

# New York State Overview on Functional Needs Support Services

## I. Introduction

This document has been designed to provide a short overview of the recent changes to the way that we collectively identify, implement, manage and support emergency shelters in New York State. In providing that overview, this document will also identify recently-released guidance from the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/FEMA) and the American Red Cross that break down the specifics on Functional Needs Support Services (FNSS). Included in this overview is some insight into the current and upcoming efforts being taken by the New York State Human Services Committee, which provides support for human services activities during State emergency operations under the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). This guidance emphasizes the need to meet access and functional needs in general population shelters in adherence with Federal legislation and provides operational tools to assist localities with implementation.

To successfully integrate the guidance into current plans and procedures, local emergency preparedness and response partners will need to work closely with local health and community service agencies, the disability community, and other local service providers, such as home health care and advocacy agencies. We strongly encourage local emergency planners to review this new guidance, engage their planning committees or other planning groups, identify gaps in capability, and develop procedures and strengthen partnerships to meet these new criteria.

## II. Background

Emergency shelters are one of the most commonly utilized response capabilities in times of emergency. Many jurisdictions have previously planned to provide mass care capabilities through the establishment and use of general population shelters. For those individuals that require care above and beyond the services and capabilities of general population sheltering, jurisdictions may have established provisions to operate special needs shelters. Mass Care planning has been an ongoing state and local planning process engaging representatives from emergency management, schools, voluntary organizations, and health-based agencies to reach the level of capability that currently exists in New York State.

The landscape of emergency sheltering continues to change to promote an environment that is inclusive of the needs of a community as a whole in the most integrated setting possible. Guidance has been developed by our Federal partners to ensure that each new and existing general population shelter can accommodate and integrate children and adults, with and without disabilities. This will be accomplished through the integration of Functional Needs Support Services in the shelter environment.

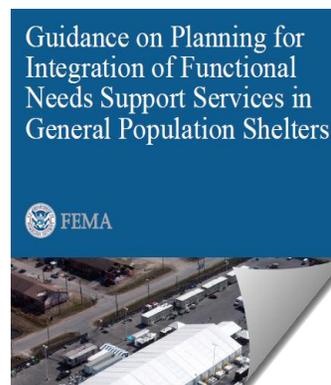
## III. Federal Guidance and Initiatives

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued new sheltering guidance for local and state emergency management officials and shelter planners. The guidance can be found at: [www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odtc/fnss\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odtc/fnss_guidance.pdf).

The guidance was developed by DHS/FEMA in coordination with several Federal and State response partners including: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS) - *Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*; U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) - *Disability Rights Section, Civil Rights Division*, the American Red

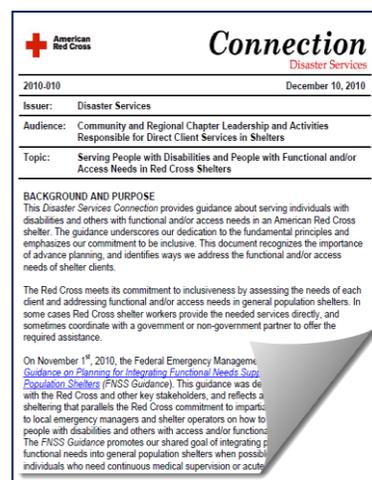
## New York State Overview on Functional Needs Support Services

Cross, National Council on Disability, and the National Council on Independent Living. It is intended to provide emergency planners with guidelines, methods, best practices and a comprehensive understanding of the requirements for providing Functional Needs Support Services to individuals and families in emergency sheltering environments.



The guidance does not provide new legal obligations, rather it reinforces existing legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Fair Housing Act and other state and Federal guidelines pertaining to accessibility and non-discrimination principles. In summary, individuals with disabilities shall be provided with an equal opportunity to participate in programs, activities and services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the individual. This includes emergency shelters.

