

# **“No Person Left Behind”**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**January 9, 2006**

### **Statement of the Problem**

More than one-third of Florida's 6,341,130 households include at least one person with a disability. Over the last two years with multiple hurricane threats in various counties, it became even more evident that dedicated support for emergency preparedness for persons with special needs of all ages is critical. Those who have medically stable conditions but need a source of power, specialized personnel or equipment may not have considered all their options related to being able to shelter-in-place or needing to evacuate. There is no standardized template for pre-registration, nor an easy-to-understand state information source for who should consider going to special care units or special needs shelters. Hospitals may not have the space, personnel or supplies to care for a large number of shelter persons, and face liability issues and a lack of reimbursement for services provided.

### **Background on Pilot Program:**

The ADA Advisory Board of Southwest Florida has a “No Person Left Behind” pilot program that has been operational for 19 months and could be considered as a model program for the state. The goals of this program include:

- Communication with a coalition of agencies to include all types of disabilities.
- Establishing a centralized website, [www.nopersonleftbehind.org](http://www.nopersonleftbehind.org), for information and links to resources including the Southwest Florida ADA website, [www.adaboardswfl.org](http://www.adaboardswfl.org). The website allows secure pre-registration to identify basic needs for persons with disabilities.
- 100% accountability of all pre-registered persons with disabilities during disasters.
- Education of persons with disabilities and their families on disaster preparedness and empowerment to take control of their disaster planning.

A coalition of organizations in Southwest Florida are working together (largely volunteer participation) on “No Person Left Behind” and include: the ADA Advisory Board of Southwest Florida, the Career and Service Center of Lee County, Lee County Center for Independent Living, Deaf Service Center of Southwest Florida, Division of Blind Services, Families First of Southwest Florida, FEMA Publication Supply Center, Florida Gulf Coast University, Lee County Emergency Management, Lee County Parks and Recreation, Lee County Transportation (Passport), Ruth Cooper Center, Visually Impaired Persons Center of Southwest Florida, WGCU - Florida Gulf Coast University, Wink TV (Ft Myers), Workforce Alliance of Southwest Florida and the Fort Myers Senior Friendship Center.

Active assistance is offered in distributing multilingual FEMA Hurricane and Disaster Publications to persons with disabilities and to the Spanish communities of Southwest Florida. Information is shared including in Tape, Braille, Large Print, and electronic formats.

**Proposed Statewide Solution:**

“No Person Left Behind” can be expanded around Florida with the following support:

- Dedicated staff and a state office for this program.
- Designation of a dedicated public communication channel for persons with disabilities.
- Development of common template for pre-registration/identification of persons with special needs.
- Establish links from the database to the Emergency Operations Centers to use for mass care and evacuation planning, and search and rescue in the event of a disaster.
- Develop recommendations for health care facilities (acute, long-term, and disaster) to use to advance their preparedness in supporting persons with disabilities.
- Work with media to include information to support persons with special needs before, during and after disaster events.

**Budget:**

To expand this program from the current pilot to a statewide program, it is anticipated that \$500,000 would be needed for the following basic needs:

- State Office with a toll-free phone number and dedicated full-time staff.
- Regional Office Space (perhaps based with EOC's)
- Master database, primary and backup servers, IT support to set up registration software and processing with inter-link into the phone system.

**Contact Information:**

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