

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



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
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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:

Steps for 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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Objective:

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 system leaders

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Section 3:

Guidance for Health Care Providers

1 Identification and Assessment

- Assessing medical and behavioral health issues and evaluation
- Accessing services
- Mental health considerations

2 Prevention of Hospital System Surge and Coordination of Care

- Pre-event care management and planning
- Surveillance monitoring
- Pre-event triage and resource allocations

3 Medical Capacity Available for Ready Mobilization in Disasters

- Pre-disaster planning
- Response during a disaster
- Post-crisis recovery activities



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