

# SPECIAL NEEDS

in this section

- Register for shelter
- Know before you go
- Supply checklist
- Help for seniors



Pinellas County's special needs program is intended for those who need transportation or require MINIMAL medical assistance. The county has three special needs shelters for residents; registration is generally required. Plan ahead and communicate with friends, family or caregivers if you'll need extra help evacuating and sheltering during a storm.



## REGISTER FOR SHELTER

- Call Pinellas County Emergency Management at **(727) 464-3800**.
- Call your nearest fire department or home health care provider.
- Submit a registration form online at [www.pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency).

Once registered, a medical needs review will determine your eligibility for a special needs shelter. If you don't qualify, other options will be discussed. If you have your own transportation, registration is NOT required but is strongly recommended. If you make other arrangements after registration, you are not obligated to go to the shelter.

Keep in mind that the shelter will be inside a school and will likely be crowded and noisy. It will be safe, but it's not for everyone.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Important things to know when going to a public shelter:
- It's recommended to bring family or a caregiver to a shelter.

- Service animals that are trained to assist a person with a disability are allowed in any shelter, hotel or motel – no registration required. Don't forget to pack their supplies too - see page 13. Pets that are not service animals must go to pet-friendly shelters.
- Personnel from Pinellas County Schools and Florida Department of Health staff special needs shelters.
- Assistance is limited to medical monitoring, oxygen and some backup electricity.
- Oxygen is available, but the shelter could lose air conditioning in a power outage.
- Bedding is not provided. Residents who are unable to sleep on a cot or the floor should consider a hotel or a host home. See page 7.
- Have your "go bag" ready and let an out-of-town contact know where you are going.
- Wear comfortable clothes and sturdy shoes.

## SUPPLY CHECKLIST

In addition to the suggestions for evacuations on page 2, consider adding these items:

- Medical contacts list – phone numbers, medical records, medications list
- Wearable medical alert tag
- Special written instructions for emergency personnel
- Two-week supply of medication and any special medical materials you need
- Cooler for refrigerated medications
- Special dietary foods, non-perishable
- Air mattress and bedding

### Wheelchairs

- Patch kit
- Extra battery or converter for charging battery

### Visual Impairment

- Talking or Braille clock
- Extra cane, magnifier and glasses

### Hearing or Speech Impairments

- Extra hearing aid batteries
- Pen and paper for communicating emergency information
- Preprinted key phrases for use in an emergency

## HELP FOR SENIORS

If you are an older adult who doesn't require special needs assistance, you don't have to ride out the storm alone. Many senior communities are in non-evacuation zones, so start a hurricane club with other people from your neighborhood, social group or place of worship.

- Sign up for **Alert Pinellas**. If you can't sign up online, you can call **(866) 484-3264**.
- Build a phone tree with your group to coordinate plans if there's a Hurricane Warning.
- If you live in a nursing home or assisted living facility, contact the administrator about emergency plans – let friends/family know the plan and share important contacts with them.
- If you are homebound, discuss your plan with your caregiver.

### Look around:

If you know an elderly person, don't assume he or she has a plan. **Ask. Offer help. You may save a life.**



# KIDS

in this section

- Make plans with the whole family
- Supplies for your kids
- Talk to your kids
- Learn with your kids



Hurricane season can be a scary time for kids. It's confusing to evacuate and leave personal belongings behind. Adults may be stressed out by the weather updates. How can you help younger family members work their way through these stressful times?

## MAKE PLANS WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY

- Involve children in emergency planning, e.g. checking supplies and writing a shopping list.
- Use matter-of-fact language to discuss safety steps you will take.
- Play "let's pretend" games with young children to help them work out "what if" situations.

## SUPPLIES FOR YOUR KIDS

If you are evacuating or even if you're riding out the storm at home, don't forget the everyday items your children will need. Think through a typical day at home and plan accordingly.

### A few suggestions:

- Diapers and wipes
- Powdered milk
- Blanket and pacifier
- Stuffed animal or favorite toy
- Favorite non-perishable snacks

## TALK TO YOUR KIDS

Three major fears common in children during a storm are: death, darkness and abandonment. Emotional support from parents is critical, well after the storm is over.

- Listen to fears and reassure children often.
- Encourage them to talk and ask questions, but limit discussion to basic facts.
- Spend extra time before bedtime; leave a door open and night-light on.
- Maintain close contact. Hold and touch your child.
- Don't discipline for unusual signs of anxiety during a crisis, like bedwetting or thumb-sucking.



- Do not lie to children about the dangers. Reassure them that you are focused on their safety.
- Be cautious of permitting young children to watch or listen to news.
- Allow for mourning and grieving over the loss of meaningful items.

### If you must leave your child...

Children who have been through a disaster are afraid of being separated from family and left alone. Avoid separation, even to go to the store. If you must leave children with friends or relatives, reassure them:

- Let your child know how long you will be away and how often you will be in touch.
- Make sure your child's needs are being met.

## LEARN WITH YOUR KIDS

Learning the steps to preparedness with your kids will help both them and you get a better understanding of what's happening when a disaster strikes.

For educational resources, visit [www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/helpingchildrencope.htm](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/helpingchildrencope.htm).