

# When Emergencies Converge: Homelessness-Focused Strategies Before, During, and After Natural Disasters and Environmental Hazards

2024 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
**ENDING HOMELESSNESS**

★ **AND CAPITOL HILL DAY** ★

JULY 8-10, 2024

WASHINGTON D.C.

#NAEH2024

## **Darlene Matthews**

*Principal, Darlene Mathews, Inc.*

## **Amanda Richer**

*Displacement Consultant, Independent Contractor*

## **Dominique Randall**

*Homeless Section Manager, Pinellas County Government*

*People experiencing homelessness remain disparately vulnerable to both natural disasters and environmental hazards, such as air pollution and extreme heat. While the disaster response system must better incorporate the unique needs of people experiencing homelessness, the homelessness response system can also learn about how applying disaster response frameworks can urgently scale resources to end unsheltered homelessness. Come learn from community partners employing emerging strategies to rapidly move people off the streets and address underlying climate vulnerabilities.*



# **When Emergencies Converge: Homelessness-Focused Strategies Before, During, and After Natural Disasters and Environmental Hazards**

---

**JULY 10, 2024**

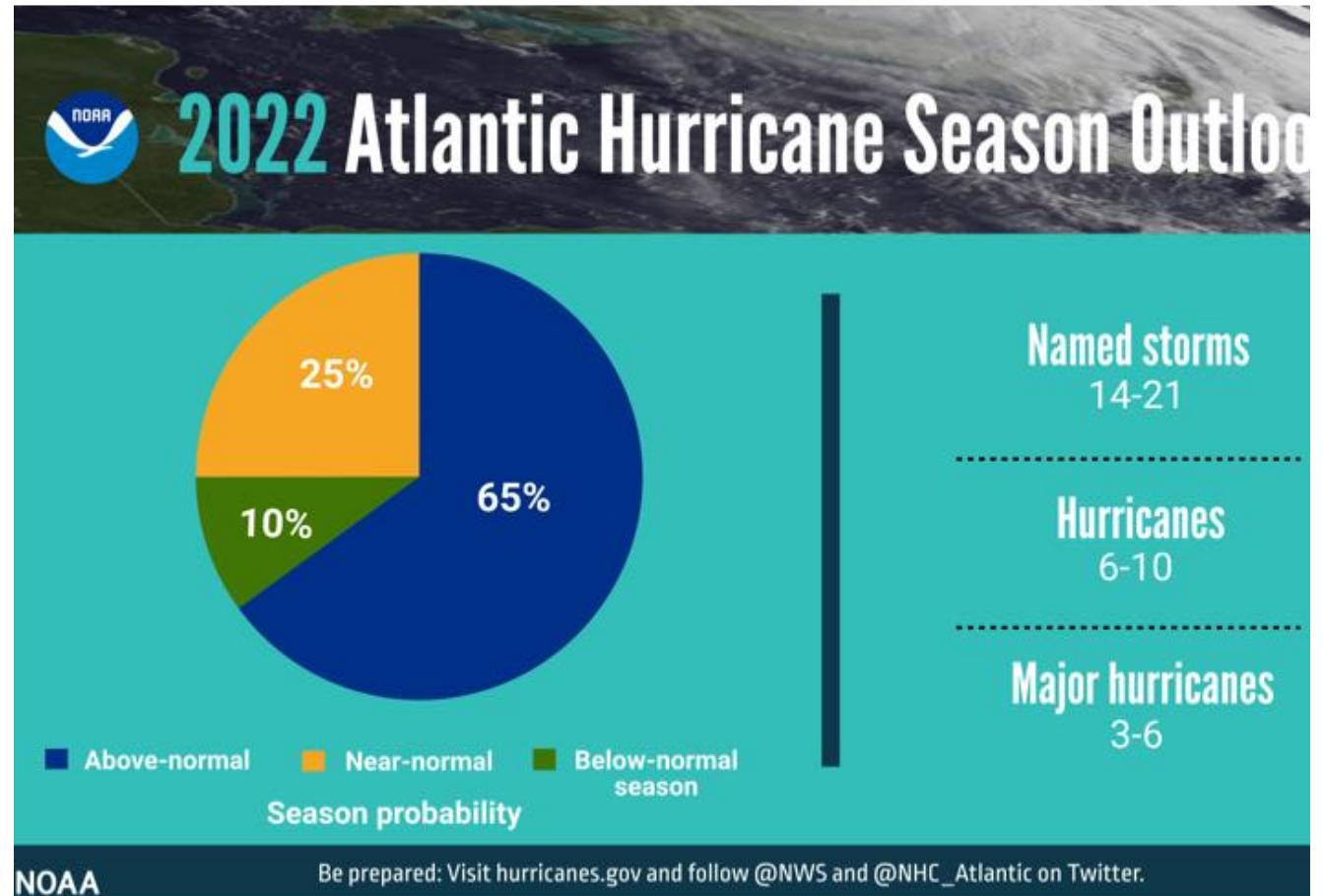
Darlene Mathews

[Darlene@darlenemathewsinc.com](mailto:Darlene@darlenemathewsinc.com)



