

Vulnerable Population Preparedness



Purpose: Meeting the needs of vulnerable populations during a disaster is a key component of public health and medical preparedness planning. These populations include, but are not limited to, those who are physically or mentally disabled, blind, deaf, hard-of-hearing, cognitively impaired, or mobility challenged. Also included in this group are those who are non-English (or not fluent) speakers, geographically or culturally isolated, medically or chemically dependent, homeless, frail elderly and children. Vulnerable population preparedness involves collaboration with partners and stakeholders including community based organizations to address their unique, individual situations at the local level. It is important to understand the nature of the vulnerabilities that put individuals at risk, develop better methods for identification, and identify strategies for meeting those needs during disasters to enhance existing plans.



Program Authority/Funding: The department receives funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Cooperative Agreements.

Vulnerable Population Preparedness aligns with:

[Florida Public Health and Health Care Preparedness 2014-2017 Strategic Plan](#)

Goal 7: Community and Health Care System Resilience

[ASPR Healthcare Preparedness Capabilities](#)

Capability 1: Healthcare System Preparedness, Function 7 – Coordinate with planning for at-risk individuals and those with special medical needs

[CDC Public Health Preparedness Capabilities](#)

Capability 1: Community Preparedness, Function 2 – Build community partnerships to support health preparedness

Capability 4: Emergency Public Information and Warning, Function 5 – Issue public information, alerts, warnings, and notifications

Objectives:

- Maintain tools and resources that support counties in identifying and assessing the risk of vulnerable populations.
- Provide information and data to assist counties in recognizing planning considerations for vulnerable populations.
- Integrate the needs of vulnerable populations in preparedness planning, training and exercises.
- Collaborate with statewide groups to support the development of personal emergency preparedness plans for persons with functional and access needs.
- Work with the Functional and Access Needs Work Group to evaluate current trends and conditions.

- Enhance assessment, awareness and identification of persons most at risk for adverse health outcomes during a disaster.
- Assist community planners with tools and resources needed to prepare for the needs of vulnerable populations, before, during and after a disaster or incident.
- Enhance effective communication between responders and those most at-risk in the community.

Accomplishments 2011-2014:

- Produced and broadcast a webcast on planning considerations for vulnerable populations, posted on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsiKk8NSwC0&list=UU_r2tOiVqnfR5HydNXqiBOA&index=1&feature=plcp with presenters from the department, Division of Emergency Management and Department of Elder Affairs.
- Developed and presented a webinar entitled “Disaster Behavioral Health Needs of Persons with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Considerations.” Slides from the webinar can be found at: www.floridahealth.gov/preparedness-and-response/community-preparedness/community-resilience/documents/mental-health-disaster-behavioral.pdf.
- Provided captioning and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for a series of safety videos developed by the Florida Fire Marshal’s Office.
- Developed and distributed toolkits to each region for conducting ADA assessments on emergency evacuation shelters in Florida.
- Collaborated with the Centers for Independent Living and other community-based organizations to assist 5,154 individuals with functional and access needs complete personal emergency preparedness plans (1,633 in fiscal year 2011-2012 and 3,521 in fiscal year 2012-2013).
- Earned a Florida Prudential Productivity Award for the collaborative effort between the department and local community-based organizations assisting persons with disabilities develop disaster preparedness plans.
- Earned a Gold Award for Excellence in Public Health Communication from the National Public Health Information Coalition and a Florida Prudential Productivity Award for producing a webcast on planning considerations for vulnerable populations.

FY 2013-2014 Highlights:

- Developed videos addressing emergency preparedness issues for the deaf and hard of hearing, children with special needs and persons needing the use of special needs shelters in an emergency.
- Staffed and staged an exhibit at the Family Café Conference for Persons with Disabilities where information on emergency preparedness was discussed with and made available to 8,900 conference participants. A brochure and poster featuring healthy foods to pack in a hurricane kit were also debuted.
- Presented sessions at the National American Public Health Association annual meeting in Boston. The department received excellent feedback on an oral session on discharge planning titled, “Safely Returning Sheltered Persons Back to the Community,” and a poster session/display describing the collaboration between the department and community based organizations for assisting persons with disabilities develop disaster preparedness plans.

- Enhanced and integrated vulnerable population county profile data into the department's Community Health Assessment Resource Toolset (CHARTS) making it more accessible to planners and others who use this information.
- Sponsored and conducted an Emergency Management Interpreters for the Deaf Training in Orlando Florida in collaboration with the Florida Division of Emergency Management and the Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Eighteen interpreters from across the state were trained to prepare them to provide interpreting services in a variety of emergency management settings prior to, during and after disasters.

Partners: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, County Health Departments, Florida Division of Emergency Management, other government agencies, statewide disability and aging organizations and Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

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For more information on the Florida Department of Health, Division of Emergency Preparedness and Community Support, Bureau of Preparedness and Response, Vulnerable Populations Preparedness initiatives, go to:

www.floridahealth.gov/preparedness-and-response/healthcare-system-preparedness/vulnerable-populations or go to: www.floridahealth.gov and enter the words "vulnerable populations" in the search box.