



Association of
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**Responding to a Disaster
Skills Building Session**

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Emergency Preparedness: Special Needs Populations & Workforce

Department of State Health Services
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Background: Three Waves of Evacuees

- Aug. 29- Hurricane Katrina struck near New Orleans.
- Widespread flooding and devastating loss of life and property.
- An estimated 400,000 Louisiana evacuees sought shelters in Texas.
- Known as the first wave of evacuees.



Background: Three Waves of Evacuees

- Sept 21- Rita became a Category 5 hurricane on a projected path toward the Houston metroplex.
- Houston-area residents began to evacuate voluntarily in record numbers.
- This began the second wave of evacuees.



Background: Three Waves of Evacuees

- Sept. 24- Hurricane Rita made Landfall in the Southeast Texas Region (22 counties).
- Significant flooding and destruction.
- Local infrastructure damaged.
- Citizens flee the Beaumont-Port Arthur Area.
- Known as the third wave of evacuees.



SNP: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Challenges to get Texans with special needs out of potential hurricane impact zone.
 - No clear definition of the term *special needs* population.
 - Because of lack of specificity, *special needs* could cover 50% of the population, rendering the term meaningless.
 - Lack of precision associated with *special needs* could lead to injudicious planning and misuse of limited resources.



SNP: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Involve the disability community in all prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities.
- People with disabilities should not be simply consumers in this process.



SNP: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Governor's Task Force On Evacuation.
- DSHS After Action Review.
- Coordination with the Governor's Division of Emergency Management.
 - Pre-identify people with special evacuation needs.
 - Make specific, detailed, individualized arrangements for notification, evacuation, and shelter.

SNP: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Ensure that the special evacuation needs information is kept current and accessible in a confidential county-wide registry.
- Pre-define shelters with appropriate training for managers.
- Engage medical/nursing/pharmacy communities to prepare SNP for disaster response.
- Pre-declare contractual arrangements for the use of private medical transportation assets for SNP.
- Establish effective mechanisms to track special needs individuals' destinations.





Workforce: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Work settings
 - Emergency Support Center (Health Department in Austin)
 - Shelters across state
 - DSHS Patient-Locator Assistance
- Workforce
 - State employees, either “volunteering” or directed by supervisor
 - Local health professionals volunteering



Workforce: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Disaster Readiness Plan: Emergency Support Center
 - Ensure agencies/partners know your mission and how they fit.
 - Have clear hierarchy so staff know the chain of command.
 - Establish a proactive planning team to ensure smooth transitions during evacuation, assessment and response, recovery and repatriation phases.



Workforce: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Disaster Readiness Plan: Emergency Support Center

- Ensure understanding of planning and communication systems.

- Include disaster preparedness/response into clinical and non-clinical staff job descriptions.



Workforce: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Disaster Readiness Plan: Clinical Teams.
 - Inventory skill sets and establish teams in advance.
 - Provide periodic incident training and drills.
 - Require continuing education in triage and relevant clinical skills.
 - Ideally, teams should be bilingual, or have access to translators.
 - Teams must establish emergency plans for their family members.



Workforce: Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Disaster Readiness Plan: Staff support systems
 - Issue prepaid credit cards for food, gas and essentials.
 - Ensure access to mental health counselors as needed.
 - Train some staff in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM).
 - Train staff on personal security and how to ensure evacuee/victim safety.
 - Train staff on available resources and how to refer to or access them.



Emergency Preparedness: SNP & Workforce

- After Action Report, including lessons learned and recommendations, is due March 21, 2006.
- Apply lessons learned
 - Same challenges experienced during Hurricane Floyd (1999) and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005).

A Few Areas For Training Opportunities

- Link people with special health needs to the statewide database/registry.
- Lead development and implementation of guidelines and protocols for the registration process.
- Train and involve the medical and other health discipline student body.
- Educate local officials and shelters managers on vulnerability of children and adolescents in shelters.



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Questions?