

November 4, 2012

Dear Home Health Care Provider,

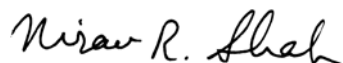
We appreciate all the tireless work you have performed in serving your clients and New York in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. We are concerned about vulnerable individuals who may be at risk of serious harm due to Tropical Storm Sandy. Particularly, we want to ensure that individuals who receive home health services, whose homes may be inappropriate to stay because of the storm, are able to receive appropriate services throughout the emergency. Toward that end, we are working with New York City authorities to have a Special Medical Needs Shelter (SMNS) specifically focused for individuals who receive home health services and whose homes are not safe due to the storm.

This SMNS is located at Lehman College, 250 Bedford Park Blvd, Bronx, 10458. This focused SMNS will house up to 200 patients and their caregivers, and is for both those who are home-based and those who are hospital discharge patients, categorized as Level 1 priority and have a temporary condition in their home associated with Tropical Storm Sandy that makes their home an inappropriate place to stay. It will also be able to house the patients' home care aides. This SMNS will open at 8 a.m. on Sunday, November 4, 2012.

Please begin immediately to identify patients under your care who meet these criteria. Any patient accepted to the SMNS must be accompanied by your staff. Your agency should arrange for transportation to the SMNS. You will be responsible for providing home health care to your patient during his/her stay at the SMNS, consistent with the patient's current plan of care.

To refer patients for consideration for temporary placement in the SMNS, please call the Unified Operations Center (UORC) at 1-718-935-3892. Clinical UORC staff will speak with you to assess the patient and determine whether temporary placement at the SMNS is appropriate. Please contact the New York State Hurricane Sandy Healthcare Provider Hotline at 1-866-544-1303 if you have questions regarding this initiative. It is critical that we move expeditiously to appropriately transfer your patients to a safe temporary setting. Thank you for your prompt cooperation in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health

Attachment

INSTRUCTIONS TO HOME HEALTH AGENCIES FOR PATIENT TRANSFER TO SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS SHELTER

OVERVIEW

NYC is creating a specialized SMNS at **Lehman College 250 Bedford Park Blvd, Bronx, 10458** to house home-based and hospital discharge patients with Category Level 1 Priority homecare needs and a temporary condition in their home associated with Tropical Storm Sandy that makes their home an inappropriate place to stay. Criteria include:

- No heat
 - No electricity over long-term
 - Extremely challenging home nurse access issue
 - Other hazard endangering health
1. This solution represents a temporary shelter measure and is not meant to represent a formal alternate care site providing an alternate level of care. Only those patients who would be able to be at home should be placed at this site.
 2. Initial capacity of home care SMNS section at **Lehman College 250 Bedford Park Blvd, Bronx, 10458** is 200 patients, along with home care aides. It is for short term use by those home care patients currently receiving care at home and/or potential home care patients who are currently hospitalized whose assessment indicates they would meet the category Level 1 priority criteria.
 3. It is anticipated that the individuals accessing the shelter would do so for a short duration and would return to their primary residence or some other suitable living arrangement as soon as possible.
 4. Access to the shelter will require referral by a home care agency and/or hospital discharge staff, as well as a telephone-based assessment conducted by a specialized team at the UORC.

Level 1: High Priority – Patients in this priority level need uninterrupted services. The patient must have care. In cases of a disaster or emergency, every possible effort must be made to see this patient. The patient's condition is highly unstable and deterioration or inpatient admission is highly probable if the patient is not seen. Examples include patients requiring life sustaining equipment or medication, those needing highly skilled wound care, and unstable patients with no caregiver or informal supports to provide care.

Process

1. Home care agencies should identify their patients who are categorized as Level 1 whose condition is deteriorating or has the potential to deteriorate quickly because their environment has become unsafe as a result of the effects of Hurricane Sandy.
2. Home care agencies must provide the same level of service for the individual patient who is admitted to the special needs medical shelter that they would have provided in the primary residence. Responsibility for the assessment of patient care needs, development of the plan of care, and the provision of home health care services consistent with the plan of care continues to be the primary responsibility of the home health agency.
3. In addition, to providing the appropriate staff to provide services to individual patients, the home care agency must provide supplemental aides and or nurses to provide 24 hour supervision and support to the agency population that will be in the shelter.
4. Home care agencies must provide adequate supervision of their staff and ensure that staff is appropriately assigned to the care of patients based on their licensure, training, orientation and demonstration of skills to assure quality of patient care services.
5. Persons providing care must display proper and current identification, including name, title and current photograph of care provider and the name of the agency providing the service.
6. An assessment of the individual should be conducted to determine whether a prospective patient's health and supportive needs can be met safely in the shelter and whether services should be increased to meet their needs during the short term relocation.
7. Patients and their families should be clearly informed about the shelter environment.

Admission to the Shelter

1. Admission to the shelter will be based on an individual's assessed needs and after a determination is made by intake staff of the shelter. Appropriateness of admission to the SMNS will be determined through consultation with clinical staff of the Unified Operations Center (UORC). Please contact the UORC at 1-718-395-3892 to discuss potential admission of a patient to the SMNS. If an individual is found to be appropriate for admission to the shelter, the home health agency is responsible for arranging safe transportation to the shelter for the individual. This could mean that appropriate agency staff or caregivers accompany the individual to the shelter to ensure that the individual and all necessary medications and supplies are transported. **Patients and their families should be reminded that all necessary medications, supplies and equipment should be brought with them to the shelter to ensure that there is no interruption of their services.**
2. Agencies should not under any circumstances, send an individual to the special need medical shelter without first being authorized through the intake process that the individual is appropriate for admission and there is available capacity in the shelter.
3. Agencies whose patients are admitted to the special medical need shelter should notify the next of kin or other designated representative of the individual's whereabouts.
4. Agencies continue to have full responsibility for the care of individuals who are receiving home health services through their home health agency as described above and consistent with all applicable rules and regulations that apply to them.