



Vulnerable and Hard-to-Reach Population FACT SHEET: The Developmentally Disabled

This fact sheet provides information about a population in Florida that is potentially vulnerable and/or hard-to-reach before, during, and after a disaster event. Preparedness requires understanding the demographics and characteristics of these groups in order to best meet the needs of all persons.

Definitions

- The US Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD): “Severe, life-long disabilities attributable to mental and/or physical impairments, manifested before age 22.”
- Florida’s Agency for Persons with Disabilities (FAPD): “A variety of conditions that interfere with a person's ability to function in everyday activities.”
- Chapter 393, Florida Statutes: “Spina bifida, autism, cerebral palsy, Prader-Willi syndrome, and mental retardation.”

A person with a developmental disability is incapacitated in at least 3 of the following activities (ADD):

- Taking care of themselves (dressing, bathing, eating, other daily tasks)
- Speaking and being clearly understood
- Learning
- Walking/moving around
- Making decisions
- Living on their own
- Earning/managing income

Demographics

- 4.5 million developmentally disabled individuals in the US (ADD)
- Over 265,000 developmentally disabled individuals in Florida (FAPD)

General Information

Some Types of Developmental Disabilities:

- **Spina Bifida:** a condition in which the spine and the cord inside the spine do not grow as most spines do. Normally, the spinal cord carries messages from the brain to other parts of the body, but when a person has spina bifida, the spinal cord does not carry all of the messages to the rest of the body.
- **Autism:** a condition characterized by impairment in social interactions and communication abilities and unusual or restricted ranges of play and interest. Autism results in social isolation and varying degrees of unusual behaviors.
- **Cerebral Palsy (CP):** a group of motor disabilities that arise due to injury to the developing brain before or during birth or during the first year of life. These motor disabilities do not get worse over time. Cerebral palsy keeps the brain from telling the rest of the body some of the things it is supposed to do. Despite significant motor impairment, many people with CP have normal intelligence.

- **Mental Retardation:** a significant limitation in functioning related to sub-average intelligence. People who have mental retardation learn more slowly than other people and might need assistance in areas like communication, self-care, self-direction, health and safety, leisure, work, and functional academics. While the term is still clinically correct, "intellectual disability" is becoming the preferred nomenclature.
- **Prader-Willi Syndrome:** an inherited condition in which a severe lack of muscle tone is present in early infancy. Later on, an excessive drive to eat usually leads to significant weight problems. Obsessive-compulsive behaviors and difficulty with social interactions are often present. People with Prader-Willi syndrome are usually short with small hands and feet. They typically are mildly mentally retarded.

For More Information

1. Myflorida.com. (n.d.). *Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved March 14, 2006, from www.myflorida.com/agency/42/.
2. Myflorida.com: Agency for Persons with Disabilities. (2006). *Agency for Persons with Disabilities – APD*. Retrieved March 4, 2006, from <http://apd.myflorida.com>.
3. The Florida Senate. (2005). *The 2005 Florida Statutes: Title XXIX, Chapter 393 – Developmental Disabilities*. Retrieved March 14, 2006, from www.flsenate.gov/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=Ch0393/titl0393.htm.
4. US Department of Health and Human Services: Administration for Children and Families – Administration on Developmental Disabilities. (2006). *ADD Fact Sheet*. Retrieved March 14, 2006, from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/add/Factsheet.html.