

MIGRANT BUSING TOOLKIT FOR RECEIVING CITIES

The Biden Administration is committed to ensuring that city, county, and state governments are prepared to receive migrants who are bused to their jurisdictions from the southwest border. The Administration is marshaling all available federal resources to cities already accepting migrants, and actively helping local officials and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in those cities to coordinate migrant intake, shelter, care, and transportation. Because cities may see these buses arrive suddenly and without notice, the Administration has drafted the following best practices to help those governments prepare a sound response. While receiving cities and states will confront different challenges and require different resources, this toolkit provides four approaches for receiving governments to consider, and offers concrete steps they can take to implement each.

Best Practice 1: Pre-Plan and Centralize Coordination

Coordinating with the federal government is a key first step:

- Establish contact with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA). The Biden Administration is proactively determining where buses are being chartered, and will alert local governments if it knows of any planned routes. If you, however, learn of planned buses first, contact IGA, which will activate Administration officials who are supporting receiving cities.
- Establish communication with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, who will ensure you are connected with the appropriate DHS POCs.

Immediate coordination among city, county, state, and federal officials, as well as NGOs, is also critical.

- Local governments should ensure the relevant police department is aware of any incoming bus(es) or flight(s).
- If migrant transport becomes frequent, local governments should establish a coordination group that meets to coordinate responses and includes relevant agencies and NGOs.
 - A single leader (or office) should oversee this coordination center/group, which should promulgate meeting notes and relevant data to partners.
 - This coordination center/group should work with NGOs in the receiving state as well as NGOs located where the buses or flights originated.
 - City, state, and local representation should include, among others, the mayor's staff; city and state offices of immigrant affairs (if applicable); city and state emergency management staff; and city and state public health officials.
 - NGO representation should include local service providers as well as local and state immigrant advocacy and service coalitions.
 - Federal government representation should include the local Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Administrator and, if necessary, local liaisons from the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Education, and Transportation (DOT).

Best Practice 2: Delineate Lines of Effort and Organize a Phased Approach

Given the complex operational challenges that local governments face when receiving migrant buses, local leaders should assign distinct lines of effort and articulate different phases of the operation.

As the chart below lays out, phases could be: (1) pre-planning, en route, and local arrival; (2) reception and shelter; (3) transition to state management; (4) long-term case management; and (5) stabilization and end state. Within these phases, individual tasks can be allocated to different partners.

CITY	Enroute and local arrival	Bus departs SW border Bus arrives at local transit center Initial data collection, local transfer to reception	Coordination ➤ NGO ➤ City agencies
	Reception and shelter	Medical triage screening Access to donations and supplies Transportation to shelters via city busses 1-3 day sheltering	➤ NGO ➤ City agencies ➤ County health
STATE	Transition to state mgt	State HHS manages transition to housing Continued NGO engagement Some migrants begin onward movement	➤ State HHS ➤ NGO
	Long term case mgt	Secure semi-permanent housing	➤ State HHS ➤ NGO
	End state	Onward movement or permanent settlement	➤ State HHS ➤ NGO

Phase 1: Pre-Planning, En Route, and Local Arrival

- Determine where you can set up volunteers and assistance at or near the point of arrival and where migrants can be moved so that you can perform intake indoors and away from media, which will likely be present.
- Determine where you can immediately house migrants for first 24-72 hours.
- Set up a coordination center/group (discussed above) and have local NGOs set up lines of communication with NGOs in the state(s) where the bus(es) originate.
- Engage the local police department, as it will likely be the first group to be in contact with the arriving migrants.

Phase 2: Reception and Shelter

- Determine where you can provide short-term shelter (1-3 days).
- Plan longer-term shelter options. Federal reimbursement of emergency food and shelter is for 30 days only, so decisions on housing after 30 days (e.g., whether to use hotels) should be made now.

- Provide health screening and access to resources at this point. These services require robust volunteer and staff assistance to disseminate information.
- Perform a needs assessment during intake. Collect information on migrants' intended final destination.
- Link migrants with immigration and social services in their native language to ensure that important immigration paperwork (Notice to Appear, Parole, and Alternative to Detention) is accurate with the correct name, address for final location, and time for initial reporting to a DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field office. Consider enlisting trusted messengers – such as immigrants' rights groups, parishes, and community centers in immigrant communities – during this process.

Phase 3: Transition to State Management

- Transition migrants to housing managed by state HHS. That state agency should ensure migrants' timely departure from hotels or other short-term housing.
- Ensure continued NGO engagement, which will be necessary to help enroll individuals into local services and case management and to assist onward movement for those who have ties in other cities.
- Assess the longer-term needs of migrants remaining in your city or state and the needs of the state and city for such services.

Phase 4: Long-Term Case Management

- Secure permanent housing for those migrants who do not move onward. Assess existing federal, state, and local stabilization resources.

Phase 5: End State

- Facilitate migrants' onward movement or permanent legal settlement.
- Ensure access to programs for English as a Second Language (ESL) and access to immigration legal resources to help promote integration into the community and compliance with immigration laws.

Best Practice 3: Consider Transportation at Every Phase

When organizing your phased approach or delineating individual lines of effort, consider transportation as a separate, critical issue. Transportation is the link between each phase with multiple movement by multiple means required. The federal government – especially through DOT and GSA liaisons – will help local city, county, and state officials complete a needs assessment of existing and missing transportation resources. In doing so, this federal-local team will consider:

- Are buses available to link migrants to the various phases of the operation? If not, how many buses and supporting personnel (drivers, trip planners, etc.) are needed, and what will the costs be?
Are there local permitting or regulatory elements to consider?

Best Practice 4: Use Each Actor's Relevant Expertise

Given the multifaceted response required when cities receive migrant buses, it is vital that local officials maximize the expertise of all actors involved. For example, performing triage and health screenings requires medical providers; NGOs have expertise with case management and information gathering; securing shelter requires partnership between city/state officials and NGOs that have experience providing housing and services to migrant populations; and state and local governments are best positioned to coordinate all actors. When seeking to maximize all partners' contributions, consider these questions:

- Have you assigned a specialized health care provider for triage and health screening?
- Are you utilizing the expertise of local service-provider NGOs who have worked in housing and migrant services?
- Is an entity assigned to manage and recruit volunteers? Donations?
- Is an entity assigned to lead recordkeeping for funding and data-collection purposes?
- Is a city entity assigned as the point of contact for the initial housing procurement?

