



IDENTIFYING AT-RISK POPULATION FOR EVACUATION DURING EMERGENCIES

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ISSUE

Do any state laws or municipal ordinances require municipalities to identify or register special needs or at-risk populations and create strategies to evacuate or serve them during emergencies? Specifically, do the following municipalities have any ordinances that deal with this issue: Bridgeport, Norwich, Stamford, Waterbury, and Willimantic?

EVACUATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION DURING EMERGENCIES

No state law specifically requires municipalities to identify special needs or at-risk populations and create strategies to evacuate or serve them during emergencies, and we found no municipal ordinances addressing this issue. But, by law, municipalities are charged with securing and promoting the health and safety of their residents, and the law requires every municipality to have an emergency plan of operations (sometimes called emergency response plan) in order to be eligible for certain state or federal civil preparedness funds. The plan must include strategies to address certain civil preparedness activities and measures specified in law, including, when appropriate, the “nonmilitary evacuation of the civilian population” (CGS §§ [28-7](#) & [28-1\(4\)](#)).

The Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) provides municipalities with tools and guidance to help them determine which residents are at-risk and establish a plan to evacuate and provide them with services during emergencies. DEMHS also conducts statewide exercises with municipalities, focusing on responses to specific emergencies. As part of an exercise involving a response to a Category 1 hurricane in 2014, the agency asked municipalities to convene a “mass care/functional needs working group” to, among other things, (1) determine the best way to get information on the size of their functional needs population (including the elderly, people with disabilities, and people in congregate



settings), and (2) identify entities that have the best resources to help in planning for and responding to an emergency. Among the questions that DEMHS suggested that the municipality focus on was whether its evacuation planning addressed the needs of people with disabilities.

According to Waterbury's emergency operations plan (the only one we were able to review):

The evacuation of "special needs" populations [is] specified in the facilities' own emergency plans. These would include rest homes, day care centers, and public and private schools. The disabled population (hearing/sight/mentally/mobility impaired) should be monitored by the Waterbury Health and Medical Department, and the Visiting Nurses Association. Prisoners in police holding cells will be the responsibility of the Police Department. . . .

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