

KATRINA/RITA SOLUTIONS
November 21, 2005

TRACKING AND LOCATE

Purpose

Tracking movement of evacuees with disabilities (EWD) being relocated from a shelter or other facility until they are placed in appropriate long-term housing and connected with support services; locating evacuees with disabilities with whom grantees or service providers have lost contact or who need to be added to the disability service system

Problem Description

- States do not keep a central registry of individuals with disabilities (IWD) served
- IWD may be left behind when others are evacuated
- Evacuees being displaced and separated from families
- Information not collected to track relocation of evacuees
- No database of relocation information

Strategies to Address Problem

- Assign EWD an evacuee buddy (and alternate) to remain with them from time of evacuation, to remain in touch with established DD service network and connect with the new service network if needed
- Identify shelters and other facilities housing evacuees and send staff to shelters/facilities to identify IWDD
- Contact faith-based agencies to identify evacuees welcomed into homes of church members
- Establish toll free number for EWD wanting to be connected with family or supports
- Coordinate with and access registries for posting information on missing persons including
 - International Red Cross Family Links Registry 877-568-3317
 - National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
 - National Runaway Switchboard 800-Runaway (800-786-2929)
- Establish a database that includes information about where people lived before the disaster and where they live now; include fields for shelter, nursing home, ICF/MR, house etc.

Related Websites

- International Red Cross Family Links Registry www.familylinks.icrc.org/katrina
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children www.missingkids.org
- National Runaway Switchboard www.nrscrisisline.org

ADVOCACY EDUCATION

Purpose

Informing rescue, relief and recovery officials about P&A authority and gaining cooperation

Problem Description

- Shelter and health/mental health administrators uninformed about P&A authority
- Advocates and interpreters are refused entry into shelters

Strategies to Address Problem

- Educate responders and recovery personnel, health and mental health operators about P&A authority
- P&As should have letter of introduction (consider using letter drafted by ADD and cleared by OGC) requesting that P&As be given access to evacuees with disabilities
- Coordinate with MH/MR agencies on advocacy education efforts

Related Websites

- National Disability Rights Network www.ndrn.org

SCREENING

Purpose

Providing rescue, relief and recovery officials with aids to identify evacuees with disabilities (EWD) and providing guidance on what action should then be taken

Problem Description

- Responders and recovery personnel do not collect information to identify EWD
- People are not viewed as being disabled unless there is a physical disability
- EWD relocated to medical facilities rather than referred to disability support network

Strategies to Address Problem

- Initial questions asked should allow some determination of the existence of a disability and affect subsequent questions and decisions about that person
- DD grantees, State MH/MR programs can provide screening aids
- Use aid similar to the Univ. of New Mexico UCEDD booklet on practical suggestions for interacting with and assisting people with different types of disabilities in an emergency
- Provide instructions on action that should be taken when EWD identified
- Resource lists of state disability experts and agencies should be maintained in shelters and provided to relief agencies

Related Websites

- <http://cdd.unm.edu/products/TipsForFirstResponders.htm>

LINKING TO SERVICES

Purpose

Connecting evacuees with disabilities (EWD) and their families with their established or new disability related support services; connecting them with non-disability related benefits and services (e.g., Food Stamps, Medicaid)

Problem Description

- Service systems destroyed or damaged
- Existing service systems overburdened
- EWD cannot find aid centers where they can sign up for or restore benefits
- There is no accessible transportation
- Inability to stand in lines for extended periods
- Need for service workers, equipment etc.
- No assistance provided to help evacuees complete forms
- Lack of durable medical equipment and medical supplies for IWDs
- Phone numbers individuals can call for help are not adequately publicized

Strategies to Address Problem

- Establish 800 numbers for service information and referral
- Establish a disability information access line for EWD and their families to connect with a support system to meet their special needs
- Advertise in all media (e.g., PSA) about dates, times and location of services available
- Create a website where EWD can request assistance or individuals can offer assistance
- Families should be contacted before a storm to let them know who and how to contact assistance as soon as the storm is over
- Visit shelters immediately after a disaster to provide assistance, information, and connect people to services
- Consider state plan amendments for federal programs to address emergency service needs
- Shelter, relief and program staff should have expertise on disabilities on the premises
- Get P&A and other resources on the resource/call list for shelter, relief, public services and private agencies should they get calls from EWD
- Bring the application process to the individual with a disability in the shelter or provide accessible transportation to the application site and a personal assistant
- Provide assistance to help EWD complete forms
- Open computer terminals and offer assistance to EWD to apply for assistance online
- Establish a system to discharge EWDs from shelter with health, social service plan in place
- Arrange follow along and follow-up services for EWD before they leave shelters
- Contact faith-based agencies to identify evacuees welcomed into homes of church members for purposes of linking to services
- Train volunteers as systems navigators to help EWD and families identify, access supports and establish a data base of these volunteers for relief agencies to mobilize
- Establish one-stop shops to connect to services
- Establish a case management model for screening, identifying needs, information and referral, securing resources, monitoring etc. to assist EWD and their families in securing all benefits to which they are entitled

