

Escambia County Special Needs Shelter Information
Frequently Asked Questions

What is a special needs shelter?

Special Needs Shelters are staffed by County Health Department and Emergency Medical Service personnel and provide last resort sheltering for persons with special medical needs during an emergency. Nurses and physicians are available for medical emergencies. The shelter is able to provide for only very basic needs during an emergency. Persons with special needs should consider all other options before going to a special needs shelter.

Who qualifies for a special needs shelter?

- See attached “Definition of A Person with Special Needs and Special Needs Shelter (SpNS) Criteria” sheet .

If I don't qualify for the Special Needs Shelter, where can I go?

If you do not qualify for placement in the special needs shelter, the American Red Cross operates general shelters throughout the county. Red Cross shelters provide no medical care.

- Ambulatory (with or without assisting devices (walker, wheelchair, cane, etc)
- Can perform activities of daily living without nursing assistance.
- Can administer medications without nursing assistance
- Persons who have no requirement for electrical power to run a piece of medical equipment.

For persons with complex medical conditions, contact your home health agency or private physician about alternative locations during a disaster such as a hospital or skilled nursing facility.

What are the shelter accommodations?

- There are no beds in the Special Needs Shelter. Individuals are given a camping/military-style cot for sleeping. One blanket and a pillow are provided, as available.
- Caregivers will be provided a cot based on availability.
- Shower facilities may or may not be available
- Meals may be provided. During the event, sandwiches or other pre-prepared foods may be provided 3 times per day. Foods for special dietary needs are not available.
- There are no electrical outlets available for non-medical equipment such as radios, televisions and cell phones.
- There is no smoking in the shelter. A designated smoking area, away from the shelter, will be identified. Shelterees will not be allowed outside to smoke if weather conditions do not permit.
- People in the shelter are expected to follow rules of good conduct. Anyone not conforming to the rules of conduct will be asked to leave the shelter.

Should I bring someone with me to the shelter?

Each person checking into the shelter should bring one caregiver who can assist them with activities of daily living. This includes changing, feeding, providing medications and toileting.

What should I bring to the Shelter?

Each person should bring supplies to support themselves for up to 4 days including:

- Any special diet foods
- Clothing and bedding (pillows, sheets, and blankets).
- All required medication in their containers, along with the dispensing instructions (if not found on the container). Try to obtain a 30 day supply of medication before arriving at the shelter. The shelter has limited capability to get prescriptions refilled during and after an event.
- Medical or electronic equipment required for medication or activities of daily life such as:
 - Nebulizer
 - Oxygen Concentrator
 - Wheelchair (non-electric recommended)
 - Oxygen Tanks
 - Walkers or Canes

Any equipment or personal belongings brought to the shelter should be marked clearly with your name. Escambia County Health Department, Escambia County EMS, or the Escambia School District will not be responsible for any lost personal equipment or belongings.

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How can I register for the Special Needs Shelter?

Escambia County Emergency Management maintains a list of persons with special needs requiring shelter during a disaster. A copy of the registration form can be obtained from your local physician, home health agency or by accessing the website: www.escambia-emergency.com. Once completed, return the registration by mail, to: Escambia County Public Safety-Special Needs Registry 6575 North "W" St, Pensacola, FL 32505. All registration forms will be screened by medical personnel.

Can I reserve a spot in the Shelter?

NO. There are no reserved spaces. Cots are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Pre-registration does not reserve your space. Pre-registration assists the county in planning for special needs personnel.

Where is the Escambia County Special Needs Shelter?

Listen to news media for shelter location.

How do I get to the shelter?

If you are registered with the county, there is a block on the form for transportation requests. The Escambia County Transit Authority (ECAT) will provide transportation if you qualify for the special needs shelter. Make sure you request a wheelchair accessible vehicle if needed. ECAT will only transport from the home directly to the shelter. They will not make other stops (store, pickup caregiver, etc).

When will the Special Needs Shelter Open?

The special needs shelters will open when the general shelters in the community are opened. This is done at the direction of the Escambia County Public Safety Division. Citizens are urged to monitor news broadcasts for opening times and dates.

What other preparations should I make before coming to the shelter?

- If you are a home health client, discuss your emergency plans with your caregiver/agency. Have their contact information with you if you come to the shelter.
- If you receive services from a durable medical equipment company, talk with them to ensure you have adequate supplies when you return home. The shelter will have limited capability to supply oxygen to individuals after discharge.
- Notify family members if you are going to the special needs shelter during an emergency. It is suggested that you bring a fully charged cell phone as phone service at the shelters cannot be guaranteed. We cannot accept phone calls for individuals at the shelter. Family members should monitor the news for local conditions.

When can I leave the shelter?

The goal of the Special Needs Shelter is to return the citizens back to their homes as quickly as possible after the danger passes. At admission, each person will be asked to provide the names and phone numbers of neighbors who can be contacted to determine the status of the home. Some individuals may be discharged to a temporary facility (nursing home/ALF) while waiting for their homes to become livable. Once discharged from the special needs shelter individuals may not be readmitted.

Shelter Conduct

Do **NOT** bring weapons of any sort (knives, guns, etc). Alcohol is **not** permitted at the shelter. Weapons and alcohol will be confiscated by shelter staff and either turned over to law enforcement or disposed of.

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**Definition of A Person with Special Needs and
Special Needs Shelter (SpNS) Criteria**

- 1) A person with special needs is defined as a person who during periods of evacuation, either mandatory or voluntary, will require assistance that exceeds the basic level of care provided at the general population shelter but will not require the level of skilled medical care provided at institutional facilities.
- 2) Criteria for Special Needs Shelter client may include, but not limited to:
 - A person with a stable medical condition requiring periodic observation, assessment, and maintenance (i.e. glucose readings, vital signs, ostomy care, urinary catheter) by a nurse.
 - A person requiring periodic wound care assistance (i.e. dressing changes).
 - A person with limitations that require nursing assistance with activities of daily living.
 - A person requiring and needing nursing assistance with oral, subcutaneous or topical medication.
 - A person requiring minimal assistance with ambulation, position change and transfer (i.e. able to move more than 100 feet with or without an assistive device).
 - A person requiring oxygen that can be manually supplied.
 - A person medically dependent on uninterrupted electricity for therapies including but not limited to oxygen, nebulizer, and feeding tubes. Ventilator dependent persons and persons with multiple special needs requiring a higher level of care should seek assistance from a skilled medical facility.
 - A person with mental or cognitive limitations requiring assistance who is accompanied by an appropriate fulltime caregiver for the duration of their stay in the shelter.
 - A person whose weight does not exceed the safety weight restrictions of provided cots. (300 lbs)
 - A person who can be safely transferred and does not require special lifting or transferring equipment. A person requiring a stretcher to be transported may need to be referred to a higher skilled medical facility.
- 3) Persons with the following conditions/requirements are **NOT** appropriate for the Special Needs Shelter and should be referred to a medical management facility: (This list is not all inclusive)

Third trimester pregnancy	Renal dialysis
Patients requiring isolation (MRSA/TB)	Ventilator patients
IV Therapy	Hyperalimenation
Bedridden and total care patient	Acute shortness of breath
Acute chest pain	

- 4) Persons with the following conditions/impairments (if **NOT** combined with other qualifying conditions) do not require sheltering in a Special Needs Shelter and are appropriate for a general shelter:

First and Second trimester pregnancy (stable)
Vision Impaired
Hearing Impaired
Amputees
Wheelchair Bound