



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

VULNERABLE POPULATION: Persons with Alzheimer's Disease or a Related Form of Dementia

Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and accounts for 50 to 80 percent of dementia cases. Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, but treatments are available to slow the worsening of dementia symptoms. According to the Alzheimer's Association's 2012 report, in Florida alone, the number of people living with Alzheimer's disease or a related form of dementia (ADRD) has increased from 360,000 in 2000 to 450,000 in 2010.

Key Issues:

- Persons with ADRD may be at greater risk of unfavorable health outcomes and loss of independence if there is a disruption to their surroundings and continuity of care.
- New environments or situations can be unsettling for persons with ADRD. In the event of a disaster, an individual with ADRD may have difficulty adjusting to unfamiliar settings and individuals.
- Frequently, persons with ADRD have caregivers who may also have medical conditions or special needs of their own, making the safety of both critical. If the caregiver is unable to care for the person with ADRD there is a great risk of institutionalization for one, if not both, of them.

Planning Considerations:

The cognitive impairment and diminished sensory awareness that is associated with ADRD can affect an individual's ability to prepare for an emergency.

- Many individuals with ADRD are on multiple medications and have limited mobility. Transportation, wheelchair access, and medication distribution are all factors that need to be considered when preparing for a viable shelter.
- Individuals with ADRD may need assistance from trained staff at a shelter with activities of daily living, such as bathing, toileting, feeding, and dressing.
- For persons with ADRD who live alone, it is important to register with the Special Needs Registry to ensure appropriate community assistance will be provided during an emergency.
- Many people with ADRD live with a caregiver, typically a family member. The caregiver should be informed of correct procedures to prepare for an emergency, such as pre-event planning in writing that includes the location of the special needs shelter and transportation availability, as well as medications and other supplies that should be taken.
- The physical and psychological needs of the caregiver should be seriously considered. The caregiver is probably stressed and frightened and may have health care challenges.

Supporting Agency:

Department of Elder Affairs: www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us or phone 850-414-2000

Additional Information: The following link provides more information and resources that may be helpful in understanding planning considerations for persons with Alzheimer's disease or a related form of dementia:

Department of Elder Affairs Alzheimer's Disease Resources:
http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/alz_resources.php#links