



NEST FAQs

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 from any other year. NEST and the city of Norfolk determined that this invaluable program had to continue even in the midst of a pandemic. As planning started for 2020/2021, NEST realized that they would not be able to use any buses to transport our guests to facilities outside the Ghent/downtown area. Therefore only walk-up sites that have enough space were eligible to serve as a NEST site. Initially, First Presbyterian was only going to host for 6 weeks but then decided to host the entire season in order to accommodate more guests.

How are the meals served? In years past, NEST has 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 touch points. Volunteers will prepare and package the meals ahead of time.

NEST During 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 be 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. 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 over 50 people in our area without housing. In prior years, NEST would serve upwards of 70+ people a night per site. With the reduced number of guests needing shelter, there is adequate space at First Presbyterian to distance sleeping mats. Additionally, sleeping mats will be separated physically by clear plastic barriers provided by the City.

What is being done to sanitize the space and the building to keep people safe? 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 the guest area and the restrooms.

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 help them 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.

I signed up to help with meal service, what can I expect? As the guests are checking in, you and your team will place meals on tables. Each guest will retrieve their meal and then retreat to their cubicle to eat. (Chairs will be inside the cubicles.) After they have eaten, the guests will place their clamshell and other trash into trash cans that will be stationed throughout the guest area.

I signed up for a late evening or overnight shift, what can I expect? Overnight volunteers will monitor the guest area in order to maintain a safe environment for the guests. This volunteer opportunity is for folks 18 and older. You are encouraged to bring a blanket to stay warm.

I signed up for a breakfast shift, what can I expect?

Breakfast will be pre-cooked. This team will serve guests breakfast at their individual sleeping area, help them check out, and hand out bag lunches.

Who can volunteer? *Anyone with a heart can volunteer.* You do not have to be a Temple member to volunteer. If you do not feel comfortable coming in person – feel free to sponsor a meal via a restaurant (they need our help as well!) or cooking one at home. If you are interested in learning more, contact Andy Fox at Andrew.fox@norfolk.gov or Sharon Ross at s4ross@cox.net

Do you need donations? We always need donations of fresh fruit (bananas and tangerines are best), protein bars and snacks. Long underwear, sweatpants, warm gloves and coats/jackets are also needed. **Please do not bring any other clothing.** Other clothing donations can be donated to GAM (Ghent Area Ministries).