- Use a person centered approach to help EWD identify services needed
- Develop a list of services that are available
- Use a Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster model
- Provide respite care so EWD and families can return to work, apply for services and address cleanup and repairs of personal property; needs to be a large number of people and places for respite care because of the amount of time it takes to rebuild; have programs in place as soon as disaster is over
- Arrange for personal care attendants
- Make counseling available to EWD and their families following a disaster

Related Websites

- www.thearcLink.org has online clearinghouse so family members, case managers, service coordinators or advocates can list people or families who need support

APPROPRIATE SHELTERS

Purpose

Placing evacuees with disabilities and their families in accessible shelters equipped to meet their needs

Problem Description

- Not enough accessible shelters
- Some special needs shelters would not accept a person with a disability unless it was a physical disability
- Shelters not equipped with durable medical equipment and other supplies needed by individuals with disabilities
- Shelters staff not informed about special needs of individuals with disabilities
- People with mental health issues are turned away from shelters because there are not enough doctors to monitor them; shelters are short on supplies to meet needs of EWD
- Health and mental health operators have access to shelters to recruit residents
- EWDs inappropriately relocated to MH/MR, ICF, nursing homes and other institutions often away from the community
- People who have never been institutionalized may end up being institutionalized as the only option easily available
- People placed in special needs shelters are not permitted to be accompanied by family members and other care givers who may be with them

Strategies to Address Problem

- Shelters should be accessible and have accessible restrooms and showers and other adaptations
- Shelters should have ready access to wheelchairs, canes, walkers, glasses and other durable medical equipment and assistive technologies
- Shelters should be able to provide first aid and have a supply of psychotropic drugs
- Utilize the National Registry of Resources at www.swern.org to obtain durable medical equipment and other supplies
- Accessible shelters should house service animals and provide care for them
- Shelters should arrange for interpreter services if needed
- Shelters should monitor and assist in taking medication

APPROPRIATE HOUSING

Purpose

Placing evacuees with disabilities (EWD) and their families in a temporary (if needed) then long-term housing situation with adaptations appropriate for their level of functioning

Problem Description

- Not enough accessible housing

Strategies to Address Problem

- Explore accessible rentals, section 8 housing, trailer parks, new homes and homes individuals are willing to make accessible
- Runaway and Homeless Youth shelters used in Galveston
- Special triage phone lines established to accept calls of citizens seeking special needs shelters
- Provisions to ensure consumer self-determination, choice and informed consent are being made about medium and long-range relocation decisions
- Information should be maintained on the accessibility of housing stock and its location prior to an emergency

Related Websites

- www.katrinadisability.info has accessible housing registry
- www.thearcLink.org has online clearinghouse to offer short-term or long-term housing

TRANSPORTATION

Purpose

Organizing accessible transportation to serve evacuees with disabilities (EWD) and their families to access the assistance they need while recovering from a disaster

Problem Description

- Limited access to accessible and affordable transportation affects quality of life and meaningful choices

Strategies to Address Problem

- Provide transportation to Social Security local offices, DOL one-stops, Aging and Disability Resource Centers and other centers where EWD can be connected to services
- Establish one-stop shops to ease the transportation burden
- Provide taxi vouchers to those who need door to door pick up
- Arrange for accessible vans to pick up people who cannot get to a fixed route
- Prior to a predicted storm, individuals with disabilities without transportation should be encouraged to sign-up for transportation to the nearest appropriate shelter. Such transportation should be well organized and be free of charge.
- Evaluate the availability of accessible transportation for IWD before and after a disaster to determine what improvements are needed to keep people safe and healthy.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Purpose

Providing guidance to the disabilities community on emergency management; sensitizing responders, relief and recovery agency staff and their volunteers on the special needs of individuals with disabilities; promoting inclusive emergency management

Problem Description

- Disability and special needs communities under-prepared
- Lack of coordination at all levels

Strategies to Address Problem

- Establish a chain of command and authority to commit resources
- Disaster plans should include provisions for an internet-based registry
- Establish a 2-1-1 emergency planning and disaster response network
- Adopt a Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster model
- Provide cell phones and laptops for staff
- Disseminate emergency plans and what is available to people with disabilities
- Develop a website with emergency plan information for people with disabilities and their families so they can access the information before and after a disaster
- Establish several centralized locations around each county for people with disabilities to meet with and receive services from generic providers like FEMA and the Red Cross
- Purchase portable generators prior to a natural disaster
- Each county should identify the number of IWD and their needs by encouraging them to register with the county emergency office and provide a brief description of what their needs may be during a natural disaster
- Mandatory training should be provided to group home staff and personal care attendants on emergency preparedness
- County emergency management offices should be made aware of the location of group homes, supported living arrangements, and intermediate care facilities in their areas
- Provide families with cell phones, generators, and vouchers to fill tank of gas; by running the car can charge a cell phone battery, listen to radio for information about services available
- Arrange for group homes to call next of kin about plans for evacuation and whereabouts and condition of EWD after a disaster

Related Websites

- www.disabilitypreparedness-ncr/Resources3
- www.dhs.gov/disabilitypreparedness
- www.ncd.org then click on “What’s New” or newsroom/publications
- www.makeaplan.org