

# Developing and Sustaining State Partnerships That Quicken State Response to Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families During Natural Disasters

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## Backgrounds

- ^ Emergency preparedness efforts at the local and state levels are generally limited for individuals with disabilities and their families and children<sup>1</sup>
- ^ 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<sup>4</sup>
- ^ 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

1. Family discussion
2. 72 hours-worth of emergency supplies for the house
3. Know location of at least one shelter
4. Emergency medical information sheet
5. Know whether shelter is accessible
6. Evacuation plan
7. Used registry/enhanced 911
8. Evacuation bag
9. Written communication plan
10. Practiced family emergency plan
11. Final family emergency plan

## 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

## 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
  - Included: WVU CED, WVSILC, DD Council, WV Disability Rights, ARC, local providers, and more than 24 other agencies and local experts
  - 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 non-federal resources
- ⤴ Networked non-federal partners such as Save the Children and other nonprofit organizations into Disability Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Group
  - Became trained in Journey of Hope and other Resiliency Programs for individuals of all ages, caregivers, and school personnel
  - Identified other individuals who would help disseminate resiliency programming throughout the state
  - Led research programs to examine impact of resiliency programming on rural WV communities

### 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 and
- ⤴ Incorporating assistive technology program throughout planning phases

### Conclusions

- ⤴ 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/medialibrary/resources-documents/collections/379>) is essential

## References

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