The State of New Jersey

Functional Assessment Service Team (FAST) Program

Introduction

The State of New Jersey has created a Functional Assessment Service Team (FAST) Program in order to assess and coordinate mass care operations as they relate to the Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) community. The team will be coordinated through the NJ State Office of Emergency Management with support provided by the NJ Department of Human Services Office of Emergency Management (DHSOEM) and the Division of Disability Services (DDS) under Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6 (Mass Care/Emergency Assistance). The team will be comprised of State agency representatives and other organizational representatives with a background and expertise in working with and assisting the DAFN community

Background: Though disasters vary in type and scope, they disproportionately affect people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Accommodations may be needed to ensure that all disaster survivors benefit equally from available programs and services. Disabilities and access and functional needs include, but are not limited to individuals who have/are:

- Physical, sensory, developmental, or intellectual disabilities
- Chronic health conditions
- Mental health disabilities
- Substance Abuse
- Limited English Proficiency
- Deaf/ Hard of Hearing
- Blind/Visually Impaired
- Children, elderly, pregnant women

Purpose: FAST conducts functional assessments of disaster survivors. This assessment evaluates needs and determines what resources are needed to accommodate individuals so they can maintain their health, safety, and independence. FAST:

- Directly assesses the needs of disaster survivors
- Assists in obtaining items/services to fulfill unmet needs, particularly those related to disabilities or access and functional needs which may include communication needs, durable medical equipment, assistive technology, interpreters, or personal care attendants
- Informs and educates disaster survivors
- Ensures information is available and accessible, providing alternate formats if necessary
- Advises on assistance available and assists with contacting the correct resource (government or private entity). This may include programs such as Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP), among others

Where and When: FAST responds to disaster scenes or affected communities as early in the incident as is practical. FAST may respond to declared or non-declared disaster locations, disaster shelters, Disaster Recovery Centers, Community Reception Centers, Reunification Centers, Points of Dispensing, Points of Distribution, or other community locations. FAST will work side by side with emergency response workers to assist in identifying essential functional needs. FAST will only respond to the site of a disaster/emergency when the team is requested through State Emergency Operations Center ESF6 Team by the county where the disaster/emergency occurred and staff will work for the county of request. The FAST team will offer ESF6 resources and report unmet needs to the county/state for determination of how to fulfill the needs.

Staffing/Training: FAST consists of one FAST Leader and one to five FAST Members, ideally with experience in a variety of disability areas. FAST members will be well-versed in the Incident Command System and National Incident Management System (NIMS) and will receive FAST specific training online and/or in person. Here are some additional FEMA courses that can be taken online at www.training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx

FEMA IS 100 – Introduction to Incident Command System
FEMA IS 700 – National Incident Management System
FEMA IS 800 – National Response Framework, an Introduction
FEMA IS 405 – Overview of Mass Care/Emergency Assistance
FEMA IS 806 – Emergency Support Function (ESF) 6 – Mass Care

The FAST will meet periodically to discuss new initiatives and training relative to the Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs Community. The team will participate in NJOEM related exercises and test the capabilities and response of the team. New members and teams can be designated as needed and based on the amount of interest devoted to this program.