

Access and Functional Needs Support

FEMA Mass Care and Emergency Assistance coordinates with and supports state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to provide services and resources to people with access and functional needs.

FEMA ensures its programs and services are equally accessible for evacuees and disaster survivors with access and functional needs through coordination, procurement, transportation, and provision of resources. These programs include sheltering, feeding support, distribution of emergency supplies, support to household pets and service animals, and evacuee and reunification support. These services are provided before, during and after a disaster to help build resilience and provide support to the communities we serve.

Responsibilities of FEMA's Mass Care and Emergency Assistance Program

Pre-Incident

- Develop plans, templates, guidance, training courses, and tools for states, local governments, tribes, territories, non-governmental organizations and mass care/emergency assistance providers to ensure functional needs support services are integrated into operational plans.
- Develop agreements with various entities to provide resources and services to people with disabilities and individuals with access and functional needs during disaster response activities.
- Coordinate with American Red Cross, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FEMA's Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, Regional Disability Integration Specialists, and other agencies and organizations to identify and develop strategies and processes to expand support to children and adults with access and functional needs.
- Identify communication practices and the federal resources necessary to support individuals with limited English proficiency, people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind/low vision, have cognitive/intellectual or developmental disabilities, and individuals who have limited or no ability to read or write, and who are eligible for Mass Care/Emergency Assistance services.
- Coordinate with FEMA's Office of Civil Rights¹ to ensure equal access to resources and services for all disaster evacuees and survivors.

¹ [Office of Civil Rights | FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov/civil-rights)



FEMA

- Coordinate with FEMA’s Children’s Advisor to assist in identifying and collaborating with applicable federal, state, local, tribal, territorial and non-governmental organization partners to address the specific needs of infants and children.

Response and Recovery

- Coordinate with other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other partners to support states, local governments, tribes and territories in monitoring, analyzing, and validating the need for human and material resources, programs, and services.
- Coordinate with other federal agencies and nongovernmental veterinary and animal welfare organizations to support life-sustaining resources for household pets, service and support animals.
- Provide subject matter expertise to task forces responsible for identifying resources for survivors to maintain independence in MC/EA programs and services.
- Ensure the availability of interpreters, translators and related technologies.

Access and Functional Needs

People with access and functional needs make up to 43% of our population and may increase as a result of a disaster.² These individuals may require additional support to maximize disaster services and resources.

A person may have needs in functional areas such as maintaining health, independence, communication, transportation, support services, self-determination, and medical care, which may impact their ability to access sheltering and other response assistance. Individuals with access and functional needs may include, but are not limited to, older adults, individuals with limited English proficiency, people with a disability, people with limited access to transportation, and/or limited access to financial resources to prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency.

Access and functional need accommodations are circumstances that are met for providing physical, programmatic, and effective communication access to the whole community by accommodating individual requirements through universal accessibility and/or specific actions or modifications.³

Integrating Access and Functional Needs Support

Developing resources and support to individuals with access and functional needs should be part of the planning process, to include services and support such as:

- Evacuee transportation
- Reunification assistance

² [American Community Survey \(ACS\) \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/)

³ [DHS Lexicon Terms and Definitions](#) at p. 6

- Infant and toddler supplies, including formula, baby food, infant wash, portable cribs, and other items to accommodate infants and toddlers
- Durable Medical Equipment
 - Wheelchairs and walkers
 - Shower chairs
 - Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)
- Consumable Medical Supplies
 - Bandages and gauze
 - Dental floss
 - Blood glucose meter (glucometer)
- Effective communication access
 - Limited/no English proficiency assistance via translators, language interpreters and picture boards
 - Low/no literacy-related assistance including reading support and picture boards

Resources

- [Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services \(FNSS\) in General Population Shelters, November 2010](#)
- [Planning for an Emergency: Strategies for Identifying and Engaging At-Risk Groups \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [Access and Functional Needs Toolkit: Integrating a Community Partner Network to Inform Risk Communication Strategies \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [HHS/ASPR Access and Functional Needs \(AFN\) Web Based Training \(hhs.gov\)](#)

Authorities

- Sections 308, 309, 402, 403, and 502 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as codified at 42 U.S.C. §§ 5151, 5152, 5170a, 5170b, and 5192
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794
- Titles II, III, and V of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101-103, 12131-134, 12181-12189, and 12201-12213
- Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4151-4157
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d
- Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, August 11, 2000
- Executive Order 13988, Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, January 20, 2021