Considerations for Special Populations During a Disaster

Gina Biter-Mundt, MA
  Adaptive Sports Consultant
  Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center

Donna Williams, RN, MSN, CRRN
  Patient Care Coordinator/Case Manager
  Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center
Gina Biter-Mundt, MA
Adaptive Sports Consultant
Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center

Gina is the adaptive sports consultant at Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center, where she provides information and education on a number of topics including community resources and adapted sports and recreation programs, spinal cord injury education and emergency preparedness. She taught adapted physical education for 20 years at Napa Valley College.

Donna Williams, RN, MSN, CRRN
Patient Care Coordinator/Case Manager
Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center

As a patient care coordinator and case manager, Donna Williams coordinates patient care and prepares for transitions in care-acute rehabilitation for Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Hospital. She has 30 years of rehabilitation experience and has served as a clinical instructor for the associate degree in nursing program with Santa Barbara City College, where she supervised, instructed, directed and evaluated student nurses in the clinical arena. Donna is a frequent author and presenter on the topics of clinical rehabilitation, rehabilitation concepts and case management.
Objectives

1. Increase awareness of potential unconscious bias towards individuals with disabilities
2. Provide an overview of legislation related to emergency planning for people with disabilities
3. Identify the benefits of including individuals with disabilities in emergency planning
4. Gain understanding of individual needs of people with disabilities during a disaster
Does your City/County Have a Plan?

- 2004 nationwide survey of emergency managers:
  - 69% had incorporated the needs of people with disabilities (PWD) into their emergency plans
  - 22% had a plan under development

U.S. Disability Stats

- Nearly 6.5 million people require assist of another person for ADLs
- 21.2 million Americans are blind or have low vision, even w/ corrective lens
- ~36 million Americans have hearing loss
- 1 million are completely deaf
- 1.5 million wheelchair users
- 4 million require mobility assist
- 4.76 million with cognitive disability
- Many have more than one disability

National Organization on Disability's Emergency Planning Initiative

To ensure:
- The functional needs of people with disabilities (PWD) are adequately addressed prior to an emergency in order to minimize the adverse impact on PWD & their communities
- PWD are included in the emergency planning process at all levels of government/private sector
The Experience of Disaster

- People with disabilities must be given priority during a disaster’s initial recovery phase to avoid further trauma or interruption of established services.
- Planners must look beyond individuals to support and care networks.
- People have survived disasters because of effective emergency planning.
- Planners must ensure that emergency notifications are accessible to those with all types of disabilities, including those with visual, hearing and cognitive impairments.

The Experience of Disaster (cont.)

- People with high-level disabilities who live in nursing homes, assisted living facilities or similar supervised settings should be made aware of what disaster plans are in place for them & how their relatives will be notified of their whereabouts if evacuation is necessary.
- People with disabilities should be encouraged to have emergency plans in place that include appropriate, accessible arrangements to stay with friends or family out of town when evacuation is warranted.

NOD/Harris Survey Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PWD did not know whom to contact about emergency plans</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans have been made to quickly &amp; safely evacuate from jobs</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extremely anxious or anxious: 18% (non-disabled=8%)
Legislation & Policies

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on Emergency Preparedness
- Primarily a policy & coordinating body

Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act
- Membership includes Advisor on Disability Issues & Advisor on General Special Needs
- Established a Special Needs subcommittee

FEMA
- 2009: new position of Senior Advisor on Disability Issues

National Response Framework (NRF)
- Includes guidance on “functional needs” planning

The Three Categories of Representation

Government Organizations

Involve a representative from the disability agency or task force in:
- Governor’s Office
- Mayor’s Office
- State & County Government
- May also include:
  - Department of Health and/or Mental Health
  - Department of Aging
  - Department of Veterans Affairs
  - The local Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator
Institutional Participants

- Representatives from home-based care agencies
- Residential healthcare facilities, nursing homes, skilled care homes, assisted living facilities
- Hospital Associations
- The local end-stage renal disease (ESRD) network
- The ambulette and private-accessible transportation industry

National Response Framework: Special Needs Populations

Definition: populations whose members may have additional needs before, during, & after an incident in functional areas, including, but not limited to:

- Maintaining independence
- Communication
- Transportation
- Supervision
- Medical care

Functional Needs Planning & Support Services

Sheltering scope & definition:
- Services that enable children and adults with disabilities to maintain their health, safety and independence in a general population shelter
“Special Needs?”