Recently, the American Red Cross (ARC) has once again been designated as the lead and subject matter expert in sheltering and the provision of mass care as part of Emergency Support Function #6 - Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services. Statewide, the American Red Cross is an important partner as a lead provider of Mass Care services. However, local jurisdictions should be able to coordinate resource support as identified in their local Comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plans. The American Red Cross National Headquarters recently developed and distributed the internal *Connection* guide to prepare and assist Chapters with the integration of the new FNSS guidance. Additional trainings and information will be forthcoming to Regional and local chapters, and ARC regional exercises are currently being planned to assist in implementation.



### IV. State-Specific Information

The New York State Human Services Committee to the Disaster Preparedness Commission (DPC) is a multi-agency committee that meets routinely to discuss and plan for activities associated with the provisions of Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, and Housing and Human Services (Emergency Support Function #6). During an emergency, this committee becomes an operational arm of the State's response as the Human Services Branch. This Committee brings together partners from government as well as private, public and non-governmental organizations. The sheltering leaders and other subject matter experts are available to provide assistance with any questions regarding planning for the integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters.

In an effort to successfully integrate the guidance statewide, the New York State Human Services Committee has formed a working group which has been actively engaged in discussions and planning efforts to create guidance and tools for local jurisdictions, as well as integrating the guidance into the State's planning efforts. The Committee is also working with the American Red Cross to address key implementation issues, such as clarifying roles and responsibilities in co-located shelters of local partners (e.g. health, social services, and volunteer groups), impacts of

## New York State Overview on Functional Needs Support Services

FNSS on shelter capacities, and the possible limitations or liability concerns of the existing American Red Cross shelter agreements.

### V. What this Means and Steps for Implementation

Below are some key points in implementing the FNSS guidelines in a coordinative and cooperative manner across the disciplines and organizations that would play role in this effort. In reviewing, please note that each entity should conduct an assessment of their role to ensure that they have the ability to implement or support FNSS sheltering operations. The assessment should include identifying any *pre-existing* response commitments or missions the organization may have in other local emergency plans (e.g., PODs, mass casualty, etc). The added responsibility to support FNSS shelters may overextend an organization's capability, creating additional gaps in local efforts. Therefore, any gaps should be cataloged and addressed in the planning stages or operationally through a request for assistance from the State.

#### *Mass Care Service Providers:*

- Will be responsible for making reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures to deliver shelter and other related services to clients with disabilities.
- In cooperation with local emergency management partners, ensure that shelter facilities are physically accessible for clients using any type of mobility devices. Checklists are available to ensure that emergency shelters are in compliance with ADA requirements.
- Should ensure that clients that utilize service animals will not be restricted with access to the shelter facility.
- Should ensure that shelter capacities can adequately address additional space / layout requirements that may be necessary for persons with access or functional needs.
- Ensure that the tools and communications with the public and clients are effective. This will include making communication devices accessible to individuals with access or functional needs.
- Should enter into agreements with facilities that are suitable to serve as shelters.
- Educate staff and volunteers on guidelines, and know the protocol and mechanisms for obtaining support when capabilities of your organization are exceeded.
- Should utilize a Shelter Intake tool that will assist with the registration process of clients and identification of those individuals that may require specific accommodations.
- Should ensure that meals served can be modified to meet dietary requirements (diabetic, low sodium, puree, etc.) of the population served.
- Should make sure that shelter facilities provide appropriate health, mental health and child friendly spaces, along with security and other needed services. Shelters should also include "stress-free" or "quiet areas" for those with conditions that may be worsened by congregate care environments.

#### *Emergency Management:*

- Possess a thorough understanding of the ADA requirements and support the selection of facilities that meet ADA requirements or those that can be modified as necessary to ensure accessibility.
- Have a thorough understanding of community demographics, the challenges in meeting that demand, and identify the resources and potential gaps within the existing response system.

