

## Special Needs populations

Populations whose members may have additional needs before, during, and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to:

- Maintaining independence
- Communication
- Transportation
- Supervision
- Medical care

The concept of a function-based approach to defining special needs populations has been developed by June Isaacson Kailes. See Kailes, J. and Enders, A. in "Moving Beyond 'Special Needs' A Function-Based Framework for Emergency management Planning," *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, Vol/No. 44/2007/pp. 230-237.

The definition focuses on the following function-based aspects:

- **Maintaining Independence** – Individuals requiring support to be independent in daily activities may lose this support during an emergency or a disaster. Such support may include consumable medical supplies (diapers, formula, bandages, ostomy supplies, etc.), durable medical equipment (wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, etc.), service animals, and/or attendants or caregivers. Supplying needed support to these individuals will enable them to maintain their pre-disaster level of independence.
- **Communication** – Individuals who have limitations that interfere with the receipt of and response to information will need that information provided in methods they can understand and use. They may not be able to hear verbal announcements, see directional signs, or understand how to get assistance due to hearing, vision, speech, cognitive, or intellectual limitations, and/or limited English proficiency.
- **Transportation** – Individuals who cannot drive or who do not have a vehicle may require transportation support for successful evacuation. This support may include accessible vehicles (e.g., lift-equipped or vehicles suitable for transporting individuals who use oxygen) or information about how and where to access mass transportation during an evacuation.
- **Supervision** – Before, during, and after an emergency individuals may lose the support of caregivers, family, or friends or may be unable to cope in a new environment (particularly if they have dementia, Alzheimer's or psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia or intense anxiety). If separated from their caregivers, young children may be unable to identify themselves; and when in danger, they may lack the cognitive ability to assess the situation and react appropriately.
- **Medical Care** – Individuals who are not self-sufficient or who do not have adequate support from caregivers, family, or friends may need assistance with: managing unstable, terminal or contagious conditions that require observation and ongoing treatment; managing intravenous therapy, tube feeding, and vital signs; receiving dialysis, oxygen, and suction administration; managing wounds; and operating power dependent equipment to sustain life. These individuals require support of trained medical professionals.

Interim Emergency Management Planning Guide for Special Needs Populations, Federal Emergency Management Agency and DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, *Version 1.0 (August 15, 2008)*  
<http://www.fema.gov/pdf/media/2008/301.pdf>