

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Definition

Emergency preparedness is “a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in an effort to ensure effective coordination during response” (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2014). The cycle is part of a broader National Preparedness System to prevent, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other disasters. Involving the whole community is essential to success.



Rationale

Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, advanced medical needs, and access and functional needs face unique challenges in emergency preparedness and response. Disasters may increase anyone's vulnerabilities, but this effect is even more likely for individuals with disabilities.

Research suggests that home preparation for a disaster is less likely among persons with disabilities and that they are less likely to evacuate their home or community, but will likely need greater assistance when they do so (National Council on Disability, 2009). All individuals, including people with disabilities, must plan before a disaster for survival at

home, in a shelter, or elsewhere in an emergency. By planning ahead, people with disabilities increase the likelihood that they will stay safe, healthy, informed, mobile, and independent during a disaster.

In the United States:

- Nearly 4 in 10 people said they would expect to need help to evacuate or get to a shelter (FEMA 2009).

- Twenty-nine percent of people responding to a national disaster reported having a physical or other disability, or indicated they lived with and/or cared for someone with a physical or other disability, that would affect their capacity to respond to an emergency (FEMA, 2009).
- Only 43% of emergency managers had some idea of the possible number of persons with mobility impairments within their jurisdictions (National Council on Disability, 2009).

In Alaska:

- Only 53.9% of Alaskans with disabilities report having supplies to shelter in place for 5 to 7 days during an emergency (Rein, 2013).
- Only 31.6% of Alaskans with disabilities report having a "go kit" containing supplies to take with them during an evacuation (Rein, 2013).
- Only 18.8% of Alaskans with disabilities have a written emergency plan that details what they need, who to contact, and where to go during an emergency (Rein, 2013).

Individual and Family Preparedness

Vision

Alaskans with disabilities, their families, and households are fully prepared for a disaster.

Access

ACTION STEPS

- 3.1.1 The AHDP, in partnership with the Disability Law Center, Northwest ADA Center, and Independent Living Network, will distribute information and promote the use of resources on **communication and information accessibility** of emergency preparedness related services.
- 3.1.2 The AHDP, in partnership with the Disability Law Center, Northwest ADA Center, Red Cross of Alaska, and Independent Living Network, will distribute information and promote the use of resources on **built environment accessibility** of emergency preparedness related services.

3.1.3 The AHDP, in partnership with the Disability Law Center, Northwest ADA Center, Red Cross of Alaska, and Independent Living Network, will distribute information and promote the use of resources on **staff training, policies, and accommodations on accessibility** of emergency preparedness related services.

3.1.4 The AHDP will ensure that the online version of the Get Ready! toolkit meets the accessibility regulations of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other relevant laws (U.S. General Services Administration, n.d.).

Data/Surveillance

ACTION STEPS

3.2.1 The AHDP and the UAA CHD will conduct follow-up surveys related to emergency preparedness interventions.

3.2.2 The AHDP will utilize data to identify and prioritize emergency preparedness disparities among Alaskans with disabilities and disseminate information in an annual report to stakeholders.

Education/Awareness

ACTION STEPS

3.3.1 The Division of Public Health Section of Emergency Programs (DPH EP) and the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) will promote resources on emergency preparedness that are accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities, using diverse images of people with disabilities, person-first language, and varied literacy levels and formats.

3.3.2 The AHDP in partnership with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), Independent Living Network, and Municipality of Anchorage will increase awareness of the Get Ready! toolkit among Alaskans with disabilities, their families, and their support systems, by providing targeted outreach at existing venues and training for provider agencies.

- 3.3.3 The AHDP will disseminate the Get Ready! toolkit to Alaskans with disabilities, their families, and agencies providing disability-related services.
- 3.3.4 The AHDP will promote ongoing direct care staff training as part of new staff orientation and staff meetings on the Get Ready! toolkit to mitigate high levels of employment turnover across Alaska.
- 3.3.5 The AHDP, in collaboration with the DPH EP, will develop an accessible webinar on personal preparedness inclusive of people with disabilities and make it available online. A webinar is a cost-effective strategy given the cost and time required to conduct face-to-face training across Alaska's vast expanse and potentially increases access for individuals with limited mobility, transportation, and related issues.
- 3.3.6 The AHDP, DPH EP, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (DSDS), Office of Children's Services, and Division of Healthcare Services will identify and customize materials on best practices related to emergency preparedness for residential group settings.
- 3.3.7 The AHDP and the DPH EP will identify and customize materials on best practices related to continuity of operations plans.

Collaboration

ACTION STEPS

- 3.4.1 The AHDP and the DSDS will use the Get Ready! toolkit to meet the emergency preparedness requirement associated with individual plans of care.
- 3.4.2 The AHDP, Assistive Technology of Alaska, Red Cross of Alaska, Access Alaska, and Municipality of Anchorage will produce and promote the Emergency Preparedness for All video.
- 3.4.3 The Municipality of Anchorage, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and Mat-Su Offices of Emergency Management will adopt the Get Ready! toolkit as their primary emergency preparedness resource for people with disabilities.

Integrated Emergency Planning

Vision

Alaska's overall response and recovery efforts address the impact of disasters upon children and adults with disabilities in Alaska.

Access

ACTION STEPS

- 3.5.1 The AHDP, in partnership with the Disability Law Center, Northwest ADA Center, Red Cross of Alaska, and Independent Living Network, will distribute information and promote the use of resources on **communication and information accessibility** of emergency response and recovery related services.
- 3.5.2 The AHDP, in partnership with the Disability Law Center, Northwest ADA Center, Red Cross of Alaska, and Independent Living Network, will distribute information and promote the use of resources on **built environment accessibility** of emergency response and recovery related services.
- 3.5.3 The AHDP, in partnership with the Disability Law Center, Northwest ADA Center, Red Cross of Alaska, and Independent Living Network, will distribute information and promote the use of resources on **staff training, policies, and accommodations on accessibility** of emergency response and recovery related services.
- 3.5.4 The DPH EP and the DHSEM will increase universal access across the domains of preparedness, response, and recovery through the inclusion of Alaskans with disabilities and other subject matter experts on local emergency planning committees. Partners in this effort include the Centers for Independent Living and local disability subject matter experts. Initial steps should address access to community congregate shelters, including emergency notification, transportation plans, shelter accessibility, and access to life-sustaining equipment during power disruptions.

Data/Surveillance

ACTION STEPS

- 3.6.1 The DPH EP will identify, summarize and disseminate existing emergency preparedness and response data, such as 2010 Census data, to demonstrate need, in multiple formats to diverse audiences to support whole community planning.
- 3.6.2 The AHDP will utilize data to identify and prioritize emergency preparedness disparities among Alaskans with disabilities and disseminate information in an annual report to stakeholders.

Education/Awareness

ACTION STEPS

- 3.7.1 The AHDP, Independent Living Network, and Northwest ADA Center will provide guidance for local and state emergency planners on emergency planning resources related to disabilities.

Collaboration

ACTION STEPS

- 3.8.1 The AHDP, Independent Living Network, GCDSE, and DPH EP will advocate for the meaningful inclusion of Alaskans with disabilities on local emergency planning committees.
- 3.8.2 The AHDP, Independent Living Network, GCDSE, and DPH EP, will advocate for the meaningful inclusion of Alaskans with disabilities in local and state policies and emergency operations plans (EOPs) that address the needs of all individuals through embedded and integrated emergency planning documents.
- 3.8.3 The AHDP, GCDSE, and Division of Public Health Section of Women's, Children's, and Family Health (DPH WCFH) will advocate for annual review of school emergency plans for inclusion of children with disabilities.