The situation
Stress makes more important the ability for someone to retreat to their personal place and not be bothered. These times of being alone by choice can heighten a sense of empowerment and calm because a person knows they can personally control their interactions with others (source, year). Having a ‘home base’ for collecting one’s thoughts is closely linked to one’s sense of personal identity formation (source, year).

Potential solution
In the case of sleeping facilities that are only partially private such as those with no or lower height walls, a client-controlled signage system that explains ‘stop’ or ‘go’ identifying when interaction with others is welcome can be helpful for peace of mind. This can make clear when interaction is desired—or not. This idea emerged from the residents of Bakhita Gardens.

Location: Bakhita Gardens, Seattle.
Managing organization: Catholic Housing Services.
Architect and interior designer: Environmental Works Community Design Center. www.eworks.org

Key words
Empowerment
Bedrooms
Personal space
Transitional shelters
Emergency shelters