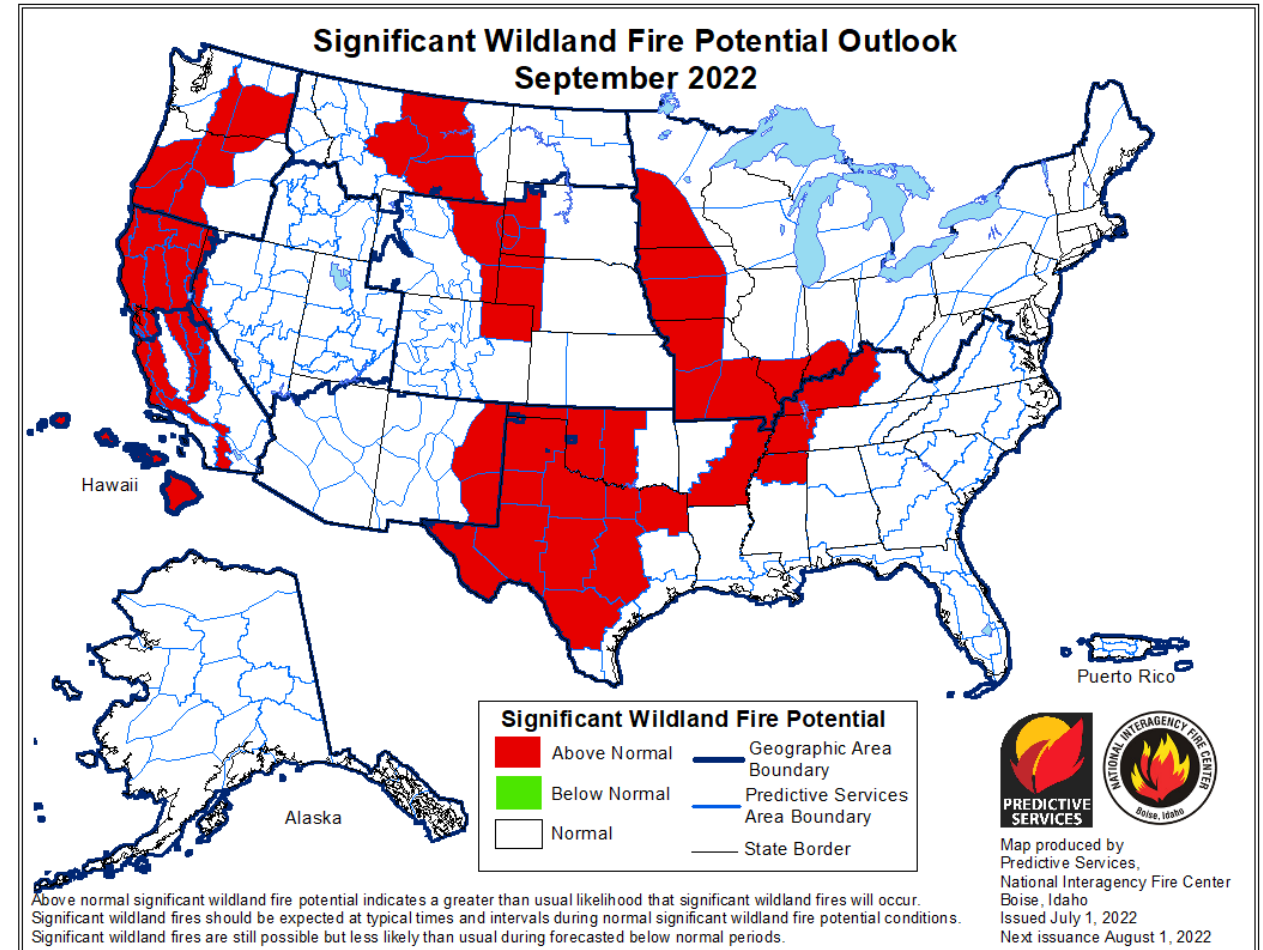
# HURRICANES

- Avg 14.4 named storms per year
- 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year for above average # of storms
- NOAA has 70% confidence in predictions



# FIRES

- Year-to-date acres burned for the US is approximately 220% above the 10-year average, with over 92% of the total acres burned in Alaska, the Southwest, and Southern Areas
- Most of the West, Plains, and Texas remain in drought, with areas of extreme to exceptional drought across the southwestern US. Drought developed across southwest Alaska and expanded or increased in severity across the Southeast and Hawai'i.



[https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly\\_seasonal\\_outlook.pdf](https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf)

# TORNADOES

- Broad Doppler radar technology was implemented in mid 90s, making long term predictions difficult
- We may be experiencing slightly fewer tornadoes, but they are stronger
- The majority of tornadoes were historically reported in “Tornado Alley” (TX, KS, NE). Geography is shifting to other states
- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/tornadoes-and-climate-change>



# OTHER SITUATIONS TO WATCH



Earthquakes



Extreme temperatures



Water conditions

# RUSH Overview

- Special allocation of Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) funding
- Can be used to address housing and services needs of people experiencing homelessness whose needs are exacerbated by disasters, and people who are at risk of longer-term homelessness as a result of disasters
- Fills a gap in federal disaster assistance for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness
- Focused on disaster declared geographies

# Homelessness in Disasters



Homeless prior to  
disaster



Precariously Housed  
People who become  
homeless because of  
the disaster



People who receive  
TSA but it's not enough  
to help them stabilize &  
they become  
homeless



# Eligible Activities

- Emergency Shelter (Congregate and Non-Congregate)
- Rapid re-housing or Homelessness Prevention
  - Short/Medium term rental assistance (Up to 24 months)
  - Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services
  - Financial assistance for move in costs,
  - Supportive services for people currently experiencing homelessness;
- Street Outreach Services
- HMIS
- Administration

# RUSH Funding Allocations

## First Allocation

Determined based on the number of persons experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness (based on the most recent Point-in-Time count) in counties or local municipalities for which TSA is made available and the Fair Market Rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in those areas.

