



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 access and functional needs (PAFN), 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 PAFN could be better supported in general population shelters.

The key component of the sheltering plan for PAFN is the Functional Assessment Service Team (FAST). The purpose of the FAST program is to provide staff to conduct functional assessments of PAFN who are in shelters. This assessment will evaluate the needs that people with access and functional needs may have, 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 be transferred 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 PAFN 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 residents in shelters that have access and functional needs. 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 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 PAFN populations.

FAST consists 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

Further questions regarding the FAST program and training please contact: Kim Sackman, FAST Coordinator at, kim.sackman@dss.ca.gov or 916-651-8860 or to the website: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/dis/PG1909.htm>.