



## Florida's Public Health & Medical System **PREPARES & RESPONDS**

### **VULNERABLE POPULATION: Homeless Persons**

The homeless population includes those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, or one who is living in an emergency shelter or similar temporary housing arrangement. For those who are living on the street, sleeping in their car, camping in the woods, the major challenge in an emergency is notifying them of the danger, and directing them to a safe shelter.

#### **Key Issues:**

- For the homeless who are in emergency shelters or other temporary housing arrangements, the major issue will be how to relocate this population, which lacks transportation, to disaster shelters. Most of the homeless shelters were not designed to meet disaster shelter safety standards.
- Coordinate with local shelter managers and behavioral health to provide safe shelter while maintaining the safety and function of the shelter.
- Identify populations residing in residential shelters (i.e. women and children) for which the general disaster shelters are appropriate.
- The Florida Department of Children and Families coordinates with a network of 30 local homeless coalitions, who connect to direct service partners locally.

#### **Planning Considerations:**

- A significant portion of the homeless population suffers from mental illness, and/or substance abuse problems.
- Other disabling conditions, including physical and developmental, are present in about 37% of the homeless in Florida.
- Most of the homeless shelters do not have relocation plans for evacuating to alternative shelters outside the disaster area. Some established such plans after the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes, including street outreach systems to inform those on the streets, and alternative transportation (school buses, etc) to evacuate shelter residents.

#### **Supporting Agency:**

Florida Department of Children and Families, Office of Homelessness  
[www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness](http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness)

**Additional Information:** The following resource provides more information on planning considerations for homeless persons during disasters and other emergencies:

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, *Disaster Response for Homeless Individuals and Families: A trauma-Informed Approach*  
[www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/homeless-trauma-informed.aspx](http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/homeless-trauma-informed.aspx)