Elements of Disaster Readiness for Organizations Providing Services To Persons with Disabilities or other Special Needs

The list below identifies the nine main areas identified by thousands of respondents when asked to consider the needs in disasters of persons with disabilities or other special needs and organizations that provide residential or other services to them. Respondents included persons with disabilities, their family members, caregivers, management and staff of organizations that advocate for or provide services to persons with disabilities, emergency responders and managers, volunteers, officials with state and federal agencies, and others. A strong pattern of these nine elements emerged and persisted throughout all responses from rural, urban, and suburban sources, and from providers serving diverse populations in different states, indicating the importance of a systemic approach to disaster readiness.

Practical action based on these elements must be adapted to fit the particular needs of a given organization and those it serves, in their circumstances. An initial action by a provider organization or a local emergency management agency to improve a single element such as communication should be planned in the context of the other elements of readiness. An effective approach to such planning is mapped out in the Disaster Readiness Template for Service Provider Organizations developed by the Inclusive Preparedness Center.

Elements of Disaster Readiness

1. **Communications**
   a. **Internal**
      i. Communicating with consumers
      ii. Communicating with staff
   b. **External**
      i. Communicating with family members
      ii. Communicating with the media
      iii. Communicating with EOC & local officials
   c. Communication equipment & alternate forms
   d. Establishing channels of communication
   e. Communication strategies for EMS

2. **Staffing**
   a. Issues that will arise
   b. Surveying your staff
   c. Establishing emergency policies
   d. Other resources potentially available (volunteers)
   e. Preparing family members of staff
3. Transportation
   a. Internal
      i. Immediate capacity
      ii. Potential need
   b. External
      i. Planning
      ii. Establishing protocols
   c. Evacuation
      i. Choosing local sites
      ii. Choosing distant sites
      iii. Establishing agreements with peer organizations
      iv. Identifying needs at destination
      v. Planning routes and means to get there
      vi. Identifying likely local shelters
      vii. Building capacity to reach local and distant destinations

4. Sheltering In Place
   a. Supplies Needed
      i. Food
      ii. Water
      iii. Blankets, flashlights, etc.
      iv. Identifying ones specific to organization
   b. Addressing storage issues
   c. Securing the facility
   d. Shelter in place staffing issues

5. Medical Needs
   a. Tracking, securing and dispensing medical needs
   b. Potential strategies to build up reserves
   c. Ways to get medications in an emergency
   d. Other needed durable medical supplies

6. Practice and Training
   a. Evaluating current training program
   b. Potential emergency related trainings for follow-up
   c. Importance and types of exercises
   d. Sample exercise to become familiar with tabletop format
   e. Developing an exercise schedule
   f. Developing your own exercises
   g. Participating in local exercises

7. External Partners
   a. Introduction to ICS, NIMS, NRP
   b. Partnering with peer organizations
   c. Coordinating with religious and volunteer groups
   d. Coordinating with EMA
      i. Self identifying
      ii. Inclusive planning
      iii. Participating in exercises
   e. Training for responders
   f. Working with schools
g. Coordinating with other national organizations such as Red Cross
h. Potential outside funding opportunities
i. Legal advocacy and meeting regulations

8. Readiness Management
   a. Establishing command and control structure
   b. Drafting plans
   c. Allocating internal resources
   d. Redraft any policies if necessary
   e. Building organization-wide awareness
   f. Developing culture of responsibility
   g. Documenting readiness activities
      i. Internal formats
      ii. Local/State/Federal mandated formats

9. Continuity of Operations
   a. Business Functioning
      i. Emergency incident record keeping
      ii. Securing location
      iii. Identifying how standard practices and standard of care might change in an emergency
      iv. Suggestions for maintaining operations through emergency
      v. Identifying important records
      vi. Developing strategies if anything were to happen to physical structure
      vii. Backing up data
      viii. Billing
   b. Consumer Support
      i. Family reconnection
      ii. Mental Health issues
      iii. Emergency medical needs
      iv. Staffing
      v. Ensuring records remain with individual
      vi. Go Kits
   c. Data management
      i. Consumer health information
      ii. Staff health information
      iii. Staff and consumer contact information
      iv. Facility insurance
      v. Transportation licensing
      vi. Payroll
      vii. Storing data

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