



FEMA's Functional Needs Support Services Guidance

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has released *Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters*, commonly known as the FNSS. This guidance is intended to ensure that individuals who have access and functional needs receive lawful and equal assistance before, during, and after public health emergencies and disasters. This guidance can be incorporated into existing shelter plans. It does not establish a new “tier” of sheltering or alter existing legal obligations.

Definition

Functional Needs Support Services are services that enable individuals with access and functional needs to maintain their independence in a general population shelter.

- Individuals requiring FNSS may have physical, sensory, mental health, and cognitive and/or intellectual disabilities affecting their ability to function independently without assistance.
- Others who may benefit from FNSS include women in late stages of pregnancy, seniors, and people whose body mass requires special equipment.

- ADA, Fair Housing, and civil rights requirements are not waived in disaster situations.
- Emergency managers and shelter planners have the responsibility to ensure that sheltering services and facilities are accessible.
- Most individuals with access and functional needs can be accommodated in a general population shelter with support.
- Functional Needs Support Services can be incorporated into existing shelter plans and resources.

Legal Guidance

Legal requirements for inclusion, integration, and equal opportunity are not waived during disaster situations.

- The Stafford Act and Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) mandate integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities in general population shelters.
- Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (RA), and the Fair Housing Act (FHA) define the scope of FNSS.

Planning Considerations

Advanced planning is essential in order to ensure equal access and services. Making general population shelters accessible to persons with access and functional needs may require additional items and services, such as:

- Durable Medical Equipment (DME) such as walkers and wheelchairs
- Consumable Medical Supplies (CMS) such as medications and diapers
- Personal Assistance Services (PAS)

Plans must also be made for how medical support will be utilized in general population shelters and how to assess when individuals are not appropriate for these settings because of medical needs.

It is important for emergency planners and public health officials to know and understand the community's demographic profile in order to ascertain what services and equipment will be needed in an emergency. Meeting with community partners, stakeholders, providers, constituents, and service recipients, including individuals with access and functional needs, will enhance emergency planners' and public health officials' abilities to develop plans that successfully integrate individuals with access and functional needs into general population shelters. In addition, these collaboration efforts will help educate community members with access and functional needs about the importance of personal preparedness plans.

Resources:

Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters:

<http://www.fema.gov/about/odc/>

ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters: <http://www.ada.gov/shleterck.htm>