The Safety Concerns
This is a time when safety should be a priority. Children with special needs may not understand the dangers involved with a disaster. Discuss only safety issues that affect them, in simple, understandable terms, using real pictures if possible. Set understandable rules and boundaries and repeat them often. If possible, ask them to explain the dangers and safety measures back to you. Always be honest and try to remain calm, assuring them that you will work together to stay safe.

Medication
For individuals with prescribed medications, attempt to contact the pharmacy or doctor to get a refill. Medicaid recipients can contact their HMO who may have alternate pharmacies to refill the prescription. Individuals who have medications manufactured by Pfizer can contact the Pfizer Connection to Care program at 1-866-706-2400 for assistance. If you are at a Red Cross Shelter, notify a shelter representative if you have medication issues, particularly if the medicine requires refrigeration.

Medical Supplies and Transportation
Notify your local emergency responders or police department if you have specific medical supply or transportation needs related to your child with a disability. This support may include lift-equipped vehicles, transportation of a child with oxygen, etc.

Emotional Support
Children with special needs may be confused by all the disruptions and challenges. Children with language and learning difficulties may be particularly vulnerable to misconceptions. Redirect negative emotions and behaviors by doing positive things like playing games, visiting others, or reading. Reduce exposure to television and newspaper coverage of the disaster.

These children may remain confused and upset after the storm and may express themselves in different ways, particularly children without language. Children may express themselves through various behaviors. Try to identify the issues that are bothering them and help them to express themselves through pictures or other positive methods. To limit negative behaviors, attempt to offer desirable leisure activities and reinforce appropriate behaviors.

It is natural to be stressed, angry, tired, and worried during and after a disaster. Recognize that it is not appropriate to take your anger out on another person. You and your family may require assistance to cope with new surroundings and to minimize confusion. To get help approach community supports you can turn to in time of need, including extended family, religious groups, local organizations, and recreational activities to relieve stress and to connect with others around you. Don’t be afraid to ask for and receive help. If a friend or family member offers help, not only are they concerned for you, but it helps them feel good, too. So, give them an opportunity to feel good and get out of the cold at the same time. Along with family members, find ways to calm or express your emotions in a safe way such as through music, art, writing, etc.
2-1-1 Disaster Response
Call 211 if you need information on local resources in your community. You can also find information at http://www.nj211.org/hurricane.cfm
24 hours a day, seven days a week if you need help in understanding and finding available assistance services in your area. Language translation and TTY services are offered to any caller. You can also search the database of services in your local community or speak live with an experienced community resource specialist. 2-1-1 will help identify with you the best local resources to fit your individual needs including open pharmacies, grocery stores, gasoline stations, etc.

American Red Cross
Response vehicles are feeding people at mobile and fixed locations. Communicate your special needs so that they can assist you most appropriately.
To find a Red Cross disaster related services and supports near you, call 1-800-733-2767 or visit http://newsroom.redcross.org/. The Red Cross established a method to let family and friends know that you are safe and well: https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms/index.php

AutismCares - Autism Response Team
This organization provides support for families affected by natural disasters.
Call the Autism Response Team at 1-888-Autism2 (288-4762). Español 1-888-772-9050 or e-mail at AutismCares@autismspeaks.org

Disaster Mental Health Helpline
Stress, anxiety, and depression are common reactions after a disaster.
Anyone, including parents and caregivers of children with special needs, who feels overwhelmed as a result of the storm can call 1-877-294-4357 to speak with a trained counselor. A TTY line is available for the deaf and hearing impaired at 1-877-294-4356.
The federal government also has a Disaster Distress website — www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/ and helpline that provides 24/7 crisis counseling and support at 1-800-985-5990.

FEMA Office of Disability Integration & Coordination
This office coordinates emergency recovery for children and adults with disability.
The general FEMA number to call for assistance is 800-621-6632. If a family that has a child with special needs in New York or New Jersey is in dire need of help, contact Jim Flemming, the Regional Disability Integration Specialist at james.flemming@fema.dhs.gov

Sesame Workshop: Hurricane Kit
Hurricanes, storms, and other natural disasters can be difficult for young children who may not fully understand hat’s going on around them. These tips, activities, and videos can help them feel safe, cope with emotions, and understand that there is hope for the future.
http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/hurricane

www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness
For more information about this program contact: KohlsAutismAwareness@childrens-specialized.org

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