

Emergency Preparedness and People with Developmental Disabilities: What Nurses Need to Know

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Reflecting on the Past...

- Recent emergency/disaster events have increased awareness of need to plan for the three areas of emergency management: preparing, responding, and recovering.
- Does emergency planning always include people with disabilities? Past events have shown that this is not the case.

Looking to the future

- Preparedness is occurring on multiple levels, from Federal initiatives (e.g., Ready.gov) to individual planning efforts
- It is critical that plans being developed at state, local, and organizational levels be inclusive of individuals with disabilities
- Individuals need to make a plan that takes into account their specific needs
- Plans should address all content areas of emergency management

Emergency Management Planning Content Areas

- Collaboration with state emergency management activities
- Stakeholder involvement (do you and the people you serve have input into planning?)
- Communication and coordination

Emergency Management Planning Content Areas

- Workforce (including workforce for your organization as well as services such as utilities)
- Power generation (for medical and other purposes)
- Evacuation (do you have a primary and secondary-backup plan?)

Emergency Management Planning Content Areas

- Transportation (need a primary and secondary plan with alternative vendor agreements)
- Identification and Tracking (establish your system now)
- Specialized Supports (e.g., durable medical equipment)
- Sheltering

Proactive Strategies and Protocols

- Make pre-disaster mutual assistance agreements with other agencies, vendors
- Create voluntary registries of people receiving services
- Create and put in place a tracking system for use during evacuation

Proactive Strategies and Protocols

- Establish a working relationship with local emergency management officials
- Prepare an emergency kit and help others do the same
- Assist your organization in developing a continuity of operations plan (COOP)

Proactive Strategies and Protocols

- Store medical and other critical documents electronically and ensure that a backup system is in place in another geographic location
- Involve the people receiving services in the emergency planning process
- Create and put in place an identification and tracking system

Proactive Strategies and Protocols

- Train others in your organization on potential types of emergencies and basic medical care, including pandemic flu protocol
- Offer emergency preparation training to people with disabilities served by your organization
- Identify other stakeholders (such as government agencies) who could form a work group to address emergency preparedness issues for people with disabilities

Useful Tools and Resources

- Kit checklist and emergency planning information:
<http://www.redcross.org/images/pdfs/preparedness/A4497.pdf>
- Tip sheet on power generation and safety during emergencies:
<http://rtc.umn.edu/erp/docs/TipsForStormSafety.pdf>
- Tips to share with emergency responders in approaching and aiding people with disabilities during emergencies:
<http://www.hhs.gov/od/tips.html#disa>

Additional Resources

- Pandemic flu.gov is a web site providing information on pandemic flu, including Avian flu:
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/general/>
- Tips for Preparing an Emergency Health Information Card provides a checklist for preparing for an emergency.
<http://www.ilrcsf.org/resources/Medical.pdf>
- University of Minnesota *Impact* issue on Emergency Preparedness:
<http://ci.umn.edu/products/impact/201/201.pdf>

Additional Resources

- NASDDDS (National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services) Emergency Response Preparedness Assessment Instrument. Demo available at:
<http://rtc.umn.edu/erp/main/index.asp>
- Higher Ground video—full version:
<http://rtc.umn.edu/rtcmedia/higherground/>

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