

Strategic Plan for Extending Training and Education on Emergency Management for Persons with Disabilities at the County Level in Kansas

Existing Opportunities, Required Competencies, and Implementation

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The task of developing a strategic plan for extending training and education at the local level in Kansas on emergency management for persons with disabilities is broad and encompassing. For the second year of our Disability and Health Program Emergency Preparedness grant funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Bureau of Health Promotion, our state disability emergency preparedness workgroup was asked to "develop a strategic plan to extend training and education on emergency management for persons with disabilities at the county level."

To do this requires three components:

- 1) Summarizing existing educational opportunities available to county level emergency managers, health officials and disability advocates in our state,
- 2) Developing a set of required competencies that could be used to develop learning tools needed to build on, reinforce or fill gaps in current training and education, and
- 3) Identifying the most appropriate means of implementing and disseminating all training and educational tools to county level stakeholders.

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security's National Response Framework (DHS/NRF) recognized the need for a consistent federal definition for "special needs" using a functional framework that includes, but is not limited to, persons with disabilities. They developed the following definition for "special needs populations (FEMA, 2008: <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/media/2008/301.pdf>):"

Special Needs Populations - Populations whose members may have additional needs before, during, and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to: **maintaining independence, communication, transportation, supervision, and medical care.**

Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include those who have disabilities; who live in institutionalized settings; who are elderly; who are children; who are from diverse cultures; who have limited English proficiency; or who are non-English speaking; or who are transportation disadvantaged.

While our strategic plan will continue to emphasize the need for awareness and training directed towards persons with disabilities, other segments of "special needs populations" included in the DHS/NRF definition could also greatly benefit from the knowledge gained through this training process.

A. Existing educational opportunities available to county level emergency managers, health officials and disability advocates and advocates for other special populations in our state.

A number of public health stakeholders, including the CDC, The Public Health Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and state affiliates, help underwrite costs for maintaining a website that hosts numerous on-line professional training opportunities related to disability and emergency management through its TrainingFinder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network (TRAIN; <https://www.train.org>). Anyone can register to take courses, many of them free, which address over 60 public health topics. Among the topics are "Disability," "Emergency Management," "Emergency Medical Services," "Education/Training/Exercises/Drills." Each course is cross-referenced so that those related to disability and emergency management will be listed in both places. Courses currently (5/2009) available through this resource that provide disability and emergency management training are:

"Counting upon the Kindness & Expertise of Others: Serving Vulnerable Individuals & Families in Times of Disaster," offered by Pacific Emprints and free. It is described as a keynote address delivered by Dr. Jeanette Takamura. This presentation describes three at-risk population segments: older Americans, persons with disabling conditions, and persons with limited English proficiency. In addition, the presentation identifies components of systems-based interventions, and provides resources for those who work with these populations.

"Emergency Readiness Rounds: Planning for and Engaging Special Populations in Emergency Preparedness," a free, web-based course offered by the University of Minnesota Center for Public Health Preparedness (CPHP) and Minnesota Emergency Readiness Education and Training (MERET). This seminar provides a definition of special populations and an overview of key issues related to special populations in public health emergencies. In addition, speakers will address gaps, challenges, and strategies in emergency preparedness

planning for special populations. Community-level speakers will share examples from their on-the-ground experience.

"Get Ready 2 Get Connected," is a short, free video produced by the Allentown Medical Reserve Corp. that illustrates emergency preparedness for special populations, including persons with cognitive impairment, mobility issues, the visually impaired, the hard of hearing, the elderly, those with young children, those with household pets, etc.

IS-197.EM Special Needs Planning Considerations for Emergency Management (Course ID# 1017009), is offered as a four and a half hour course on-line from FEMA and is also free. It is designed for emergency management and first responder personnel to enable them to better understand the special needs population and teach how to partner with persons with special needs as well as their support providers and organizations. At the time of this writing (9/09), FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG - 301) has not yet been made public. CPG 301 employs the function-based definition for the term "special needs populations" contained in the NRF, focusing on emergency planning that addresses the function-based needs of individuals (i.e. maintaining independence, communication, transportation, supervision, and medical care). CPG-301 was developed jointly by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), benefiting from extensive stakeholder involvement (<http://www.cepintdi.org/>).

"Older Adults: Vulnerable During Disasters," also by Pacific Emprints, features a presentation delivered by Karen Lamb, DNP, APRN, BC. Topics covered include the key concerns that may arise for older adults caught in disasters, such as sensory deprivation, the multiple loss effect, and chronic health issues, and what can be done to make older adults less vulnerable.

