarterly reminders via email/mail addressing any new information.
- Provide infestation updates regarding ongoing bed bug issues in the building.

Examples of education tactics for staff:

- Provide general bed bug information at the time of hire including information on relevant laws pertaining to their responsibilities.
- Share training updates/retraining dates on an ongoing basis.
- Outline duties related to bed bug control, and equipment available for staff to use on an ongoing basis.
- Provide protections to prevent the spread of bed bugs between units or to staff homes.



Examples of education tactics for clients.

- Provide general bed bug information upon initial engagement.
- Send periodic updates on relevant organizational rules for bed bug control and rules for reporting bed bug problems.

Conclusion

The ability to control the spread and treatment of bed bugs lies in management’s ability to plan appropriately for the population served. Without a clear understanding of the current problem; good communication with residents, clients, and staff; and a solid pest control contract with clear guidelines and expectations it will be nearly impossible to see progress. Taking the time to gain the knowledge needed to address the problem thoroughly will reap benefits and even cost savings in the future.

Contact Information

For more help with developing a bed bug control plan, please feel free to reach out to Elevate’s pest control experts by going to <https://www.elevatenp.org/pest-management/> and filling out the contact form at the bottom of the page.

Additional Resources

There are many resources on the internet for understanding the bed bug problem and coming up with a plan that will fit your needs.

Organization	Content Type	Website(s)
Elevate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops & Training • Educational Resources 	Elevatenp.org/pest-management/ or Contact (773) 269-4065
City of Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Resources • Chicago Bed Bug Ordinance Info. 	CityofChicago.org , search for “bed bugs”
Let’s Beat the Bed Bug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Resources • Multiple Language • How to Videos 	Bedbugs.umn.edu
Stop Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops & Training • Educational Resources 	StopPests.org
U.S. EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Resources • Pesticide Information 	EPA.gov/bedbugs
Illinois Department of Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Resources • Licensing of PCOs • Enforcement 	Dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/structural-pest-control/bed-bugs
Bed Bug Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request of Proposal 	http://www.bedbugcentral.com/sites/default/files/RFP%207.9.18.pdf
National Pest Management Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Practices for Bed Bug Control 	https://www.pestworld.org/all-things-bed-bugs/best-practices/