

# DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

## Information and Tools for Homeless Service Providers and Disaster Professionals

### Objective:

Identify and collaborate with partners to address homeless individuals' disaster response & recovery needs.

### Key Audiences:

- Homeless service providers
- Disaster coalitions (e.g. Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs))
- Local government (e.g. public health departments)
- Disaster relief (e.g. American Red Cross)
- Funders

The toolkit can be viewed at:

<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/nchav/education/VEMEC-Toolkit.asp>

For more information, please contact:

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A joint project of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

## Section 1:

### Build an Inclusive Emergency Management System

#### PREPARE

# 1

#### Get to Know the Community

- Understand the homeless populations in the community
- Identify key homeless service providers

# 2

#### Design a Strategy for Collaboration

- Identify roles & responsibilities of partner agencies
- Determine decision-making, collaboration & communication processes

# 3

#### Establish or Strengthen Relationships with Potential Partners

- Expand non-disaster partnerships to include collaboration for disaster response

# 4

#### Meet and Discuss Common Concerns

- Disaster response
- Community capabilities
- Collaboration opportunities
- Ongoing nature of collaboration

# 5

#### Maintain Relationships

- Bring something valuable to the table
- Have a strategic plan and focus on small steps
- Start working on homeless provider disaster plans (See Section 2)
- Make sure key partners are present

#### RESPOND

# 6

#### Use/Test the System

- Agree on clear roles & responsibilities in disaster response plans
- Have a plan to communicate with partners after emergency
- Connect homeless providers to government's emergency response structure through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) (i.e. designate a community representative in EOC)

#### RECOVER

# 7

#### Sustain an Inclusive System

- Include local homeless service providers in the Long-Term Recovery Group
- Establish agreements and contracts with homeless service providers in advance of disaster



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## Information and Tools for Homeless Service Providers and Disaster Professionals

### Objective:

Provide strategies, tools & guidance for homeless service providers to prepare & minimize disaster-caused service disruption

### Key Audience:

- Homeless Service Providers

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## Section 2:

### Preparedness for Homeless Service Providers

#### 1 Identify an Internal Champion and Preparedness Team

*Internal Champion(s):*

- “Owns the process” within organization
- Engage and motivate leadership and staff for preparedness

*Disaster Committee:*

- Develop disaster plan and establish buy-in for preparedness

#### 2 Identify Technical Assistance Resources to Initiate the Planning Process

*CBOs can take the lead in identifying potential resources, including:*

- Local emergency management agencies, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), police and fire departments, public health departments
- Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), American Red Cross, and other nonprofit organizations

#### 3 Build Organizational Buy-In

*Disaster Mission Statement:*

- The Disaster Committee drafts Disaster Mission Statement
- Given limited resources in disaster, identify which services are most critical

*Launch Meeting:*

- Present disaster scenario
- Explore how organization would respond to disaster scenario
- Review Disaster Mission Statement and obtain feedback
- Secure buy-in from key participants and identify expectations

#### 4 Prepare Staff

*Disaster preparedness training for staff and key volunteers*

- Personal preparedness training
- Search and Rescue, CPR, First Aid

*Disaster Personnel Policies*

- Expectations of staff following a disaster

*Identify disaster response skills of current staff*

#### 5 Meet Client and Staff Needs During and After a Disaster

- Plan for the disaster needs of on-site clients & staff
- Plan for the disaster needs of off-site clients
- Helping clients prepare themselves for disaster
- Plan for the possibility of delivering services at alternate location

#### 6 Back up Unique Documents

- Including financial records, personnel records, client records, legal documents, MOUs & other contracts, and state & local permits, credentials, and licenses.

#### 7 Maintain Financial Operations

- Maintain existing funding after a disaster and access new emergency/disaster funds
- Staff compensation policies after a disaster should be written out in the organization’s plan



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## Information and Tools for Homeless Service Providers and Disaster Professionals

### Objective:

Provide guidance to ensure that healthcare settings are equipped with providers experienced in serving people who are homeless, and provide expanded care following a disaster or public health emergency

### Key Audiences:

- Health care providers
- Health care coalitions
- Public Health
- Homeless service providers
- Community Health Centers
- Primary Care
- Mental and Behavioral Health
- Hospitals
- Emergency Departments
- Emergency Medical Services

The toolkit can be viewed at:

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## Section 3:

### Guidance for Health Care Providers

#### 1 Approach

- Integrate a trauma-informed approach
- Integrate cultural and linguistic competency
- Recognize strengths, skills, and resilience
- Co-locate mental health with medical services, bring services to individuals experiencing homelessness

#### 2 Assessment and Diagnosis

- Assess housing status and risk of homelessness
- Assess health status, basic, and social service needs
- Assess clinical needs for a range of medical issues (acute and chronic conditions, current medications)
- Assess need for a range of mental and behavioral health needs (history of trauma, substance abuse)

#### 3 Planning

- Map community assets pre-disaster including resources and data to anticipate and effectively plan
- Develop relationships with health care and services providers who treat individuals experiencing homelessness
- Get to know the Community Health Centers, which provide primary and preventative health care to medically underserved communities, including individuals experiencing homelessness
- Recruit disaster workers who represent individuals experiencing homelessness or homeless services
- Maintain and monitor the inventory of community health care resources to ensure they are prepared to treat individuals experiencing homelessness
- Healthcare coalitions must integrate the access and functional needs of individuals experiencing homelessness into plans and exercises

#### 4 Prevention of Hospital Surge

- Implement in-reach strategies at emergency departments and hospitals to redirect individuals experiencing homelessness to a “medical home” providing primary and preventative care
- Develop health and hygiene protocols at emergency shelters to minimize secondary exposure risk
- Assess disaster behavioral health capacity to facilitate effective collaboration and communication across agencies and strengthen identified weaknesses
- Post-hospitalization management of individuals experiencing homelessness must address the needs of individuals who lack housing, but require effective discharge planning

#### 5 Coordination/Continuity of Care

- Homeless serving health care and services organizations must develop continuity of operations plans to ensure continuity of essential functions
- Develop disaster behavioral health coalitions to facilitate communication across provider groups, coordinate behavioral health care efforts, and identify existing and emergency needs
- Mobilize teams to find, locate, and treat individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Ensure coordination and communication between agencies providing disaster relief and individuals experiencing homelessness to support recovery



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