

Promising Practice for PAS in Emergencies *Shelter Volunteer Caregiver Training*

Contact: Jeanne Abadie, Advocacy Center, jabadie@advocacyla.org

What is the practice?

The goal of the Shelter Volunteer Caregiver Training is to develop a trained cadre of volunteers who will assist general population shelter residents with disabilities and/or who are elderly by assisting them with: activities of daily living; companionship; shelter layout; and shelter schedule. The training targets people in shelters with access and functional needs without necessary devices, personal assistance services (PAS), or accessible communications.

Shelter Volunteer Caregiver Training was developed by the Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition (EMDAC) in Louisiana. It is based on FEMA's "Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters:" and the Department of Justice ADA shelter toolkit. The steps are as follows:

- Individual presents at a shelter
- American Red Cross (ARC)/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Initial Intake Form is used for assessment and if functional need(s) are determined, shelter staff will contact the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) EOC
- DHH determines if person will need equipment, a caregiver, or a transfer to a medical shelter. DHH determines if person already receives paid caregiver support and if so, secures a paid provider.
- If the individual is not receiving paid support, DHH contacts Louisiana Volunteers in Action (LAVA - a part of DHH's Office of Public Health and the organization that keeps a list of medical and non medical volunteers willing to work during a disaster), a volunteer caregiver and assigns to shelter resident.

- Shelter Volunteer Caregiver Training provides volunteer with contact info for a shelter resident and provides shelter staff with information regarding incoming caregiver.
- Shelter staff and/or volunteer will contact DHH if problems arise.

ARC nurses are now allowed to provide personal assistance services in general population shelters if needed.

FEMA has recently (2012) said that states will be reimbursed for personal assistance that is provided in a shelter at a cost; however, it is expected that it may be difficult to find trained personal assistance, so this service will help to assure available personal assistance to those who need it.

Is the practice currently in use?

It is the State's decision to provide paid PAS in disaster shelters to those who already receive paid personal assistance services. Since the practice has been viable, Louisiana has not had a mass evacuation requiring disaster.

What is the cost of the practice?

The service is provided at no cost. The Advocacy Center and Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN) train the volunteers and do not charge for the training.

What other relevant departments are included?

Other departments involved include: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), LATAN, Advocacy Center, LAVA, and the American Red Cross (ARC).

The Louisiana legislature passed legislation to allow for immunity for gratuitous volunteers acting under the auspice of the state. The American Red Cross did not want shelter volunteers to be liable. Liability Legislation drawn up by DHH's Office of Public Health attorney with assistance of ARC and EMA attorneys, and passed by Louisiana Legislature in June 2009, covers Volunteer Shelter

Caregivers assisting shelter residents.

U.S. Department of Health & Human services developed a linkage with LATAN to obtain durable medical equipment (DME) for shelter residents.

What training is necessary?

Training for Shelter Volunteer Caregivers includes:

- Expectations
- Shelter Operations and Facility Overview
- Disability Basics
- Support Within Shelters
- Assistive Technology

Three trainings took place and 35 people have been trained to date. Office of Public Health/LAVA is responsible for scheduling training, preparing handouts and doing recruitment. Currently, the Advocacy Center and LATAN are working with LAVA to provide the volunteer training online, which will allow for real-time training during a disaster, and make the good use of last minute volunteers.

Characteristics of the practice:

Hazard specific?	No	
Specific to scale of hazard?	Yes	Specific to medium, large and catastrophic (i.e. declares state of emergency) hazards
Geographic area specific?	No	
Warning specific?	No	
Is it realistic based on	Yes	

available resources to deliver on a specific promise within a specific time frame		
Is it periodically evaluated to determine if resources / assets can meet projected demand	No	
Is it periodically evaluated to determine breaking points?	No	
Is it designed to work with people with functional needs in...		
...hearing	Yes	
...vision	Yes	
...cognition	Yes	
...mobility	Yes	
...communication	Yes	