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

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Background

- Emergency preparedness efforts at the local and state levels are generally limited for individuals with disabilities and their families and children1
- 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 well4
- 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 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
 - 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
- UCEDD preparation
 - Focused planning for use of UCEDD space in emergency situations as
 - 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/media-library/resources-documents/collections/379) is essential

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