



SNSC

SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT CENTER

September 25, 2024

Emergency Preparedness: Vulnerable Populations



Emergencies may disproportionately impact people with disabilities. Past experiences have shown that **emergency preparedness and response efforts, including evacuation plans and emergency communications, may not meet the needs of people with disabilities.**

Barriers to inclusion. People with disabilities may experience discrimination. This can include a lack of access to life-saving care, despite federal laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities have the right to receive services, physical access, and **equally effective communication** as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act, even during an emergency.

Categories to Consider

- Behavioral Health
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Homebound
- Homeless
- Long Term Care
- Mobility Impaired
- Substance Abuse
- Visual Impairment



Risk Communication



Identification of Needs

- Modalities of Communication
- Access to Message
- Content of Message

Specific Suggestions

- large print
- Braille
- closed-captioned

Community-wide broadcast announcements may be unlikely to reach those who are hard of hearing or deaf. Printed flyers are likely to be ineffective for the visually impaired. The limited public interaction of homebound individuals could result in a delay in receiving an evacuation message. On the other hand, the homeless might be difficult to reach due to their constant mobility and lack of access to media sources, such as television and radio.

Evacuation procedures and shelter and care sites



Identification of Needs

- Transportation
- Legal Issues
- Coordination Between Facilities
- Evacuation Route Design

Specific Suggestions

- identify and publicize appropriate, accessible shelters and evacuation routes ahead of time
- provide advanced education and communication training to those staff assigned to supporting relocation efforts.

Everyday evacuation routes and transportation services often do not accommodate the varying navigation abilities of those with disabilities. For example, many evacuation routes require the use of stairs, which are inaccessible for people with limited mobility. Similarly, vehicles used to transport people with disabilities are often not equipped to allow for the transport of specialized equipment, such as mobility aids. Sharing and/or obtaining private client information with receiving parties raises much confusion about the legal issues related to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Continuity of Services



Identification of Needs

- Food and Water Supplies
- Medical Treatment

Specific Suggestions

- Train volunteers to assist in obtaining client information during evacuations
- Determine surveillance tools for vulnerable populations

The possible collapse of the social-service infrastructure in an emergency raises fundamental questions of responsibility: i.e., which agency would be responsible for caring for individuals who rely on electrical medical devices during a power outage?

Determine where you are at now:

Steps:

- Have you defined at-risk groups?
- Have you located at-risk groups?
- Have you reached at-risk groups?

Where SNSC can help

- Defining at-risk groups:
 - We can assist in helping you understand the disability community in the Upper Valley
- Locating at-risk groups:
 - We can coordinate our efforts to register disabled populations in the Upper Valley (SNIP program)
- Reaching at-risk groups:
 - We are trusted by the disability community.



Next Steps



Physical Needs to have at shelters

- Batteries for hearing aids
- Social story
- Communication boards
- Accessible transportation
 - Walkers, canes, wheelchairs
- Assistive equipment
 - lifts/ramps, stair slides
- Oxygen tanks
- Food for service animals
- Sensory Friendly Spaces
- Mental health worker/Crisis counselor

Transportation Needs

- Wheelchair accessible
- Tie/lock downs for wheelchairs
- Lifts
- Ramps
- Adaptive Seat Belts

Training

- Train volunteers to gather medical information in an emergency
- Train volunteers/staff on interacting with people with disabilities in an emergency