

Rules of Operation for Cooling Centers

These general rules apply to all Cooling Center facilities in New York City. Facility operators should use this guide in conjunction with any additional agency-specific directives.

- 1) Facilities must ensure that air conditioning systems are functional prior to the start of summer and before opening a Cooling Center during a heat emergency. NYC Emergency Management does not mandate a specific temperature requirement, however spaces designated for Cooling Center operations should be noticeably cooler inside than outside to provide relief from extreme heat.
- 2) Facilities must remain open during stated hours of operations as a Cooling Center. If there are any changes to a facility's hours of operation, promptly notify the agency's Cooling Center liaison so that the City's online Cool Options Finder can be updated and so that 311 can provide accurate information to callers.
- 3) If the facility's air conditioning system spontaneously malfunctions, promptly notify the agency's Cooling Center liaison. In addition, report any critical client issues to the agency's Cooling Center liaison.
- 4) A staff member who is familiar with facility operations must be onsite during the Cooling Center's opening and the telephone should be answered during stated hours of operations during both weekdays and weekends. Organizations with automatic voicemail services should have Cooling Center information available on the automated message (i.e., "You have reached _____ which is an official New York City Cooling Center with hours of operation from 9am to 5pm on Monday through Friday").
- 5) Official Cooling Center signs are to be displayed outside of each facility with the Cooling Center side facing out and should remain on display throughout the heat emergency. Agencies may display Cooling Center signage all summer long if they desire to do so. Exact placement of the Cooling Center sign is at the discretion of the managing agency, but it is recommended that the sign be placed near the main entrance in a highly visible location.
- 6) A daily census of the number of people using the facility must be tracked and reported to the agency's Cooling Center liaison. Staff are not required to verify if the individual is at the facility for the Cooling Center or for other programming or services. The total number of visitations is appropriate for the census.
- 7) During stated hours of operation, Cooling Centers must allow entrance to any person who seeks respite from the heat.
- 8) Ensure that all visitors have access to drinking water while at the Cooling Center. If a person cannot reach a water fountain, consider providing water in cups or water bottles for visitors.
- 9) Facilities may prepare a "Code of Conduct" flyer for visitors. These flyers may include:
 - a. The purpose of Cooling Centers.
 - b. Individual requirements of the facility, including any specific public health protocols.
 - c. Rules regarding respect for other visitors and the facility property (i.e., headphones for portable music, the use of profanity, or interruption of facility programs in progress).
 - d. The requirement to follow directions from facility staff for security and operational purposes.
- 10) Accessible Cooling Center facilities are intended to be fully integrated and accommodating to everyone, including older adults, people with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs. Notify the agency's Cooling Center liaison if an accessibility issue arises.
 - a. **Entrances:** Ensure entrances are well-marked. If the main entrance is not accessible, make sure that signs indicate the direction of the accessible entrance and ensure that pathways are clear of movable objects and wide enough for a wheelchair to pass.
 - b. **Restrooms:** If a designated accessible bathroom is not accessible, identify additional accessible toilets in nearby facilities or alternate Cooling Centers that are marked as accessible.
 - c. **Reasonable Accommodations:** If visitors request auxiliary aids, services for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in Cooling Center programs, contact the agency's Cooling Center liaison as soon as possible. If there are any language requests, follow the agency's language access policies and protocols.