Something closer to home is the *Ready, Willing, & Able Internet Course*, developed and written by the University of Kansas Research and Training Center on Independent Living (RTC/IL), it is a free two hour introductory course for personnel in health, emergency managers, response, relief, and disability fields. It covers disability etiquette, terminology, and communication and assistance techniques during disasters to assist persons with sensory, physical and cognitive disabilities. It is approved for CUE's for Kansas nurses.

The RTC/IL has also developed two new courses which should be on-line in January 2010 on the TRAIN network: All-Hazards Preparedness

for People with Disabilities in Seasonal and Pandemic Flu; and Service Animals and Pet Preparedness.

The American Red Cross has numerous resources available that could lend themselves to a training curriculum available on their website, <http://www.prepare.org/disabilities/disabilities.htm>, as does the CDC, with its Public Health Emergency Toolkit (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/training/>). Most of the resource guides or tip sheets are written for consumers rather than public health or emergency management officials. Another excellent resource is the website of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities, a federal interagency council addressing this concern (<http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/>). The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) in the Department of Education has recently published a Resource Guide entitled, "Emergency Management Research and People with Disabilities," that provides a comprehensive overview of work being done in the field (<http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/guide-emergency-management-pwd.pdf>). One source cited which counties hoping to develop their own training programs may find helpful is the University of Kansas, Research and Training Center on Independent Living, Nobody Left Behind website (www.nobodyleftbehind2.org). The National Organization on Disability's Emergency Preparedness Initiative (NOD/EPI) has worked with states in the Gulf Coast on a Bush Clinton Katrina Fund sponsored training curriculum called, "Preparedness: It's Your Turn," which is available upon request through their office at 703-595-3248

B. Competencies that could be used to develop learning tools needed to build on, reinforce or fill gaps in current training and education

Mission: To expand education and training to responders, service providers, and persons with disabilities and other special needs in Kansas so they may be aware of and better address the functional needs of persons with disabilities and other special needs in disasters.

Objective: To offer an education and training course that is accessible and affordable to the target audiences of the course.

Supplementary educational and training tools for first responders and persons involved in emergency management, health, and disabilities are needed for the following reasons:

- People with disabilities and service providers are typically not familiar with their local emergency managers and vice versa;
- Because of this lack of connection, persons with disabilities are often not prepared;

- Research and our own experience suggests that many emergency managers have not received training on the assistance needs of persons with disabilities;
- In our collective experiences, we have seen widespread system failure for persons with disabilities in areas of communication, sheltering, and recovery;
- Federal law requires that persons with disabilities be involved with each of the four stages of emergency management; and
- Communication between emergency management and community-based organizations serving persons with disabilities is often not adequate to meet assistance needs of persons with disabilities.

To address these concerns, a subcommittee was formed from our statewide workgroup to take on the task of outlining competencies needed for a future curriculum. Subcommittee members included Angela Drake, Janet Fouche-Schack, Heather Thies, and Kara Walters, *Cottonwood, Inc*; Sue Cooper, *NCKPHI Regional Coordinator; Health Department*; Ricky Shellenbarger, *KCEM, Sedgwick County Emergency Management; SRS*; Kathryn Allen, *Shawnee County Emergency Management*; Pat Eakes, *Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns*; Brett Starbuck, *Shawnee Health Agency*, and Cat Rooney Howland, *KU RTC/IL*. Through monthly conference calls, we met to explore what curriculum content might best serve a broad cross-section of committee members, including first responders, emergency managers, health and service providers, and persons with disabilities.

Our discussions on competencies and possible course content explored what the most pressing educational needs are in our respective fields related to disasters and disability preparedness and response. Issues we addressed:

- An Americans with Disabilities (ADA) toolkit and disaster-related requirements for persons with disabilities.
- A tool kit on general and special medical needs/functional needs sheltering.
- Material on recent developments in service animal and companion animal preparedness and planning.
- A tool kit for Kansas Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of vulnerable populations.
- Expanding use of surveillance, census, and GIS mapping in relation to people with disabilities.
- A basic emergency preparedness language glossary.
- A strategic reserve of needed equipment or supplies ("a stock pile") program for persons with disabilities.
- Registry systems.
- Language sensitivity.
- Greater exposure to communication and evacuation techniques to assist persons with sensory, physical and cognitive limitations during disasters.

In addition, we discussed using table-top exercises in some way as part of future courses. Building on the experiences of the Sedgwick County Emergency Management Administration, however, we agreed with research that suggests that since most service providers do not yet have preparedness plans in place, they may not fully benefit from this approach at the present time.

