

South Carolina Department  
of Social Services

**Adult Protective Services**

**Policy Manual**

**Disaster & Emergency**

**Preparedness**

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

Revision Number: 24-01 Effective Date: 09/28/2024

---

## **APS Program Policy: Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

### **Table of Contents**

- [6.1](#) Purpose and Scope of Program
  - [6.1.1](#) Definitions
  - [6.1.2](#) General Provisions
- [6.2](#) State Of Emergency for South Carolina
  - [6.2.1](#) Responsibilities of APS County Staff
  - [6.2.2](#) Responsibilities of APS State Office Staff
- [6.3](#) APS Office and Equipment
- [6.4](#) Establishing Communication for Severe Weather
- [6.5](#) Resources

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**APS Program Policy: Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

**6.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PROGRAM**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance and direction for vulnerable adults in the care and/or custody of the agency and for Adult Protective Services (APS) staff during severe weather, natural disasters and other emergency situations. While disasters and other emergencies will happen, APS is still responsible for the adults we serve during these occurrences. It is the intent of APS to continue to promote the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults during emergency situations. Therefore, it is important that this policy is followed, and communications remain open between the local APS staff and the APS regional directors during emergency situations.

Each emergency is unique and requires specific guidance. State office APS staff will release specific guidance for each emergency within 72 hours of an emergency occurrence. This guidance will be sent to all staff, regardless of whether they are in an effected county. APS staff not in effected counties may be required to assist staff the effected counties.

Accommodations will be made, based on the severity of the emergency, for staff affected by the emergency. This information will be included in the specific guidance provided to all staff. This may include alternative work arrangements, revised use of P cards, amended response times and other accommodations as necessary.

Local DSS offices are directed to coordinate with local agencies, nonprofits, religious organizations, local governments, hospitals and clinics and transportation providers to enhance the provision of services during a disaster and/or an emergency. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined.

**6.1.1 DEFINITIONS**

The following terms and definitions are commonly used in a state of emergency, during severe weather and other natural disasters:

**Severe Weather**

This phrase is generally used to describe any destructive weather event. However, it mostly applies to localized storms, such as severe thunderstorms i.e., damaging wind, large hail, tornadoes, and hurricanes.

**Watch**

An official statement issued by the National Weather Service (NWS), meaning that a hazardous weather-related event is possible in the near future. Watches are issued for significant winter storms, flash floods, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, high winds, hurricanes, etc. Winter storms and hurricane watches are typically posted 12-36 hours ahead of the storms expected arrival, while severe thunderstorm, tornado, and flash flood/flood watches may be issued only a few hours or less in advance. In general, watches are issued before a warning. The only exceptions are in flash floods, severe thunderstorms, and tornadoes—if these events are isolated a watch will not be issued, but just a warning. Otherwise, a watch will be issued.

**Warning**

An official statement issued by NWS offices, meaning that a hazardous weather-related event is imminent or already occurring. A warning means that there is a serious threat to life and property. Warnings are issued for significant winter storms, flash floods, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, high winds, hurricanes, etc.

**6.1.2 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. APS supervisors need to periodically review the Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Plan with their staff, especially during severe weather seasons.

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

2. Communication and documentation are essential during emergency situations. Each APS county office is responsible for maintaining and making changes to any disaster and emergency preparedness documents as the need for revisions arises. Any changes made to duties or obligations of county office staff must first receive approval from the Adult Advocacy Division at the State Office.
3. Each county APS office will include, in their documentation, provisions for protecting computers and files from flooding and other possible damage or destruction during emergency situations.

## **6.2 STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR SOUTH CAROLINA**

**Prior to any emergency ALL APS staff must:**

1. Review personal and office safety plans.
2. Become familiar with local evacuation zones, especially in coastal counties.
3. Locate the nearest hurricane evacuation routes.
4. Locate the nearest special needs shelter(s).

When the President or Governor declares a State of Emergency for South Carolina, the following policies will be in effect for the Adult Protective Services Program.

### **6.2.1 Responsibilities of APS County Staff**

1. Case managers and team leads in effected counties are responsible for knowing the vulnerable adult's plan and where they will be located during the hurricane.
2. Case managers in effected counties will communicate information to include the adults on their case load, each adult's current location (home, facility, hospital or medical facility) and the adult's plan through their chain of command to their APS regional directors upon request. This information will also include:
  - o Number of open APS cases by county;
  - o Number of adults in DSS custody by county;
  - o Number of APS adults with sitters by county;
  - o Number of APS adults in nursing homes/residential care facilities by county;
  - o Number of APS adults in hospitals or other medical facilities by county.
3. When an evacuation is ordered, case managers will follow the policy outlined below for adults in the evacuation zone(s).

