Background

- Emergency preparedness efforts at the local and state levels are generally limited for individuals with disabilities and their families and children.
- Families who self-prepare for emergencies and feel “very prepared” often engage in less than half of the recommended action steps for emergency preparedness (Table 1:2-3).
- Thus, there is a great need to provide emergency planning and response resources, particularly for children with disabilities.
- Emergency planning and response resources needed may be more challenging for rural settings as well.
- Federal, state, and local resources must collaborate closely with one another in these settings to develop a solid and sustainable workforce.

Table 1. Emergency Preparedness Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family discussion</td>
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<td>2. 72-hours-worth of emergency supplies for the house</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Know location of at least one shelter</td>
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<td>4. Emergency medical information sheet</td>
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<td>5. Evacuation plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Written communication plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Practiced family emergency plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Emergency medical information sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Evacuation plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Written communication plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Final family emergency plan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Study Objectives

The purpose of this poster is to:

- Describe two natural disasters that occurred in rural West Virginia (WV) from 2016-2017;
- Illustrate and interpret local, state, and federal responses to these events for individuals with disabilities; and
- Summarize roles and approaches UCEDDs can assume in such times to facilitate short-term and long-term recovery efforts.

Natural Challenges and Needs

- In the summer of 2016, four counties in WV (gold areas on map) experienced flash flooding that killed 26 individuals and left many families homeless.
- In 2017, northern counties experienced flash flooding (blue areas on map).
- More than 1500 individuals were homeless for at least one month; 45% received shelter or rebuilt within 5 months.
- Resources in both regions were completely stripped; resources for individuals with disabilities were non-existent in immediate area.

Partner Responses in WV

Short-Term

- Federal partners including the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) immediately respond to affected areas and provide large-scale organization of efforts.
- FEMA’s Office of Disability Integration and Coordination provided oversight and coordination of disability services in area (including statewide) – identified Disability Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Group (DEPRG).
- Identified other individuals who would help disseminate resiliency programs throughout planning phases.
- Practiced family emergency plan.
- Written communication plan.
- Evacuation plan.
- Emergency medical information sheet.
- Participated in weekly Disability Partner calls scheduled to identify immediate and unmet needs of individuals with disabilities in declared areas.
- Disseminated information about FEMA benefits, how to register, and other general resources.
- Networked non-federal partners such as Save the Children and other non-profit organizations into Disability Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Group.

Long-Term

- Continue to be a standing partner for the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) for both regions – fewer calls and meetings with shift to preparedness in these areas.
- UCEDD preparation.
- Focused planning for use of UCEDD space in emergency situations as needed.
- Identifying community training and expertise that may be needed.
- Training UCEDD staff on emergency planning and preparedness.
- Incorporating assistive technology program throughout planning phases.

Conclusions

- UCEDDs can help organize and serve as a collaborator in disability partner efforts for emergency preparedness.
- Like many agencies and individuals, UCEDDs may not be prepared to provide services in emergency situations.
- Many opportunities exist for UCEDD’s to serve their region and state in an area that has limited resources and supports.

Implications

- UCEDDs can help organize and serve as a collaborator in disability partner efforts for emergency preparedness.
- Serving as an active member by reviewing and learning more about preparedness for individuals with disabilities (https://www.fema.gov/media-library/resources-documents/collections/379) is essential.

References


Center for Excellence in Disabilities. (2011). The Role of the UCEDD in Emergency Preparedness for Youth with Special Healthcare Needs. West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (WVU CED) and was supported by Grant Number 90DDUC0027-01-00 from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). The findings and conclusions in this poster are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the ACL.