The broad domains from which emergency management and disability related competencies need to be identified were in areas of ***preparedness, relationship building, and specific issues impacting persons with disabilities.***

Preparedness

- Preparedness planning is often lacking and, if in place, does not adequately address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Relationship Building

- People with disabilities and service providers are typically not familiar with their local emergency managers and vice versa.
- Research and experience has also shown that communication between emergency management and community-based organizations serving persons with disabilities is often not adequate.

Specific Issues Impacting Persons with Disabilities

- Our experience tells us that systems have often failed for persons with disabilities, particularly in areas of communication, sheltering, and recovery.
- Federal law requires that persons with disabilities be involved with each of the four stages of emergency management.

Further criterion for course competencies included:

- The need to address important and relevant emergency management issues that would have a positive impact on the health and well being of persons with disabilities before, during, and after disasters.
- Being able to build upon or use as an example a model or Kansas initiative in emergency management design to address assistance needs of persons with disabilities.
- Using a common thread woven into course content that could bind target audiences composed of emergency managers, service providers and persons with disabilities.
- Finding a way to provide hands-on training in ways that could be applicable to their job duties.

- Tiered learning, so that educational modules could be designed for persons that build upon their current knowledge levels (basic, intermediate, or advanced).

Recommended Competencies

1. *First Responders, including local health department officials, emergency managers, disaster relief workers, fire and police personnel, Emergency Medical System (EMS) workers, hospital employees, and others.*

Basic

- Recognizing the best means available of identifying, locating and recruiting persons with disabilities to participate in emergency management planning.
- Recognizing and identifying functional needs ("special needs") of persons with disabilities in the four phases of emergency management
- Developing or utilizing tips on communication and evacuations skills to assist persons with cognitive, sensory, and mobility limitations
- Gaining awareness and understanding of the ADA and other legal precedents.
- Determining the level of preparedness for all-hazards.
- Recognizing sheltering, evacuation and communication pitfalls.
- Understanding emergency communications and response capabilities
- Identifying locations and facilities within the jurisdiction.
- Identifying government special needs planning in the jurisdiction
- Identifying service provider planning capability and needs.
- Learning strategies that better coordinate activities with service providers and special needs groups.
- Gaining awareness and understanding of relevant HIPAA requirements and information use.

Intermediate

- Identifying ways to work effectively with service providers and para-transit providers in an emergency.
- Identifying optimal approaches to working with persons who are themselves responsible for the safety of service animals, pets or other animals.
- Learning new approaches to assist facilities in fostering discussion based exercises.
- Exercising and designing team development training.
- Conducting participant and evaluator development training.
- Assisting providers with plan reviews and development.
- Writing and disseminating Incident Command issues.

Advanced

- Conducting an operations based exercise.

- Utilizing the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Exercise Evaluation Guide (EEG) to establish appropriate metrics and areas to address for person with disabilities.
- Recognizing achievable goals and objectives in an exercise.
- Understanding compliance requirements for HSEEP training.
- Identifying the best means of sharing exercise results with providers.

2. Persons with disabilities and service providers, to include government, for profit and not for profit business, residential or day care facilities that serve persons with disabilities, including centers for independent living, home health, SRS programs, and others.

Basic

- Learning approaches to get involved with emergency planning at the local level.
- Identifying what special needs are.
- Be able to identify strategies and equipment necessary to receive warning of all hazard incidents at any time of the day or night.
- Understanding who is involved in the emergency management process.
- Recognizing the regulatory requirements for planning, drills and exercises.
- Learning what is meant by an "all hazards" approach to identifying risks and vulnerabilities.
- Utilizing case studies in disasters to improve their own practice.
- Identifying the need for all-hazards planning approach.
- Recognizing the components of an emergency plan.
- Learning how to exercise an emergency plan.

Intermediate

- Identifying ways to evaluate emergency plans and improve on them.
- Identify approaches to safeguarding service animals, pets or other animals
- Increasing facility awareness related to construction, sheltering, and utilities.
- Identifying ways to improve internal and external interoperable communications.
- Recognizing unique demands of emergency response for persons with disabilities.
- Learning new ways of planning for continuity of operations that integrate the needs of persons with disabilities.

