

A Quick, Comprehensive Overview of St. Lucie County's Special Needs Program

Definition

The term "Special Needs" refers to individuals with health conditions requiring daily assistance with medical assessment and care and/or electricity for medical equipment.

Purpose

The purpose of the Special Needs Program is to provide a means for transportation and shelter for the Special Needs population of St. Lucie County in the event of a declared emergency that warrants evacuation.

Registration

Special Needs pre-registration is completed online at www.stlucieco.gov/specialneeds. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged to ensure a smooth process for admittance to the Special Needs Shelter. It is important to note that clients must re-register **every year** as an effort to maintain up-to-date information for planning and response purposes. If a hard copy application is needed, please request one via email to special.needs@stlucieco.org or call the St. Lucie County Public Safety Department at 772-462-8100 to have it mailed to you.

The registration website will be shutdown 2-3 days before tropical storm force winds are expected to make landfall; this ensures all individuals are accounted for regarding transportation needs.

Sheltering

The intent of a Special Needs Shelter is to provide, to the extent practicable under emergency conditions, an environment in which the current health of evacuees can be sustained. It is to be noted that shelters, of all kinds, are to be treated as a **last resort**. It is heavily encouraged to find safe lodging with a friend or family member elsewhere. Please do not report to the Special Needs Shelter unless the local media has announced it has opened.

Location:

The Special Needs Shelter is located at the **Havert L. Fenn Center**: 2000 Virginia Avenue, Fort Pierce, FL 34982.

In the event another Special Needs shelter is needed, it will be located at the **Port St. Lucie Community Center**: 2195 SE Airosa Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, FL 34984.

Eligibility: A person is qualified to be Special Needs if they possess a medical condition that does not meet requirements for hospital admittance but warrants some medical assistance. Examples of these conditions can include, but are not limited to, oxygen dependency, cognitively impaired, and immobility.

If you are a resident of an Assisted Living Facility or Nursing Home, you do **NOT** qualify as a Special Needs client as the facility maintains a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan that details operations in the event of an emergency and/or evacuation.

Expectation: A Special Needs client can expect basic services such as electricity, food, and medical supervision. All clients will be provided a cot and a 6 x 10 space.

Caregiver Information: A Special Needs client **MUST** be accompanied with a caregiver. The client is limited to **ONE** caregiver due to the limited space within the shelter. The caregiver will be provided a metal chair but will need to provide their own cot or equivalent that will fit in the allotted space with the client, if desired.

Transportation

Transportation needs will be assessed through an automated system poll. If transportation to and from the Special Needs Shelter is needed, a transportation company will contact you to make travel arrangements. Please be aware that the pickup windows have little to no flexibility, therefore it is important to be prepared upon first notification of a potential emergency.

FAQs

What items should I bring to the Special Needs Shelter?

You should bring the following items with you:

- Pillows, blankets, linens (for both the client and the caregiver).
- 3-day supply of non-perishable food for individual preference or dietary needs.
- 1 gallon of water per person per day for 3 days.
- Medications in prescription bottles, medical supplies, medical equipment (i.e. oxygen concentrators, portable oxygen bottles, etc.).
- Personal items: important papers, glasses, hygiene articles, clothing, flashlight, quiet games (i.e. cards, books, etc.).

Can I bring my pet to the Special Needs Shelter?

Pets and emotional support animals are **NOT** permitted at the Special Needs Shelter. Only service animals are permitted, however the owner is required to provide all necessary supplies (i.e., crate, food, and leash, etc.) to care for the service animal.

Who should I contact if I have more disaster preparedness questions?

You may call the St. Lucie County Public Safety Department at 772-462-8100 or visit the department's web page at www.stlucieco.gov/eoc.