## Second Allocation

HUD may award a second allocation would be based on data that becomes available on unmet needs and damage assessments.

# Target Population

Three eligibility factors must be met:

- 1 be homeless or at risk of homelessness
- 2 have been residing in an area affected by a major disaster declared pursuant to the Stafford Act on or after December 20, 2019 (e.g., an area covered by DR-4673-FL, dated September 29, 2022); **AND**
- 3 have needs that will not be served or fully met by the TSA Program (42 USC 5170b) and other existing Federal disaster relief programs (including both Federal and non-Federal cost share).

If already found eligible for ESG *prior* to the disaster, households are not required to re-qualify as homeless or at risk of homelessness for assistance under RUSH

# Special RUSH Requirements

- No match requirements
- Pre-award costs may be incurred by the recipient or subrecipient as of the award date Consultation with the CoC and citizen participation process suspended for this allocation.
- Duplication of Benefits – see the [Quick Guide](#)
- All Natural Disaster Waivers are applicable:

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Signed-Hurricane-Ian-CPD-Waivers.pdf>

# Benefits of Instituting a Disaster Policy

**Policy that allows the ESG recipient to make targeted funding decisions in response to a disaster**

**Benefits:**

- Helps communities expedite funding decisions
- Allows communities to bypass traditional application processes and make targeted funding decisions based on need
- Streamlines process and review time to get contracts out the door

# Disaster Policy Sample Language

## *Louisiana*

The LHC seeks to be a strong partner to local geographies affected by natural disasters. In these situations, the LHC will try to leverage all resources under its purview to provide support to vulnerable homeless clients. The ESG funding awarded to the State is one of the resources that the LHC may use to support homeless people affected by natural disasters.

In order to provide flexible and meaningful support, the LHC reserves the right to focus grant funding (both old money and new money) and corresponding eligible component types to the affected areas. In these situations, the LHC may make targeted grant awards to governments and/or nonprofits to address direct deficits to existing programs, provide temporary support to expand program occupancy or fund a new activity such as street outreach or case management that can be utilized on the street or in temporary shelters to move new and existing clients into permanent housing. All activity that may be funded to support natural disasters would still need to align with regulations that govern the Emergency Solutions Grant and with the procedures outlined in this document.

# Disaster Policy Sample Language

## ***Puerto Rico***

FAMILIA seeks to be a strong partner to local geographies affected by natural disasters. In these situations, FAMILIA will leverage all resources under its purview to provide support to vulnerable homeless clients. The ESG funding awarded to Puerto Rico is one of the resources that Familia may use to support homeless people impacted by natural disasters.

In order to provide flexible and meaningful support, FAMILIA reserves the right to focus grant funding awarded under 2012-2017 funding and corresponding eligible component types to the most impacted areas. **In these situations, FAMILIA may make targeted grant awards to subrecipients that are governments and/or nonprofits to address direct deficits to existing programs, to fund local preparedness needs and requirements such as generators and water cisterns to comply with local law no. 88 (Law for the Guarantee of Provision of Services). Familia may also make strategic awards to expand shelter beds or renovate shelters damaged by the disaster.** All activity that may be funded must still align with regulations that govern the Emergency Solutions Grant and with the local policies and procedures.

**FAMILIA will temporarily modify its traditional rating and ranking process to award funding to areas of the Commonwealth experiencing disasters.** The modification of the traditional rating and ranking process serves two purposes. **First, it acknowledges that areas affected by disasters may not have the bandwidth to put forward applications. Second, it allows funding to be focused on the areas where it is most needed and will have the greatest impact.**

# Funding Decisions - Strength-Based Approaches

- Make targeted awards to your strongest service providers
- Talk to your CoCs about the right partners to bring to the table
- Attributes of strong service providers:
  - Manage large federal awards
  - Have strong financial systems in place
  - Can subaward funding
  - Keep good records



# Strategies to Maximize RUSH Award

- Regional Coordination-working with neighboring CoCs to serve people experiencing homelessness with this funding
- Centralized Payments -maximizes efficiencies to scale up and serve many people
- Flexibility in residential placement-don't make grant awards that specify geography where program participants must reside
- [CoC Mobility Rule](#)
- The [ESG Program Interim Rule](#) does not require applicants to verify an individual's or family's residency in the jurisdiction (such as last known address) in order to be determined eligible for or receive ESG assistance from an organization located within the recipient's jurisdiction.