- The term “special needs” conjures images of people unable to take care of themselves or be an integral part of the planning process.
- Instead of looking at “special needs,” consider addressing the functional needs of the populations that are being served. Which includes people with mobility impairments, visual & hearing impairments, cognitive impairments and those with temporary conditions which limit a person’s mobility.

Functional Needs Include:

- Reasonable modification to policies, practices and procedures
- Durable medical equipment (DME)
- Consumable medical supplies (CMS)
- Personal assistance services (PAS)
- Other goods and services as needed

The Experience of Disability

- What is it like to be a person with a disability (PWD) during & after an emergency?
- Can one hear or understand the warnings?
- Can one quickly exit a home or workplace?
- Can one move about the community after evacuation?
- Are there necessary or even vital daily items that are not likely to be available?
- Are basic services (e.g., restrooms, showers) available & accessible?
- Does the person require assistance from a caregiver?
Partnership With the Disability Community:
Opportunities & Benefits

- Identify those in the community with needs
- Customize awareness & preparedness messages
- Educate citizens with disabilities about realistic expectations
- Learn & partner with the disability community
- Work with institutional & industry-specific groups

How to Involve PWD in Planning

- People with disabilities have differing abilities, opinions, needs and circumstances
- Seek input from a number of organizations that represent their constituents (PWD)
- Including government and civic officials

Advocacy Groups

- Local Independent Living Center
- Groups serving specific and general disability populations (people who are blind, deaf or have limited mobility or cognitive disabilities)
- Involve people with all types of disabilities, including sensory, physical, mental and cognitive disabilities as well as their caregivers
- A broadly-based group of PWD will lead to a more detailed, comprehensive and thoughtful response plan the community
Know Your Community Members

Identify concentrations of PWD including,
- Large-scale senior housing developments
- Residential care facilities
- Schools with large populations of students with disabilities
- Local disability organizations may be able to provide membership rosters
- Consider developing a voluntary sign-up special needs registry to alert emergency authorities

Communication is the key

Communication with PWD must be viewed differently depending at what point of the event it is initiated:
- Before: as part of a preparedness outreach effort
- Prior: as an emergency warning or notification
- During: as an emergency information and instruction
- Following: as recovery information

Communication Format

- Frequently repeat the essential information in a simple format for those with cognitive disabilities
- Website information: should be accessible and available in appropriate formats
- Provide information in alternative formats (e.g., Braille, audio recording, large font, text messages, emails, etc.) whenever possible, ahead of time, based on the needs of the population
Disability Phone Tree

- A phone tree patterned after existing internal notification and call-down system is very effective
- It must be tested regularly
- Community emergency "branch managers" should initiate communication to the top-level contact persons on each branch of the phone tree

"Branch Managers"

- Administrators of residential care facilities
- Officials at utility companies who maintain lists of customers who use life-sustaining equipment
- Staff members of disability organizations
- Senior housing complex managers
- Government officials providing oversight or regulation of such areas
- They may already have a registry of their residents, members, constituents or clients which can facilitate dispensing the information

Backup Communication Plans

- Maintain and monitor the most current information
- Websites, social media, text messaging, blogging and e-mail have emerged as viable communication alternatives
Personal Responsibility

> Personal responsibility before, during and after an emergency applies to people with disabilities just as it applies to people without disabilities.
> Abilities vary greatly from person to person; education and outreach efforts, information, and tools must be made accessible, available and achievable for everyone
> KFRC provides basic information on emergency preparedness

Be Informed

> Learn about your community warning system
> If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, ask your durable medical supplier about what you can do to prepare for a power outage
Make an Evacuation Plan

- Contact your local fire department for help in evacuation planning; make sure the advice fits your needs
- Identify accessible primary and secondary routes

Survival Kit

Basic Supplies
Integration and Coordination

When communities integrate the needs of everyone including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs in their communitywide planning initiatives, they maximize resources, meet their obligations and strengthen their ability to prepare for, protect against, respond to and recover from all emergencies and disasters.

Additional Resources

National & State Emergency Preparedness for PWD Resources
www.disability.gov/emergency_preparedness

Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions (CDHP)
Emergency Evacuation Preparedness Guide
www.cdhp.org/products

Amputee Coalition of America
www.amputee-coalition.org

EPI (Emergency Preparedness Initiative)
National Organization on Disability
www.nod.org

NOD Functional Needs of People with Disabilities Guide

Be Well!