#### **6.2.1.1 Adults with Sitters**

- i. If an adult with a sitter is in an evacuation zone, coordinate with state office to make arrangements to move the adult and the sitter to a designated shelter in the area or a motel in a safe area. Note: special needs shelters will not accept adults without a full-time caregiver. Contact your county Emergency Management Office to find out where the shelter is located.
- ii. Document in CAPSS where the adult is being relocated, how they are being transported, and all other relevant information regarding their relocation.
- iii. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the adult to return home, coordinate with the state office to make arrangements to move the adult and the sitter back home.
- iv. Document in CAPSS to include the date the adult returned and any other relevant information.

#### **6.2.1.2 Adults in Nursing Homes/Residential Care Facilities**

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

- i. Adults in nursing homes and residential care facilities that are in an evacuation zone will follow the facility's emergency/evacuation plan.
- ii. Case Managers will call the facility and document in CAPSS to include date of relocation and planned relocation site and address.
- iii. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the adult to return to the facility, call the facility to find out when the adult will be moved back to the facility and any other relevant information and document in CAPSS.

**6.2.1.3 Adults in Their Homes or a Home of a Friend or Relative**

- i. Find out what the adult plans to do. If family or friends are coming to get them, contact family members or friends to confirm and document in CAPSS where the adult is being relocated, with whom and all other relevant information regarding their relocation.
- ii. If they don't have an evacuation plan and the adult is in DSS custody or requests help, make arrangements to transport them to the closest designated shelter. Call your County Emergency Management Office to find out where the shelter is.
- iii. Coordinate with state office if you need help securing transportation.
- iv. Document information in CAPSS to include the date of relocation and planned relocation site.
- v. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the adult to return home, coordinate with state office to make arrangements to move the adult back home.
- viii. Document in CAPSS to include the date the adult returned home.

**6.2.1.4 Adults Not In DSS Custody That Wish to Remain in Their Home**

- i. APS care managers will ask each adult who wishes to remain in their home if they are aware of evacuation procedures for his/her county and the location of local shelters.
- ii. APS case managers will ask the adult if they have access to emergency supplies (first aid kits, flashlights, radios, batteries, etc.). APS case managers will help locate kits if available through the Red Cross.
- iii. APS case managers will give each adult telephone numbers for police, hospitals, neighbors, friends, family or any other resources that are able and willing to assist in meeting needs during times of severe weather or natural disaster.
- iv. Following the end of severe weather/natural disaster, APS staff will follow up with the adult to assess the adult's safety and see if there are any immediate needs that should be addressed.

**6.2.2 Responsibilities of APS State Office Staff**

1. APS state office will assist with finding temporary housing/hotels in safe areas as available and when necessary, securing transportation services for those who need it, and setting up relief for the sitters with sitter providers.
2. APS state office will coordinate with sitter providers to assist with the evacuation of APS adults as needed.
3. APS regional directors will collect information on all APS adults by county to include:
  - Number of open APS cases;
  - Number of adults in DSS custody;
  - Number of APS adults with sitters;

**South Carolina Department of Social Services  
Adult Protective Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

**APS Program Policy– Disaster & Emergency Preparedness**

- Number of adults in nursing homes/residential care facilities;
  - Number of APS adults in hospitals or other medical facilities.
4. APS regional directors will collect information on adults who are being evacuated from their homes, nursing homes, or residential care facilities as outlined in this policy.
  5. APS regional directors will provide all collected information to the designated state office staff member who will integrate the information in a document that can be provided upon request.
  6. Once the evacuation order is lifted and conditions are safe for the adults to return home, APS regional directors will collect information on clients who are being returned to their homes, nursing homes, or residential care facilities as outlined in this policy.
  7. APS regional directors will provide information about adult's returning home to the designated state office staff member who will integrate the information in a document that can be provided upon request.

### **6.3 APS OFFICES AND EQUIPMENT**

If APS is alerted to the possibility of an impending disaster, staff in affected areas should follow all guidance from IT and HR. Bring laptops, charger and any other equipment needed home with you as remote work may be necessary.

### **6.4 ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION FOR SEVERE WEATHER**

Once the APS division director becomes aware of the threat or disaster, then he/she should contact appropriate staff to inform them that the local disaster preparedness plan is in effect. Each county should maintain a list of team members with both work and after-hours phone numbers.

Immediately after the emergency situation occurs, **ALL** APS staff should check in with their direct reports to inventory who has been affected and their capacity to work. This information should be forwarded up the chain of command to state office.

### **6.5 RESOURCES**

Each county office will develop and maintain a list of resources readily available to assist in meeting adult's needs in preparation for or after severe weather or natural or other disaster.