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Secretary

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Medical Special Needs Shelters to Open**

*Telephone lines activated for triage*

*Baton Rouge* – Medical Special Needs Shelters will open today to shelter people identified with Medical Special Needs. In preparation for the opening of Medical Special Needs Shelters, the Department of Health and Hospitals and the Department of Social Services have activated triage phone lines to help people in need make their plans.

Medical Special Needs Shelters are designed for individuals who are homebound, chronically ill, or who have disabilities and are in need of medical or nursing care, have no other place to receive care, and cannot evacuate on their own. The intent of the Medical Special Needs Shelter is to provide, to the extent practical, an environment in which the current level of health of evacuees with special needs can be sustained. Electrical power for support equipment, like oxygen converters, will be provided by generators if local power fails.

The triage phone lines are for individuals to call BEFORE attempting to access these shelters, to ensure the individual is placed appropriately based upon their needs. **The lines activated at 8 a.m. Friday morning.**

Health officials note that if individuals have health problems that require medical expertise and must evacuate, it is best for them to go with family members or caretakers north to areas that are out of harm's way.

Shelters in Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Monroe, Shreveport and Hammond are on standby for this storm.

Those calling the triage lines will be screened by nurses to determine the level of care needed. If they need the services provided by the shelter, they will be sheltered. If their condition is too critical, they will be referred to a hospital for sheltering, or admission. If their condition is not severe enough for Medical Special Needs Sheltering, they will be referred to a general shelter.

The telephone numbers to call are:

New Orleans	1-866-280-2068	Baton Rouge	1-800-349-1372
Houma-Thibodaux	1-800-228-9409	Lafayette	1-800-901-3210
Lake Charles	1-866-280-2711	Alexandria	1-800-841-5778
Shreveport	1-800-841-5776	Monroe	1-866-280-7287
Mandeville	1-866-280-7724		

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Medical Special Needs Shelters are not designed for the general public or for nursing home patients. Nursing homes in Louisiana are required to have emergency evacuation plans in place that ensure the health and safety of their residents. In most instances, these plans allow for homes in affected areas to transport their patients to nursing homes in areas safe from the storm.

Medical Special Needs Shelters will provide medical support services only. Because of limited staffing, those going to a Medical Special Needs Shelter must have a caretaker to assist with ongoing support, and they should bring all necessary supplies, sheets, blankets, pillows, durable medical equipment, a five day supply of all medications and their driver's license or another form of identification.

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