

VULNERABLE POPULATION: Persons with Developmental Disabilities

"Developmental Disability" is a broad term that refers to a variety of conditions that interfere with a person's ability to function in everyday activities. Florida Statues §393.063 defines developmental disabilities as spina bifida, autism, cerebral palsy, Prader-Willi syndrome, and mental retardation.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) works in partnership with local communities and private providers to assist people with developmental disabilities and their families. APD's goal is to ensure the health and safety of the people it serves, and maximize their self-sufficiency through the programs provided. The people with developmental disabilities may live independently, with family, or in group homes, and may require sheltering in a disaster. All individuals living in group homes or supported living are required to have a disaster plan on file with the APD Regional office.

Key Issues:

- Whenever possible, persons with developmental disabilities living in a group home will shelter in place during an emergency.
 - For persons with developmental disabilities living in their family home or independently, the ability of the caregivers or the individual's support system will be the determining factors.
 - It is extremely important for those living in the community to have a plan and practice the plan regularly.
 - Persons with developmental disabilities may have complex medical needs. If this
 is the case, they should be advised to have a seven day supply of prescription
 medications available or any other medical equipment needed to sustain their
 life.
 - In many cases, an established routine is what enables persons with developmental disabilities to function independently; once this is compromised this population will need additional support to stay safe and healthy.
- If the event is severe, or the recovery phase is of long duration, those with developmental disabilities and those who support them may require sheltering or other assistance to support both their physical and mental healthcare needs.
- Many of these persons are on multiple medications and/or treatments, or have mobility, or communication challenges.
- When possible, Special Needs Shelters should provide a quiet, structured environment with a staff accustomed to working with clients with developmental disabilities. Each of the five disabilities named have different characteristics, and may require different strategies for communication, medical intervention, and support.
 - Always remember, persons with developmental disabilities are PEOPLE first. A number of them do not do well with change, loud noises, or crowds. Acting out may be caused by one or more of these issues.
 - Spina Bifida a divided backbone or spine. Normally, the spinal cord carries messages from the brain to the body – with spina bifida, the cord



- does not carry all of these messages to parts of the body. Mental retardation may or may not be a component.
- Autism characterized by impairment in social interactions and communication abilities and unusual or restricted ranges of play or interest. Often results in social isolation and varying degrees of unusual behaviors. Mental retardation may or may not be a component.
- Cerebral Palsy (CP) Motor disabilities that arise because of injury to the developing brain. Keeps the brain from telling the rest of the body some of the things it is supposed to do. CP does not affect intelligence
- Mental Retardation (MR) Significant limitations in functioning related to subaverage intelligence. People with MR learn more slowly, may need assistance with communication, self-care, direction, health, and safety.
- Prader-Willi Syndrome is an inherited condition. Severe lack of muscle tone
 and failure to thrive in early infancy. Later, an excessive drive to eat leads to
 weight problems. Obsessive-compulsive behaviors and difficulty with social
 interactions are often present, along with mild mental retardation.

Planning Considerations:

- Each APD customer is contacted prior to an event by their Waiver Support Coordinator to determine their evacuation status and destination. This information is passed along to the APD Area Office, and should be integrated at the local level so that post event assessments can prioritize those clients who sheltered in place especially those clients who live independently and alone.
- Work with Waiver Support Coordinators through APD to establish a timeframe objective to complete these assessments.

Supporting Agency:

Agency for Persons with Disabilities Regional Offices www.APDCares.org or 1-866-APD-Cares

Additional Information: The following resources provide more information on planning considerations for persons with developmental disabilities during disasters and other emergencies:

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Community Planning Toolkit for State Emergency Preparedness Managers www.hhs.gov/od/disabilitytoolkit/index.html
- U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments, Chapter 7, Emergency Management www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/toolkitmain.htm
- U.S. Department of Justice, An ADA Guide for Local Governments, Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities www.ada.gov/emerprepguideprt.pdf