# Sample RUSH CES Prioritization

A) Location	B) Circumstance	C) Housing Status	D) Subpopulation Considerations
<b>A) Disaster Impacted County</b>	1a) People who were literally homeless prior to the disaster 1b) People who have become literally homeless as a result of the disaster AND 2) Were forced to leave the place they were staying because of the Hurricane. 3) Not TSA eligible.	UNSHELTERED	-Unaccompanied Youth -Family with Minor Children -Adult
		SHELTERED	-Unaccompanied Youth -Family with Minor Children -Adult
<b>B) Disaster Impacted County</b>	1) People who have utilized TSA and those services have ended 2) At risk of homelessness or literally homeless as a result of the disaster 3) Were forced to leave the place they were staying because of the Hurricane	SHELTERED	-Unaccompanied Youth -Family with Minor Children -Adult

# What can you do right now to prepare for a disaster?

1. Put a disaster policy in place so you can quickly receive HUD funds
2. [Disaster Recovery Toolkit](#)
3. Stay Connected Locally!-Reach out to your local emergency management partners and start forming relationships

# EQUITY IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Strategies for Communities Experiencing Homelessness





# Natural? DISASTER

---

Humans have an influence on the impacts of disasters.

Social Vulnerability influences resilience

Climate change intensifies risk

The most vulnerable are the most impacted



# Human Rights Based Approach

Identify Prepare Prevent Respond Recover



# 1

# Identify

---

Who will be impacted the most in any disaster scenario?

What kind of vulnerabilities exist in our current system of emergency response?

Where will extra supports be needed for an equitable response?

When should planning begin for future disasters?

WHO . WHAT . WHERE . WHEN



# 2

## Prepare

---

Successful Preparation must include those that will be affected the most.

Disseminating critical information and supplies to impacted communities must be in accessible and trusted formats.





# 3

## Prevent

---

WE CAN REDUCE AND/OR AVOID THE  
SUFFERING THAT DISASTERS CAUSE BY  
APPROPRIATE MITIGATION EFFORTS

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY



# 4 Respond

---

PEOPLE DO NOT LOSE THEIR RIGHTS WHEN THEY BECOME DISPLACED, HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD BE A PART OF RESPONSE EFFORTS WHETHER SHORT OR LONG TERM.



# 5 Recovery

---

RECOVERY PROCESSES GIVE US THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD OUR COMMUNITIES IN WAYS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE IN THEM.

Resilience. Resources. Rebuilding





# Thank you!



Please reach out to continue the  
conversation!

[richer.amanda@gmail.com](mailto:richer.amanda@gmail.com)



# Hurricane and Disaster Response for Vulnerable Populations

# Unhoused Vulnerability During an Emergency

Homelessness is an emergency in and of itself.

Disaster does not discriminate.

However, disaster does have a disparate impact on vulnerable populations.

Lack of resources cause additional stress on an already stressful situation.

People with a disability are 2-4x more likely to be injured, or die, in a disaster.

Access to technology and communications differs.

# Whole Community Approach to EM

Attempts to engage a community across public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

## Principles:

- Understand and meet the actual needs of the whole community
- Engage and empower all parts of the community.
- Strengthen what works well in communities on a daily basis.

## Whole Community Strategic Themes:

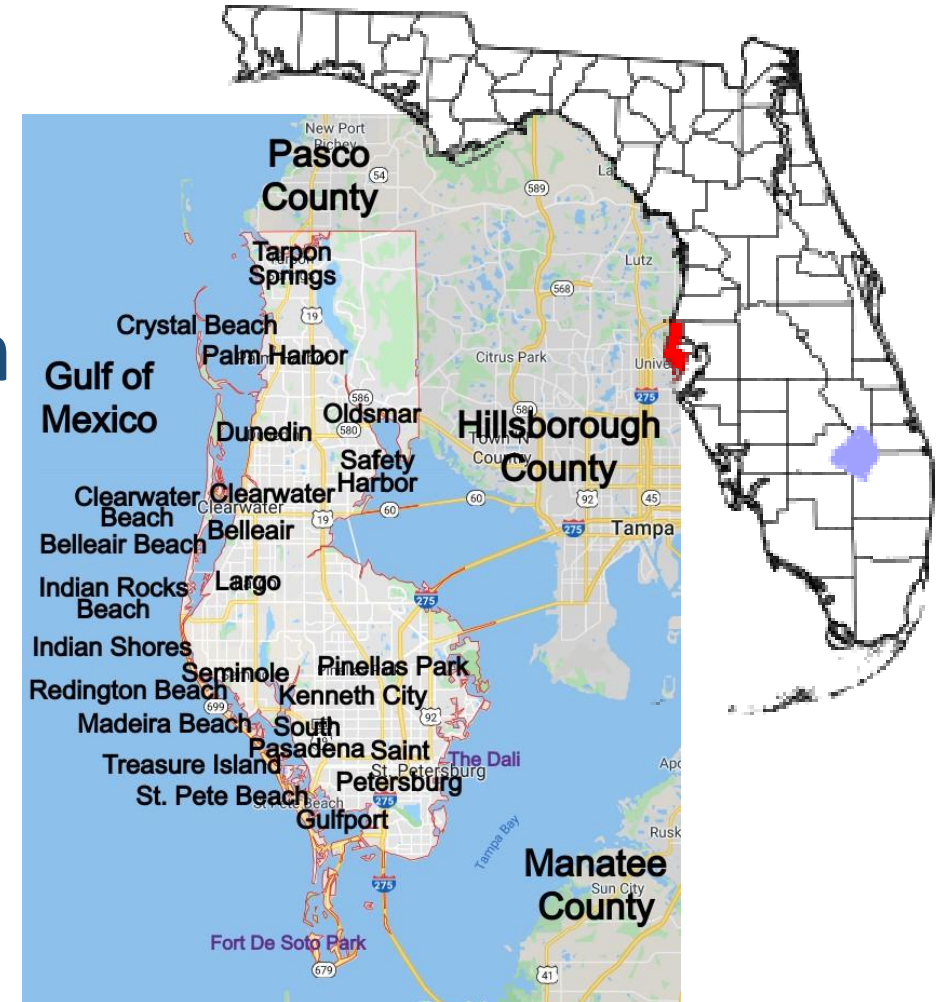
- Understand community complexity.
- Recognize community capabilities and needs.
- Foster relationships with community leaders.
- Build and maintain partnerships.
- Empower local action.
- Leverage and strengthen social infrastructure, networks, and assets.



