



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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VM-14-07

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED CARE PROVIDERS

FROM: Celesta Hartgraves, Director *Celesta Hartgraves*
Division of Senior and Disability Services

SUBJECT: The Prevalence of Bed Bugs in the Home

The common bed bug, which was mostly eradicated in developed countries, has become prevalent once again. It is quite costly to get rid of bed bugs, offering little options for many of the clients we serve. As a result, there have been cases where some have engaged in drastic measures to try to rid these pests from the home, which can be quite dangerous. These include soaking a mattress in rubbing alcohol, which is a fire hazard, or to douse the mattress or bedding materials in bleach, which is an irritant to the lungs and mucus membranes. Another desperate tactic is to use agricultural pesticides inside the home, which has resulted in poisoning or even death.

Steps to take if bed bugs are discovered in the home:

- Try to eliminate any unnecessary piles, boxes or bags.
- Vacuuming with a strong suction will not eliminate bed bugs; however, it will help in decreasing the number of bugs in the home.
- Washing and drying all fabrics (bedding, coverings, curtains, plush toys, backpacks, etc.) in 122 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of 20-30 minutes.
- Cold-freezing objects for 7-10 days at 0 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Using plastic fabric coverings specifically designed for protection against bed bugs.
- Bed Bug Interceptors-small plastic trays with an inner and outer ring to be placed under the legs of beds or furniture.
- Insecticides by a professional pest control, which is the only proven method of ridding the pests.

Reminders:

- It is possible for an aide to transfer bed bugs from one home to another.
- If an aide has been exposed to bed bugs, please ensure the problem has been taken care of or that the aide has taken precautions before entering the home.
- Remind aids to be on the lookout for bed bugs while cleaning and changing participants' bedding.
- When an aide has been exposed to bed bugs and has gone into other homes, as a common courtesy, it is appropriate to let the participants know of the issue, so they may get a handle on the situation, before it becomes an epidemic situation.

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- If the problem is in HUD, Rent Control or certain Senior Housing environments, the landlord may be held responsible, but your participants may not be aware of this and may need someone to advocate on their behalf.
- Remember, a professional pest control service is the only way proven to rid the problem of bed bugs.

Possible Resources:

Every community is different, so you will need to check the resources that are offered locally. Unfortunately, resources are very limited and there are no governmental guidelines to follow about the procedures of eliminating bed bugs, so education about prevention is the most effective tool. Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) do not have funding for this issue; however, some may know of local resources for assistance. One may seek financial assistance through churches or ministerial alliances, local fraternal organizations, senior boards within the community or other charitable organizations.

Please remember, that just like any situation our participants face, if this is a problem that has caused poor living conditions or concerns, it would be appropriate to make a report of concern by calling the Central Registry Unit at 800-392-0210.

Wikipedia. "Bed Bug." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Web. 11 September, 2013
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bed_bug

Kells, Dr. Stephen A. and Hahn, Jeff. "Prevention and Control of Bed Bugs in Residences." University of Minnesota, Department of Entomology. Web. 2013
www1.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects/find/bed-bugs-in-residences

Any questions regarding this memorandum should be directed to the Bureau of Program Integrity via e-mail at programintegrity@health.mo.gov or by phone at 573-526-8557.

CH/RM

CC: Distribution Lists 3 & 4