

FUNCTIONAL NEEDS



The terms "special needs", "**functional needs**", and medical-special needs" are in a state of evolution. For purposes of this plan, the term is defined as any person requiring assistance with some facet of daily living and/or under the care (or charge) of others, either on a part-time or full time basis. While this is admittedly a broad definition and goes beyond health-related or medical applications, it is used here to pertain to those who will require unusual or enhanced evacuation and sheltering assistance.

Those citizens residing at home who will require transportation assistance, a higher level of medical care than can be provided in a regular public shelter, and do not have anyone to provide all the care needed, evacuation and sheltering assistance will also be provided (to the degree that available resources permit). This category of functional is perhaps the most difficult to provide for because of the numbers of people involved and the lack of legally responsible "care providers" which the other categories have.

Registry

Home Health nursing agencies, County Public Health, and volunteers will develop and maintain a "Functional Needs" registry for citizens failing into this category. Immediately after a hurricane watch is issued and the emergency operation center (EOC) is fully activated, all registrants will be contacted on their status and will be informed to begin preparing for possible evacuation if and when a warning and mandatory evacuation order are issued. Once this is imminent, they will be re-contacted and told to be ready to evacuate. They will be expected to have their own extra clothing, medical equipment and supplies, medicines, etc. ready to go with them. If they have a personal care-giver (e.g., a family member), that person will be expected to be ready and accompany them. (***Please see functional needs form***)

Evacuation

Evacuees will be initially transported to on-site triage/assessment centers at the facilities, which have been pre-designated for them. There they will be triaged for a final determination as to whether their needs can be satisfactorily met in a public shelter, if they actually require admission in a hospital, or if they should still be placed in a functional needs setting as originally registered. They will then be taken to the appropriate facility. (Unregistered "call ins" will be triaged in the same fashion.)

Sheltering

Shelter staffing will be provided in the same manner as for a regular public shelter with the following exceptions and additions. Either ARC personnel or other trained volunteers will oversee general operations, but will not be responsible for the direct medical care of the functional needs evacuees themselves and will not provide for any special diets. Additional medical personnel in the form of physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, and paramedics will attend to the needs of the "functional needs evacuees. These individuals will be volunteers and not drawn from on-duty staff at the hospitals. Also, additional volunteers will be used to help load, unload, and move evacuees into the shelters. If additional medical personnel or supplies are needed, they will be requested from the State Department of Human Resources through the State Operations Center.

✚ **It is important to note that people living in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and personal care homes aren't eligible for the Functional Needs Registry and must follow their facility's emergency plan.**

✚ **How the Functional Needs Registry Works**

Functional needs persons are categorized into five levels. If you meet the criteria for levels one or two, you are not eligible for the Functional Needs Registry. If you meet the criteria for levels three, four, or five, your name will be entered into the Functional Needs Registry.

Functional Needs Definitions

Levels one and two: Not eligible for the registry:

Level one and level two clients are not eligible for the Functional Needs Registry. The definition for level one and level two clients is: "Persons who are independent and capable of self-care requiring only minimal support for minor illnesses and injuries, and persons with conditions requiring observation or minor supportive assistance in activities of daily living (i.e. independent with some family/caretaker support).

Levels three, four, and five: Eligible for the registry

Level three, four, and five clients are eligible for the Functional Needs Registry. The definition of level three residents is: "Persons with conditions requiring some level of privacy or separation but do not require skilled or continuous health care support from facility staff."

Some examples of level three residents include those with moderate Alzheimer's or dementia; those requiring assistance from a family member or caretaker for activities of daily living; those with portable oxygen; and dialysis patients.

The definition of level four residents is: "***Persons requiring frequent or continuous surveillance for potentially life-threatening conditions or require bedding or bathroom facilities not available in the (public) shelter.***"

Some examples of level four residents include those requiring assistance with toileting; those with limited mobility who cannot sleep on a cot or transfer; brittle diabetics or epileptics; oxygen dependent persons; and those with severe dementia or psychiatric conditions.

The definition of level five residents is: "***Those requiring skilled care, continuous observation, or special equipment and services usually found in a hospital.***"

Some examples of level five residents include those needing IV feeding or medication; those completely bedfast requiring total care; those with uncontrolled chronic or acute physical or mental conditions; women in active labor; and those with significant

injuries, difficulty breathing, or prolonged pain.

If you are not accepted into the Functional Needs Program, you will be immediately called by the Health Department and advised to make other arrangements for evacuation and sheltering.

Persons registered in the functional needs database will be contacted twice a year to verify their medical condition and update their information. When a storm is about three days (72 hours) from your county, you will be called and told:

- That an evacuation is possible.
- To prepare your essential items' kit that includes medications and important documents.
- To be prepared to evacuate within one hour of the next call.

You will be picked up and taken to a Functional Needs Center or local hospital where you will be given a document pouch for use during transportation to your destination.

Your registration form, medical history, allergies record and medications list will be placed in the document pouch.

Your name will be placed on a functional needs tracking form and you will be given an identification number. This number, along with your name and destination, will be placed on a bracelet that you will wear to your destination during the evacuation. When reentry is authorized, the evacuation process will be reversed and you will be returned to your home.

Pets will only be allowed at the Functional Needs Center if they are in a carrier and you have your pet's current immunization records; or if they are service animals assisting disabled persons (these animals must remain with their owner at all times).

All may be quiet in the Atlantic Basin and Gulf of Mexico now, but that could change quickly. So if you qualify for the Functional Needs Registry, don't wait to register. **Being prepared is the best way to ensure your safety during a disaster.**

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For additional information, please contact

Liberty County Emergency Management Agency at 912-368-2201