# Pinellas County by the Numbers

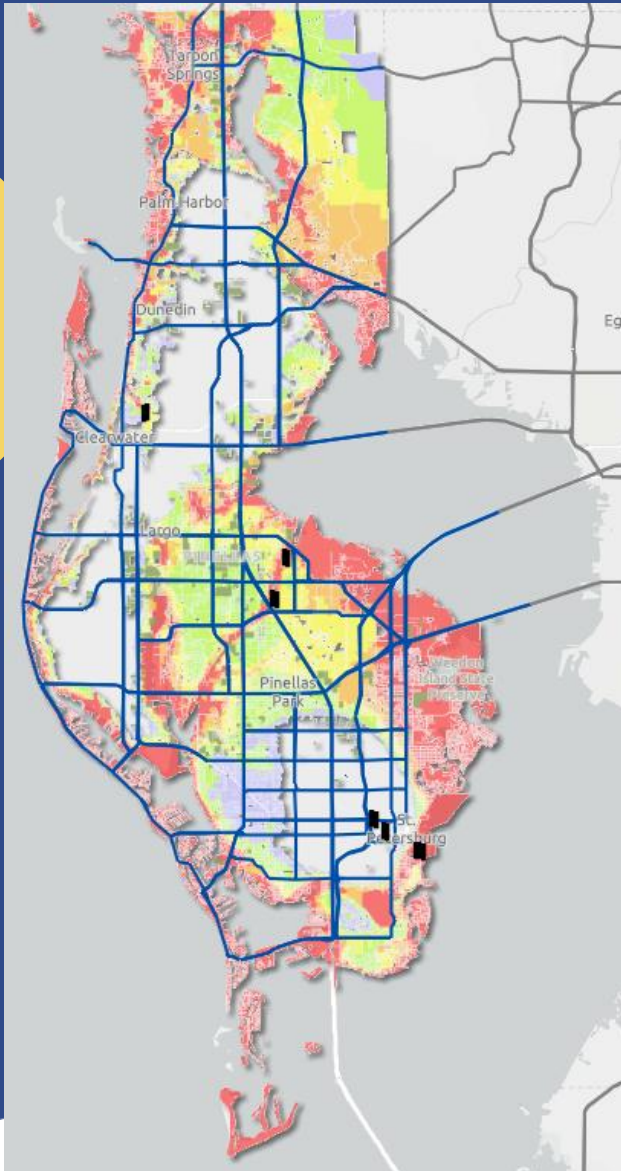


- 280 square miles...over 588 miles of coastline. Over 400 bridges.
- Most densely populated county in the state by double.
- 24 Municipalities
- 18 Fire Districts, 9 LE agencies
- 40+ COC providers





# Hurricane Season | Homeless ES Providers



- 6 homeless emergency shelters and multiple transitional shelters utilized by 1500+ individuals with 4 in A/B evac and 2 in no evac.
- Plus, 650+ individuals that are unsheltered. Where are they going?
- Most with few evacuation resources (money/friends/family/vehicles)
- **1200+ need access to shelter in the event of a level A evacuation who are experiencing homelessness. (1600+ when evac. issued for B)**
- With another 250-300 sheltering in place at shelters.

