

Functional Assessment Service Team (FAST)

Introduction:

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it became clear that the same potential for a catastrophic disaster existed in California and that preparation to shelter thousands of disaster victims was insufficient in this state. Preparation and planning, in particular for sheltering People with Disabilities and Elderly (PWD/E), needed to be improved. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has lead responsibility within the state of California for supporting local government during a disaster in mass care and shelter (MCS). In May 2006, CDSS initiated a planning effort that included local, state and federal government, as well as various community based organizations (CBO) and private non-profits (PNP) to figure out how PWD/E could be better supported in general population shelters.

The end result of that effort is the following:

1. An annex to the state's mass care and shelter plan that supports PWD/E in general population shelters.
2. A consultant contract to develop similar plans (annexes) in 10 high-risk counties within the state.
3. A consultant contract to develop the curriculum to train staff to work with PWD/E in shelters.
4. A commitment to fund the training of those staff once the curriculum is developed.

The key component of the sheltering plan for PWD/E is the Functional Assessment and Service Team (FAST). The purpose of the FAST program is to provide staff to conduct functional assessments of PWD/E as they arrive at shelters. This assessment will evaluate the needs of the PWD/E and determine whether they can be supported within the general population shelter. FAST will be deployed as shelters are opened and remain in the shelters until it is determined that they are no longer needed. FAST may transfer to other shelters and may return to shelters as needed or requested.

FAST make-up, responsibilities and qualifications

A FAST consists of trained government employees and CBO personnel ready to respond and deploy to disaster areas to work in shelters. FAST will work side by side with shelter personnel and other emergency response workers to assist in identifying and meeting essential functional needs so PWD/E can maintain their health, safety and independence during disasters.

The role of FAST is to conduct assessments of individuals and facilitate the process of getting essential resources needed by the PWD/E. These may include durable medical equipment (DME), consumable medical supplies (CMS), prescribed medications or a person to assist with essential activities of daily living.

FAST members will possess the knowledge, skills and ability to work in their area of disability expertise ,as well as a minimum of two years' experience working with and assessing the needs of these populations..

FAST will consist of members with experience in the following areas:

- Aging (services/supports, including dietary needs)
- Chronic health conditions
- Developmental & other cognitive disabilities (i.e. Traumatic Brain Injury, intellectual)
- Hearing loss
- Mental health disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Substance abuse
- Vision loss

FAST Member Position Sources

There are five (5) potential sources for staffing FAST positions. They are:

- Disaster Healthcare Volunteers of California: (formerly California Medical Volunteers) – integrate FAST members into this system which is currently under development.
- California state departments who have personnel with FAST qualifications.
- California county departments who have personnel with FAST qualifications.
- Non-governmental agencies/organizations such as Community Based Organizations (CBO), Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), Faith Based Organizations (FBO), etc., who have personnel with FAST qualifications.
- Federal Resource(s) may be requested if disaster reaches a catastrophic stage and state resources have been depleted. Federal sources and processes for FAST deployment and use are under development.

Further questions regarding FAST and sheltering by the state should be directed to Randy Linthicum, CDSS Disaster and Client Services Bureau Chief, 916-651-8880 or randy.linthicum@dss.ca.gov.