

ACUHO-I New Professional Scholarship

Submitted by:

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Case Study

You are an assistant director of housing at a small public school. It has recently been discovered that a few rooms in one of the 6 halls that your institution runs is infested with bedbugs. Conferences have moved out of the building for the summer, and the Residential Life staff is settled in the building for fall training. (The bedbugs were found when student staff began complaining of bites.) Students will be arriving in 2 weeks. You have been assigned the task of coming up with an action plan for dealing with the bedbugs and potentially reassigning the 200 students that could be displaced. (The other 5 halls on campus are at 98% capacity for the academic year.)

Overview

Using resources I've found on bed bugs I have developed a summary of the important facts to know to recognize, exterminate and prevent bed bug infestations. In the paragraphs to follow there will be a brief overview of this information as well as a comprehensive Action Plan that includes numerous steps for several units within the department to consider, and lastly a description of a special meeting with student staff that are affected by this problem.

About Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are a global problem. Possibly due to globalization, they have made a comeback after the use of DDT was prohibited. They are perfect examples of stowaways, attaching themselves to luggage, shipping crates, and furniture, and are rarely recognized due to their small size. Since college residence halls provide housing for students from around the world, there is a high probability that bed bugs will be spread to this environment as opposed to others.

Bed bugs are a very small and nocturnal making them easy to overlook. An adult bed bug is oval shaped, straw-colored to reddish-brown and wingless about the size of a pencil eraser and as thin as a piece of paper. The eggs that bed bugs lay are white, pear-shaped, and the size of a pinhead. These eggs are found in clusters of 10-50. The lifespan of a bed bug is about one year and it has the ability to live for approximately six months without feeding.

The intensity of a bed bug's bite varies depending on the individual's level of allergic reaction to it. Bites are most common on exposed areas during sleep like the face, neck, arms, and hands. In worst reactions to these bites, the individual will have some painful

swelling around the bite. Bed bug bites are mostly an irritation and are not known to transmit any diseases to humans like mosquitoes.

Since bed bugs rely on being close to a host, you can often find them in areas that are in close proximity to a bed. Inspecting for bed bugs can be done with relative success if you are meticulous. Some areas to check are the seams of a mattress, cracks in bed frames, underneath furniture and rugs, in pillow cases and sheets. It also helpful to look for bloodstains or smears on the bed sheets because it's a sign of their presence.

There are some easy things anyone can do to help exterminate an infestation of bed bugs. Cleaning the clutter from your room will give the bed bugs less places to hide like pictures, posters, and rugs. Vacuuming daily is also an effective way to remove bed bugs especially when you are intentional with your vacuuming; vacuuming specifically the furniture and anywhere you know they could hide. Bed bugs are sensitive to extreme heat so washing your pillowcases, sheets, blankets, and any clothes you think may contain bed bugs is a sure way to kill bed bugs and their eggs. Another effective thing to do is moving the bed to the middle of the room, with none of your blankets touching the floor so that the bed bugs can't crawl up them to your bed. Beyond this, there are some non hazardous pesticides that can be used to help exterminate the infestation. (Source: *Bed bugs are back! An IPM answer*)

Action Plan

As the Assistant Director of Housing I would first organize a meeting that includes all of the departments involved. I would invite the Director of Housing, Resident Directors, the unit leaders for Facilities Management, Conference housing, Custodial Services, Assignments and Occupancy, and the Director of the Student Health Center on campus. In this meeting I would begin by presenting the same information that I have provided above in the "About Bed Bugs" section, and answer any questions concerning that information on bed bugs. After laying this foundation of information on the topic, I would then propose my action plan. This action plan would influence five main areas that I have outlined below. These are Health Concerns, Conferences, Facilities Management, Assignments and Residential Life.

1. **Health Concerns** – Our main priority in this area is to offer the students that have been bitten and physically affected by the bed bugs information and appointments at the student health center to help them. I would also encourage the Director of Student Health to prepare a list of resources and information to assist future students that may be bitten if the problem is not resolved by the time new students arrive. I would ask the Director of Student Health to be present at any upcoming meetings where all the Resident Assistant staff would be present to answer questions student staff may have about this problem. Lastly, I would reassure the Director of Student Health that all means necessary to stop the bed bug problem would be used with the exception of fumigation so that there is would be no potential harm to residents with toxic gases.
2. **Conferences** – In this area, our objective is to move all student staff that currently live in the building that has bed bugs, to vacant rooms above or below their

- current rooms in the same building. This would prevent bed bugs from being spread to a whole other building. However, when students are making this move to another room, they will only be allowed to take with them their clothes and their toiletries. I would ask that Conferences assist the students in making sure that these are the only items that are transported and that they provide these displaced student staff with new bedding and have the old bedding washed and dried on extra high heat.
3. **Facilities Management** – In this area I would ask for approval from the Unit Leader of Facilities Management in the changes that are being proposed to make sure that there were no concerns with the plans that have been stated thus far in this action plan. I would also ask the Unit Leader for Custodial Services if present, to inform the group on what their process is to keep the other buildings that are not populated by bed bugs, bed bug free. I would encourage Custodial Services to begin their efforts inspecting, and cleaning the few rooms that have been infected with bed bugs and after they have inspected these rooms, have them wash all of the bedding in the infected rooms. Lastly, I would encourage the Custodial Services to vacuum daily all of the furniture and places that look like possible shelters for bed bugs. After this process has been done I would ask that the Unit Leader for Facilities check in on this progress and give me a daily update on the progress of dealing with this infestation. I am against using any other means that require pesticides because I think that in two weeks time we can at the very least prevent the bed bugs from spreading to any other rooms and nearly exterminate them through vacuuming daily, washing all bedding, and doing daily inspections.
 4. **Assignments** – In this area I don't anticipate there being much work to be done, as long as the problem is contained before the new students arrive in two weeks. If the bed bugs spread to other areas of the building, then unfortunately, we may have to reassign all of the students in that building to other buildings. This may require RAs having roommates across out system as well as other drastic measures.
 5. **Residential Life** – In this area I would ask the resident directors to review the presentation I gave on bed bugs so they have full understanding of the measures that are to be done to handle this situation. I want them to feel confident that they can answer the student staff's questions when they are asked about this topic. I would ask that if they have student staff that have been bit to connect with them as soon as possible after the meeting to suggest going to the on campus health center.

After this meeting I would then set up another meeting on this topic but with just the Resident Directors and Resident Assistant. In this meeting I would inform them of the situation and help ease any concerns they may have. I would make sure to cover the following points:

1. Go over basics of what bed bugs are, how to recognize them, where do they hide, etc.

2. Answer any questions they have concerning bed bugs or the information I've presented them on it.
3. Tell them that all student staff that are living in the building that is infected are moving to another floor temporarily until the problem is resolved. Specific procedures on who to move properly without spreading bed bugs would be explained after the meeting to those specific students affected.
4. Tell the student staff what the custodial crew's role will be over the next few weeks to help solve this problem.

Summary

After these two meetings have been held and the Action Plan is put into place for each area, I hope that this problem will be resolved. There is the possibility that this problem could get worse and not be solved within the two week window before students arrive. If this is the case, even more diligence must be considered in each of the "Action" areas to help mitigate and fix this problem as soon as possible.