# Preseason Prep (EM and COC Providers):

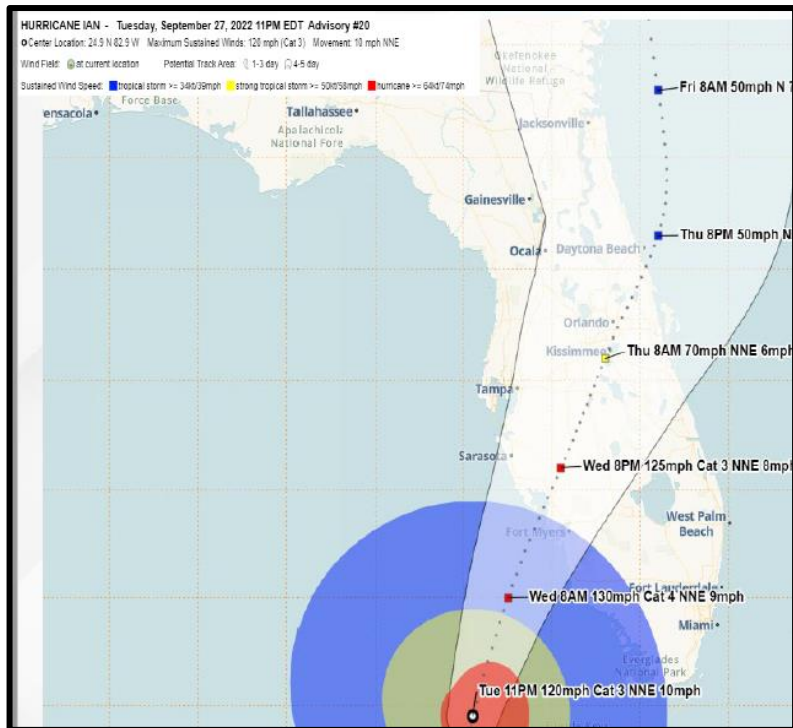


- Meet with ES, TH, and PSH providers to understand their service populations, building and staff needs.
- Review emergency operations plans, offer TA as needed, supplies, or potentially identify funding needs to mitigate facilities.
- Participate in resource fairs for various communities.
- End of May facilitate a homeless provider virtual event to start the season hosted by COC lead agency.
- Create, edit, and distribute resource cards with appropriate updates specific to unhoused and vulnerable populations.

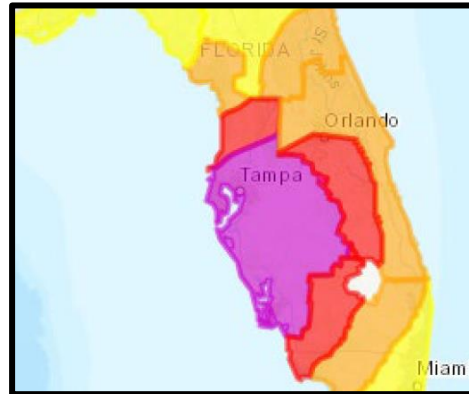


# Communicating Risk

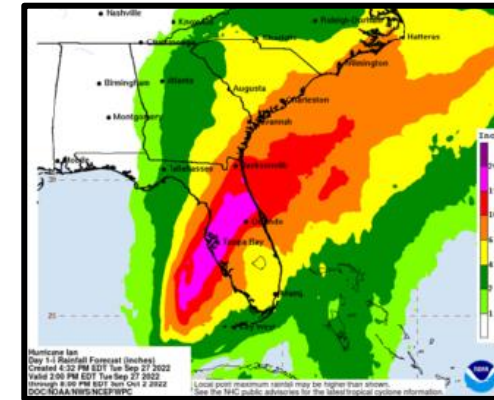
## Less focus on the cone and more focus on potential hazards



It is not about the cone.



Winds



Rain Forecast



**Time is the one resource you cannot get more of.**  
Once a storm is threatening Pinellas County, there will be a limited amount of time for you to get ready, get set and protect yourself from impact. This guide will help you determine your risk, know what to do and what to expect.



# READY ▶ SET ▶ PROTECT


## Prepare for Hurricane Evacuation

### MAKE A PLAN

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  runs most regular routes during evacuations.

- Hurricane evacuation shelters are made available throughout the County. Bus rides to shelters are free.
- Bus service may stop several hours before conditions become dangerous.
- Special needs and pet-friendly shelters are also available.
- Pets are allowed on the bus: cats and small dogs in a crate; large dogs on a muzzle leash.
- All are welcome at any evacuation shelter. No ID required.
- Food and water are provided.
- **Only bring essential items:** sleeping bag, blanket, medications and prescriptions, toiletries, personal hygiene items, important phone numbers, cell phone/charger, change of clothes, reading material.
- For assistance, check with social service agencies and street outreach teams.
- Call the County Information Center (*only during emergencies*) at (727) 464-4333.
- After the storm, when shelters close, you can ride the bus free of charge back to your initial pickup location.


### STAY INFORMED

 For alerts to your cell phone or email, sign up for Alert Pinellas at [disaster.pinellas.gov](https://disaster.pinellas.gov) or download the Ready Pinellas app.

## Prepárese ▶ Listo ▶ Protéjase


### Prepárese para evacuar en caso de huracán

#### Haga un Plan

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority  opera la mayoría de las rutas regulares durante las evacuaciones.

- Habrá refugios de evacuación por huracanes a lo largo del condado. Los viajes en autobús a los refugios son gratuitos.
- El servicio de autobús puede suspenderse varias horas antes de que las condiciones sean peligrosas.
- También hay refugios para personas con necesidades especiales y que aceptan mascotas.
- Se aceptan mascotas en el autobús: gatos y perros pequeños en una jaula; perros grandes con correa y bozal.
- Todos son bienvenidos en cualquier refugio de evacuación. No se requiere identificación.
- Se ofrece agua y comida.
- **Lleve sólo lo imprescindible:** saco de dormir, manta, medicamentos y recetas, artículos de aseo y de higiene personal, números de teléfono importantes, teléfono móvil/cargador, cambio de ropa, material de lectura.
- Para obtener ayuda, consulte con las agencias de servicios sociales y los grupos de ayuda en la calle.
- Llame al Centro de Información del Condado (*sólo durante emergencias*) al (727) 464-4333.
- Después de la tormenta, cuando cierren los refugios, puede volver en autobús sin costo alguno a su lugar de recogida inicial.