Advanced

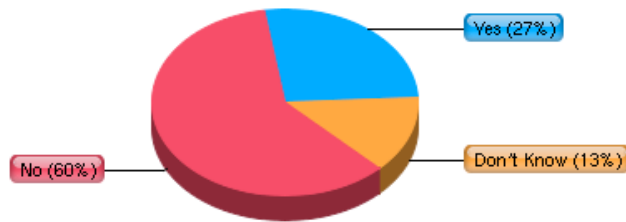
- Understanding how to design exercises for all types of emergencies.
- Recognizing emergency response activation and procedures.
- Identifying appropriate roles for staff involvement and patient/client considerations.
- Learning techniques to evaluate exercises.

- Identifying ways to integrate corrective actions and recommendations into planning and practice.
- Learning new ways to share and utilize information and provide assistance.

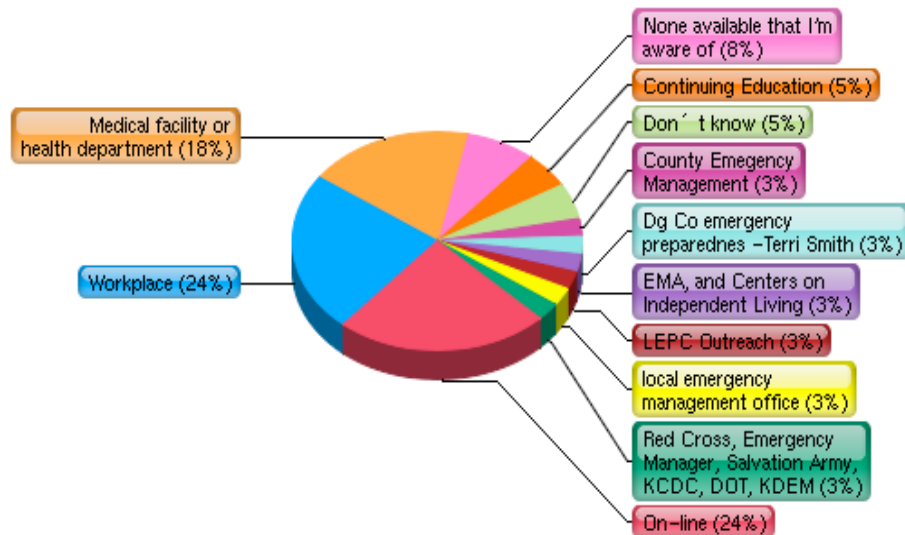
A special thanks goes to Ricky Shellenbarger, *KCEM, Sedgwick County Emergency Management* for his work in developing the curriculum competencies.

Appendix
Assessing the Draft Strategic Plan
Summary of Survey Responses

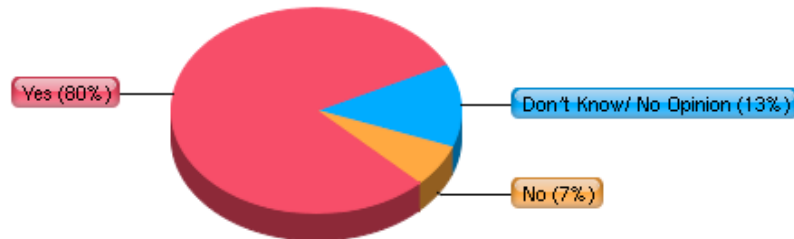
Q2: In your opinion, are training and education resources in emergency management for persons with disabilities adequate in your county? (n=15)



Q3: Where are training and education resources in emergency management for persons with disabilities available in your county? (check all that apply) (n=15)



Q4: In your opinion, does this draft plan address the needs of persons with disabilities in the training and education of emergency managers, public health professionals, and others? (n=15)



Q4a: If responding "No" to Question 4, please describe why (n=1)

"Plan does not address how to identify location and recruit persons with disabilities to participate in local emergency management planning. The plan assumes that those with disabilities are more interested and willing to be involved in personal or community emergency management than the general population and there is no data to support such an assumption."

Q4b: Are there any additional course competencies you feel may be important to add to improve the strategic plan further? (specific recommendations (n=4))

"I would like to see the sheltering needs include a piece on animals. We have a lot of older folks who are not going anywhere if they cannot take the dog or the cat or ???"

"Under #2 of the Basic competencies, add: "Be able to identify strategies and equipment necessary to receive warning of all hazard incidents at any time of the day or night"

"FEMA IS-139, Exercise Design Course for format in conducting exercises and components; FEMA CPG-301 awareness of contents and stakeholders"

"Nothing is said about making training materials available in alternate formats or about accessible websites. Providing interpreters is also important. I'm not sure health departments and other community organizations realize this is important or necessary when partnering with people with disabilities. Also, the terminology "special needs/populations" really ought to be changed."