



## Florida's Public Health & Medical System **PREPARES & RESPONDS**

### **Vulnerable Population: Non-English Speaking Individuals**

According to the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, nearly five million people in Florida speak a language, in addition to, or instead of, English. Over 11% report their ability to speak English as "less than very well."

#### **Key Issues:**

- Some non-English speaking population groups may not understand the role or presence of law enforcement officers in an emergency situation. Preparedness, response, and recovery efforts should be coordinated from the grassroots level, engaging community leaders from that group for support.
- In emergency situations where parents and grandparents are monolingual, responders may have to rely on children who often have the ability to translate. Providing preparedness information to children through schools is an effective form of outreach that can help get the message to their parents.
- Some non-English speakers may not be accustomed to our state or country's version of disaster preparedness and response and may be unaware of available assistance before, during, or after an incident. Specific outreach and preparedness trainings may need to be tailored to fit the culture of the target population.

#### **Planning Considerations:**

- Identify specific areas of the county that need emergency messages in multiple languages and establish a system to provide them.
- Develop an emergency communication plan with non-English language media in the local community. Ensure the staff at the media outlet can translate information submitted in English.
- Prepare translated standard emergency messages likely to be used in the alert system.
- Build relationships with the volunteers or staff at local community centers and places of worship to facilitate trust with the targeted population. Local businesses that the population frequently patronizes can also be helpful. Several statewide community and faith-based organizations can help identify specific programs, congregations or ministries in your local community. Refer to <http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/supportagencies.html> for links to statewide organizations..
- Consider equipping your staff and volunteers with emergency communication message boards. These durable, laminated boards with pictures and corresponding words in Spanish and in other languages can be used readily in emergencies when no translator is available.
- NEVER rely on Internet translation services (Yahoo Translator, etc) to generate a press release into another language. These are not entirely accurate.

**Supporting Agency:**

Florida Department of Health Office of Minority Health

[www.doh.state.fl.us/minority](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/minority)

U.S. Census Bureau

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

**Additional Information:**

The following resources provide more information on planning considerations for non-English speaking individuals during disasters and other emergencies:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Preparedness Resources for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/specialtopics/emergencypre/epresourcelep.html>

Emergency and Community Health Outreach

<http://www.echominnnesota.org/>