

The following advice comes to us via e-mails from John Saultis, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program in Youngstown, Ohio:

A couple of years ago, the Regional Ombudsman Program in Youngstown, Ohio had some experience in dealing with a flood-related relocation from a nursing facility. Fortunately in our case, we had a situation with maybe a foot of water through the facility, but it did result in an evacuation, and subsequent (temporary) closure of the facility.

Working with the local FEMA staff, we were able to get assistance applications made for, I believe, 64 residents, and each resident received assistance in the amount of \$940.

The residents were divided up among a half dozen or so "sister homes," but the key factor was the address/nursing home where the residents originally lived.

The "project" started out as a simple attempt to find some money for the displaced residents to be able to replace lost/destroyed possessions. I had contacted the Medicaid folks and county officials, initially looking for a couple of hundred dollars for each resident. Those paths led nowhere, as State monies either did not exist for something like this, or emergency dollars had been expended.

Our counties had been declared a disaster area, and FEMA staff were coming in, and FEMA numbers were posted, so I tried them.

The bottom line was that the original applications had to be made by phone, with a separate application for each resident. We had to get the nursing home to get their social worker to spend a day or so on the phone with FEMA, providing relevant demographic information. Social Security Numbers were required. (The nursing home folks had no interest in taking any initiative on this).

Once the applications were in, I tracked some of the applications (consent from the guardianship agency involved).

Local FEMA people had to visit the nursing homes; I can't remember if they did both the old and the new homes.

Checks then started arriving. We had to follow through on those to make sure they got to the right facility. We also made sure that local Medicaid officials would not red-flag the PNA accounts for suddenly being over \$1,500.

Why FEMA chose \$940, I have no clue. All residents received the same, regardless of their payment source, and regardless of actual losses sustained. Receipts were not required. We did not care about this, as the original search was for a couple of hundred dollars.

The first thing to do, I guess, would be to identify which nursing homes/residents sustained damage/losses, and whether the facilities are back in operation or not. I think establishing a relationship with FEMA people on site is a good idea; once we got this issue on their radar screen, they were very helpful. I know that there are horrific tragedies affecting nursing home residents down there, but this is one of those things that moves pretty quick once it gets started.

You can reach me at (330)746-2938, or [jsaulitis@age.state.oh.us](mailto:jsaulitis@age.state.oh.us)