

# Disability Rights Florida

Planning for Persons  
with Disabilities in Your  
Shelter

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Advocacy. Equality. Dignity.

# We Will Cover

- Who is Disability Rights Florida?
- Planning
- Notification
- Evacuation
- Accessibility
- Communication
- Medication, Refrigeration and Power
- Service Animals
- Advocacy



# Who is Disability Rights Florida?

- Disability Rights Florida covers the entire State of Florida.
- Congressionally mandated, federally funded and Governor appointed. Every state has a P&A.
- Extensive intake and information & referral team responding to over 7,000 calls a year.
- Offices in Tallahassee, Tampa, Gainesville and Hollywood.



# Mission

To advance the quality of life, dignity, equality, self-determination, and freedom of choice of persons with disabilities through collaboration, education, advocacy, as well as legal and legislative strategies.



# Ways an Advocate Can Help

- Our I&R team has an extensive list of service providers which may help with discharge planning.
- Outreach and Education.
- Memorandum of Understanding in place with FEMA and American Red Cross.
- Advocates and attorneys on staff that can assist with questions regarding your legal responsibilities.



# Planning

- In planning for emergency services, you should consider the needs of people who use mobility aids such as wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes or crutches, or people who have limited stamina.
- Plans also need to include people who use oxygen or respirators, who are blind or who have low vision, who are deaf or hard of hearing, who have a cognitive disability, people with mental illness, and those with other types of disabilities.



# Disability Related Needs

- During emergencies and disasters, people with disabilities may have different, disability-related needs than other individuals.
- Many of these needs cannot be met during emergencies and disasters without advance planning.
  - For example, if a person's health will be jeopardized without access to life-sustaining medication that must be refrigerated, an emergency shelter will be of little use to him unless he has access to the required medication and a way to keep it sufficiently cold.
  - Resources of this kind will likely be unavailable unless emergency managers and shelter operators arrange to have them available well before an emergency or disaster occurs.



# Notification

- Traditional emergency notification methods are not accessible to or usable by people with disabilities.
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot hear radio, television, sirens, or other audible alerts.
- Those who are blind or who have low vision may not be aware of visual cues, such as flashing lights. Warning methods should be developed to ensure that all citizens will have the information necessary to make sound decisions and take appropriate, responsible action.
- Often, using a combination of methods will be more effective than relying on one method alone.
- For instance, combining visual and audible alerts will reach a greater audience than either method would by itself.





# Evacuation

- People with a mobility disability may need assistance leaving a building without a working elevator.
- Individuals who are blind or who have limited vision may no longer be able to independently use traditional orientation and navigation methods.
- An individual who is deaf may be trapped somewhere unable to communicate with anyone because the only communication device relies on voice.
- Procedures should be in place to ensure that people with disabilities can evacuate the physical area in a variety of conditions and with or without assistance.



# Accessible Transportation

- Identify accessible modes of transportation that may be available to help evacuate people with disabilities during an emergency.
- For instance, some communities have used lift-equipped school or transit buses to evacuate people who use wheelchairs.
- Ambulances may be required to transport those individuals that require a stretcher for transport.



# Accessible Shelters

- Survey your community's shelters for barriers to access for persons with disabilities.
- US Department of Justice's ADA Checklist for Emergency Checklist.  
<https://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap7shelterchk.htm>
- If you find barriers to access, work with the facility's owner to get the barriers removed.
- If you are unable to do so, you need to find another nearby facility for your community sheltering needs.



# Communication

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing may not have access to audible information routinely made available to people in the temporary shelters.
- Individuals who are blind or who have low vision will not be able to use printed notices, advisories, or other written information.



# Medication, Refrigeration and Power

- Individuals whose disabilities require medications, such as certain types of insulin that require constant refrigeration, need shelters who provide refrigerators or ice-packed coolers.
- Individuals who use life support systems and other devices rely on electricity to function and stay alive therefore they will require a shelter with access to a generator or other source of electricity within a shelter.



# Service Animal Definition

- Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.
- Examples of such work or tasks include but are not limited to guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, alerting a person with diabetes to a drop/rise in blood sugar, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties.



# Service Animals

- Service animals are working animals, not pets.
- The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.
- Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.



# Is the Dog a Service Animal?

- When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions:
  - (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and
  - (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform.
  - Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.





# Is the Dog a Service Animal?

  <b>SERVICE ANIMAL</b>	  <b>EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL</b>	
✓	SPECIALLY TRAINED (TASK-TRAINED)	✗
✓	ALLOWED BY FEDERAL LAW (AIR CARRIER ACCESS ACT) TO ACCOMPANY THE HANDLER ON FLIGHTS	✓
✓	ALLOWED BY FEDERAL LAW TO ACCOMPANY HANDLER IN RESTAURANTS, STORES, MOVIE, THEATRES, ETC.	✗
✓	ALLOWED BY FEDERAL LAW TO STAY WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DISABLED IN APARTMENTS THAT HAVE "NO PET" POLICIES	✓
✓	TRAINED TO ASSIST JUST ONE PERSON	✗
✗	PROVIDE EMOTIONAL COMFORT TO MORE THAN ONE PERSON	✓
✗	MUST BE CERTIFIED OR REGISTERED	✗



# Access for Service Animals

- Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, for example, in a an emergency shelter, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.



# Removal of a Service Animal

- A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless:
  - (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or
  - (2) the dog is not housebroken.



# Service Animals

- Adopt procedures to ensure that people with disabilities who use service animals are not separated from their service animals when sheltering during an emergency.
- You cannot unnecessarily segregate persons who use service animals from others, you may consider the potential presence of persons who, for safety or health reasons, should not be with certain types of animals.
- Service animals are not required to wear vests nor have certification cards or documentation in the State of Florida.



# Miniature Horses

- The revised ADA regulations have a provision about miniature horses that have been trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.
- Miniature horses generally range in height from 24 inches to 34 inches measured to the shoulders and generally weigh between 70 and 100 pounds.



# Miniature Horses as Service Animals

- Entities covered by the ADA must permit miniature horses where reasonable.
- The regulations set out four assessment factors to assist entities in determining whether miniature horses can be accommodated in their facility. The assessment factors are (1) whether the miniature horse is housebroken;
- (2) whether the miniature horse is under the owner's control;
- (3) whether the facility can accommodate the miniature horse's type, size, and weight; and
- (4) whether the miniature horse's presence will not compromise legitimate safety requirements necessary for safe operation of the facility.



# Emotional Support Animal Definition

- Dogs that provide companionship, relief from loneliness & depression, and similar support can be allowed in housing (even "No Pet" housing) without the requirement of a pet deposit.
- Those dogs are called "Emotional Support Animals", but they don't have access to public places, either.
- Emotional Support Animals are not psychiatric service dogs.



# Therapy Dog Definition

- A therapy dog is an individual's pet which has been trained, tested, registered and insured to work in hospital, nursing home, school, or other institutional setting. The therapy dog and his partner visit to cheer patients, to educate the community, to counter grief and stress, and generally be good canine ambassadors within the community.
- Therapy animals work with a health-care professional as part of a treatment plan. Dogs that do visitation are also commonly called "therapy dogs".
- Neither of these usually has access to public places, unless granted permission.





# Disability Rights Florida

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# Q&A

- Your chance to ask questions!
- If I don't have the answer today, I will do my best to find the answer for you.