#### Manténgase Informado

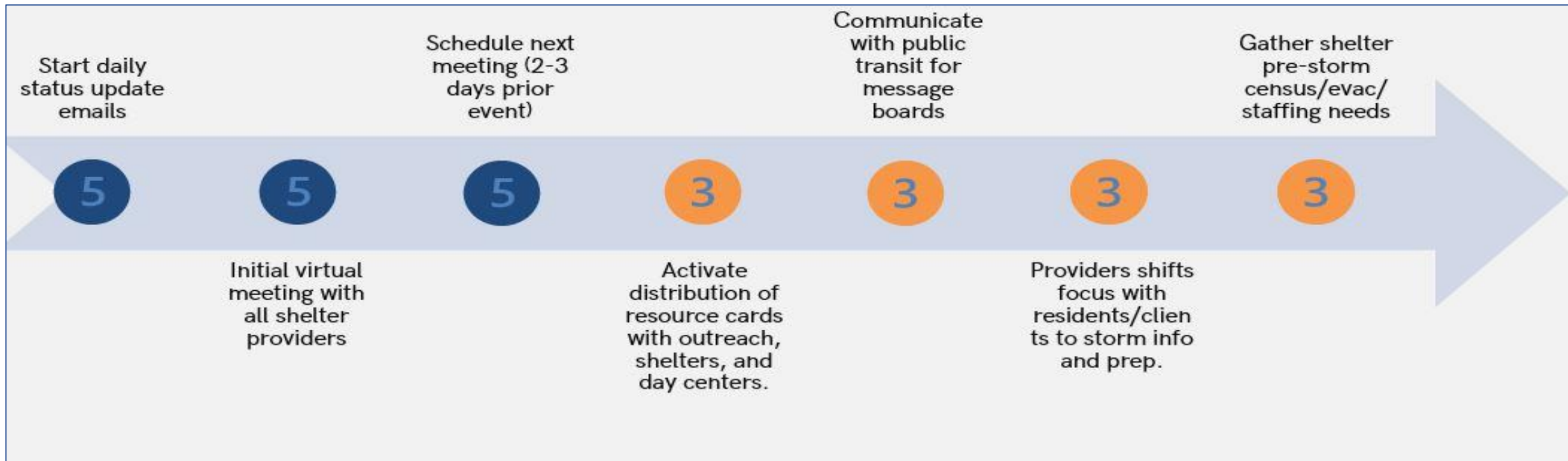
 Para recibir alertas en su teléfono celular o correo electrónico, inscribase en Alert Pinellas en [disaster.pinellas.gov](https://disaster.pinellas.gov) o descargue la aplicación Ready Pinellas.

# Messaging News, print, social media, website, app., and events.

## Blue resource cards:

- Providers receive preseason
- Heavily distributed 2-5 days prior to a storm.

# Homeless Provider Coordination



# Special Needs Evacuation Program



## Most Communities Provide:

- **Support for Special Needs residents.**
- **Individuals qualify for special needs shelter or medically managed facility placement if they require assistance with, but not limited to:**
  - reliance on supplemental oxygen,
  - life-sustaining devices powered by electricity,
  - mobility challenges,
  - medication assistance,
  - dependence on dialysis,
  - or cognitive conditions such as Alzheimer's or dementia.



# <48 Hours



## Communicating Risk-Less Focus on Cone/More Focus on Potential Hazards

**Start recurring daily virtual meetings with all homeless providers.**

- Participation in these is vitally important.
- Stay informed!



**Confirm census and evacuation needs of homeless shelters.**

- Hurricane shelter location
- Transportation

**Maintain daily status emails through storm event.**

- Participation in these is vitally important
- Connect to facts, not rumors



**Time is the one resource you cannot get more of.**

Once a storm is threatening Pinellas County, there will be a limited amount of time for you to get ready, get set and protect yourself from impact. This guide will help you determine your risk, know what to do and what to expect.



# Public Transportation and Coordination



- **PRE:**
  - **Public Transit, PSTA, opens free transportation prior to an event to help with community evacuation.**
    - Stops when windspeed reaches 40mph+
    - Takes time to reopen routes due to damage assessment and moving buses back into place.
- **POST:**
  - **Contract providers activated**
  - **PSTA 2024 starting a new “alternative route”**
    - Open as hurricane shelters close to help people get back to their community while other services are coming back online.
    - 1 bus per shelter
    - Tarpon, Clearwater, and St. Pete drop offs
- **Uber**
  - While not guaranteed, Uber often offers free transportation to and from an emergency shelter during a disaster. Check with their website for more information.





