

## Information for Physicians and Their Patients About the Escambia County Florida Special Needs Registry and Public Shelter Program

The Florida Division of Emergency Management operates a [Florida Special Needs Registry](#) website. This provides for pre-disaster registration that allows residents with special needs to register with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster such as a hurricane. A person with special needs is someone who would need assistance during evacuations and sheltering because of physical, mental, cognitive impairment, or sensory disabilities. Your patients will be required to update/review their registration each year by the anniversary of their registration to remain on the registry and to revalidate their eligibility and transportation needs.

Before a disaster occurs, it is recommended that persons with special needs first consult with their personal physician to discuss all the options to address their own medical needs prior to disaster evacuation and the potential option of evacuation from this area versus seeking access to sheltering including a General Population Shelter, a Special Needs Shelter (SpNS), or other suitable healthcare facility. This may include: having a month's supply of their prescriptions always available; arranging for special medical equipment; and, their potential admittance to a licensed healthcare facility. As their personal physician, you can guide your patients through their options to meet their medical needs during disasters.

If your patient decides to evacuate out of this area before disaster impacts our community, making plans now is the most important action they can take. They may plan to stay with a friend or family member further inland or even stay at a local or out of town hotel/motel which may offer more comfortable and potentially safer options.

Most individuals who are not electrical- or oxygen-dependent are suitable for General Population Shelters. Escambia County has pre-identified General Population American Red Cross shelters for those with no other options should they not meet the minimum medical qualifications for the SpNS. These shelters provide no medical support or care other than basic first aid. Your patient may visit the website at: <https://myescambia.com/our-services/public-safety/beready/hurricane-shelters> to see the pre-identified list of disaster shelters and a list of items they should bring with them to a public shelter. They should listen to local news information for the announcements as to which shelters will be opened and when. Not all shelters will be opened in every disaster situation. Please see the [FDOH-Escambia Levels of Care for Special Needs Shelter](#) triage criteria by medical condition to help advise your patients of their sheltering options.

For those individuals requiring additional medical care, the Special Needs Shelter services the community on a first-come, first-served basis. During a disaster, decisions on admittance to the SpNS are made upon arriving at the shelter. To assist individuals in determining their eligibility for admittance to the SpNS, please refer them to [the FDOH-Escambia Levels of Care for Special Needs Shelter](#) document. They should also bring a caregiver with them to assist in their medical care and in meeting their daily needs. Medical assessments are NOT conducted at the

time of pre-registration. If individuals need sheltering but do not reach the level of care provided at a SpNS, then the closest General Population Shelter to their location should be considered. If they exceed the level of care that can be provided at the SpNS, then please discuss with your patient the appropriate sheltering facility for them to attend. Any special dietary needs, medications, and medical supplies, along with any specialty bedding/bed must also accompany them to the Special Needs Shelter. You can review Special Needs Shelter requirements at <https://myescambia.com/our-services/public-safety/beready/shelterqa>.

Should your patients need transportation assistance evacuating to the public shelters, they may call Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) bus services when community evacuation orders are issued and at the time they are ready to evacuate to the shelter. When they are ready for pick-up, they should call (850-595-3228) ECAT and include their address in their pick-up route.

There are also many local non-profit and faith-based organization efforts underway to help assist your patients in times of emergency. Two such organizations are Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies ([BRACE](#)) which partners with the United Way and United Way's "[2-1-1](#) Northwest Florida". 2-1-1 is an information and referral program that can help connect your patients to non-profit partner organizations with a variety of services that might be able to assist them. By dialing 2-1-1, they can communicate with trained information specialists 24-hours a day, 7-days a week (alternate number 850-595-5905); or visit their [United Way Escambia](#).

If your patient is homebound because of their medical condition at the time of a disaster, BRACE has a [Homebound](#) program that may allow its partners to assist them in meeting their disaster-caused emergency needs. BRACE will strive to provide supplementary disaster preparedness information, including reasonable access to training, for persons with special needs by emailing their request to [BRACE@BeReadyAlliance.org](mailto:BRACE@BeReadyAlliance.org) or calling 850-444-7135.

The better prepared your patients are today; the easier it will be to get them through a disaster when it happens. All the websites referenced have great preparedness information to help guide them in planning and preparing for the next disaster.

For more information, call (850) 595-6683 Ext 2201.