## **New York State Overview on Functional Needs Support Services**

- Continue to establish and maintain a robust network for mutual aid assistance with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Establish and/or strengthen current relationships with agencies, providers, suppliers, vendors, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that can provide equipment, supplies, materials and/or services within your jurisdiction for FNSS.
- Engage individuals with disabilities, disability advocacy organizations, independent living centers, home care agencies, offices of the aging, mental health, developmental disability organizations, foundations, community and faith based organizations, and voluntary organizations in your planning process.
- Review various funding streams available to identify sources of funding to help address any identified gaps with respect to Sheltering and Functional Needs Integration.

### *Local Health and Health Care Providers:*

- Should serve as a key planning partner to help locate personnel and resources including medical service providers, such as physicians, registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, EMT's, paramedics, psychiatrists, dental service providers, and others as appropriate.
- Participate in planning for functional, access and medical needs sheltering considerations and issues.
- Facilitate and assist in medical volunteer planning, recruitment, and deployments (e.g. Medical Reserve Corp).
- Facilitate access to off-site medical treatment needs.
- Assisting with locating providers of personal assistance services.
- Coordination with pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies.
- Assist with locating providers of communication devices and maintaining resource lists.
- Facilitate and establish relationships with Durable Medical Equipment providers and consumable medical supplies providers and maintaining resource lists.
- Assist with coordinating with providers of Personal Assistance services, such as home care agencies, adult care facilities and other health care facilities.
- Assist with the identification/delivery of specific dietary considerations for shelter population.
- Assist with identifying individuals that should be accommodated in alternate sheltering environments due to: 1) the need for continuous medical supervision; or 2) the requirement for acute or life-sustaining medical care; or 3) present a danger to themselves or others.

### *Disability Advocacy Organizations:*

- May offer or provide training and/ or technical assistance to help promote the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into emergency management.
- May be able to provide access to assistive technology devices.
- May be able to provide technical assistance and outreach to individuals with disabilities, their families, other advocacy organizations, community agencies, local governments and other stakeholder groups regarding issues of concern to people with disabilities.
- May help to guide strategic planning goals and help to promote policy recommendations and legislative initiatives regarding individuals with disabilities.
- Will work with individuals with disabilities in the exercise of their civil rights.

## New York State Overview on Functional Needs Support Services

### *Individuals with Disabilities:*

- Are valuable planning partners that should be brought into the planning process early to help with validating existing plans and identify gaps.
- Can assist with outreach, preparedness and response efforts.
- Are likely to have established networks and connections with organizations and groups that may support individuals with their disabilities.
- Should be invited to participate in exercises and the overall planning process.
- Are most knowledgeable about their own needs.

### *Transportation / Para Transit Providers:*

- Serve as a critical support element to local mass care efforts and can provide the transportation dependent population with mass transit/ public transportation services.

## **VI. Further Information**

The New York State Office of Emergency Management (NYSOEM), the New York State Department of Health (DOH), and the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) have partnered in this effort to provide this information as a resource for local planners. In addition, the agencies have established a centralized web page to consolidate the relevant resources of information that should be part of the local “toolkit” for the integration of Functional Needs Support Services in general population shelters. This information can be found at the NYSOEM website at <http://www.semo.state.ny.us/programs/planning/>, and the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) website at <http://www.dhses.ny.gov/> at the “*what’s new*” bullet under the “*emergency management*” tab.

The websites will host additional information, guidance, planning tools and information as it becomes available. Local planning partners are strongly encouraged to bookmark this site and revisit it often, as it will be regularly updated with new information. Further, a centralized mailbox has been set up to facilitate information sharing. Local planners that have any questions on this initiative can send inquiries to [HumanServices@dhSES.ny.gov](mailto:HumanServices@dhSES.ny.gov). Feel free to send any correspondence or questions to this mailbox that relate to disability integration, ADA requirements or functional needs support services. This link will be monitored regularly and all requests for assistance will be answered as promptly as possible by members of the involved State agencies.

Starting in March 2011, the Human Services Committee we will be hosting a quarterly conference call with stakeholders as an opportunity to collaborate and share information regarding Disability Integration and Functional Needs Support Services. If you are interested in participating in these calls, please e-mail the human services link above to be included in the distribution group.