# During



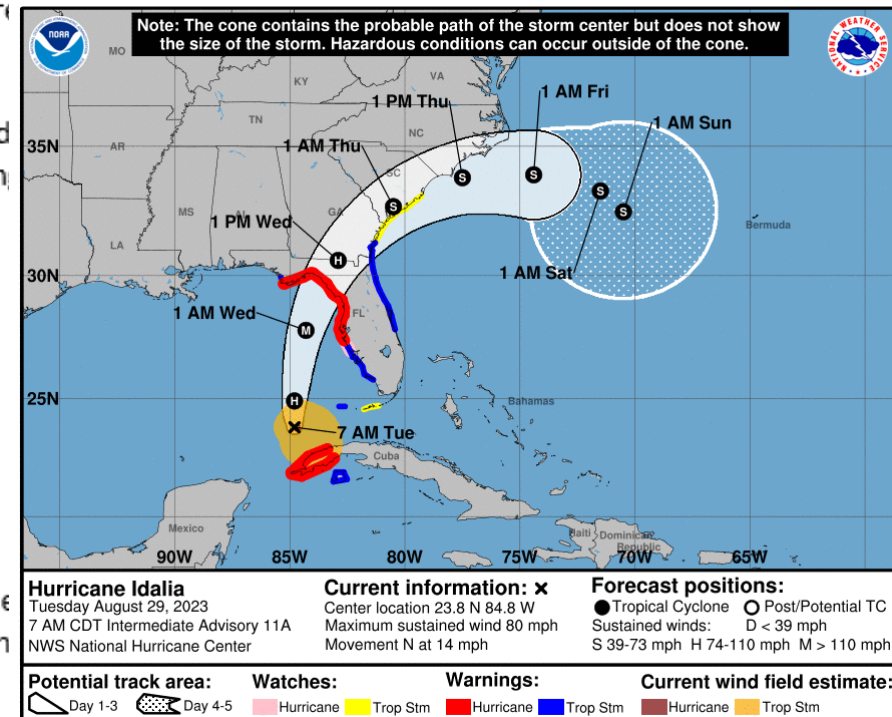
Hurricane Idalia to become a major hurricane overnight as it passes offshore of Tampa Bay and heads toward Cedar Key. Expect heavy rain of and areas of fresh water flooding along the coast tonight and Wednesday, especially at times of high tide. The tornado threat has increased Tuesday from Tampa Bay northward. 75 mph Tropical Storm moving North and increased speed to 14 mph. Expected landfall is near Cedar Key and the Big Bend Area of Florida tomorrow morning. Heavy rain of 4 to 7 inches is possible along the coast with isolated higher amounts. Gusts over 120 mph at coast of Pinellas, Levy, Citrus, 50-80 mph elsewhere in Hurricane Warning area. Storm surge currently for remain between 4-7 feet.

Please continue to monitor weather conditions and make any necessary preparations for your homes and today. At this time, impacts are forecast to begin early this evening and last well into Wednesday morning.

- Currently Pinellas County has 10 shelters open. Open locations can be found at: <https://pinellas.gov/emergency-information/public-shelters/>
- PSTA fares are currently lifted with an anticipated closure at 5pm for transportation.
- CIC remains open. (727) 464-4333
- EOC activated to a level 1- 24 hour staffing.

Conditions will begin to deteriorate starting early Tuesday evening and continues well into Wednesday morning. Today is the day to make last minute preparations and secure homes and facilities. Anticipate power outages, downed trees, and potential roadway flooding. Coastal flooding risk remains high with the hazard due to tonight's King Tide.

## Provider Communication: Daily Meetings at Set Time Daily Email with Situation Report



## Hurricane Shelters Closure

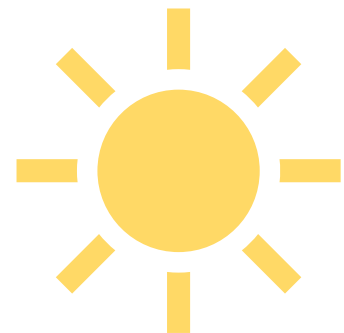
- Multiagency process working to ensure hurricane shelters close on time and people are returning to the housing they had prior to.
- Early communication to providers on next steps.
- Gather and support damage reports/reopening timelines.
- Coordinate return transportation (shelter to shelter).
- Homeless shelter census/capacity report. Secure additional beds for hurricane shelter transfer residents (street homeless/at risk homeless prior to storm).
- Coordinate/distribute supplies as needed/available (food, water, hygiene).



# Post Storm/Wrap up



- Continued daily meetings/emails.
- Other providers checking in with their caseloads.
- Visit with caseload as shelters close and programs reopen.
- Outreach checking in with residents returning to frequent locations.
- Schedule after action session/lessons learned.



# 2022 & 2023 Hurricane Season- Lessons Learned



- **Shelters- Behavioral Health Availability**
- **Transportation Assistance**
- **Shelter Demobilization Support**
- **Expectation Management**

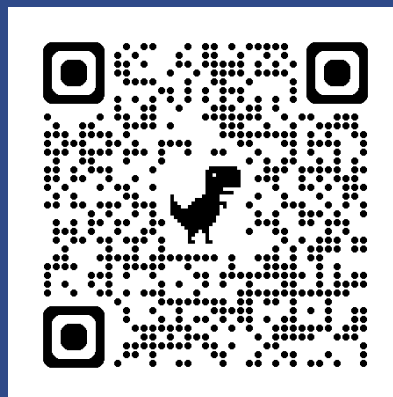
# Questions?

## Local Resources:

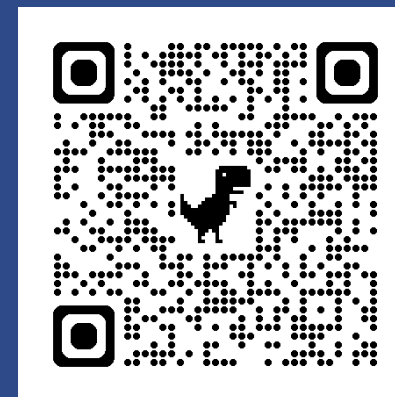
**Know Your Zone:**



**Hurricane Guide:**



**Alert Pinellas:**





# Contact Info:



**Dominique Randall**  
Homeless Section Manager  
Phone (727) 464-6433  
[drandall@pinellas.gov](mailto:drandall@pinellas.gov)

