Vulnerable Populations

Don’t Forget about Me!

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Nov. 2006

Reuters
Elderly
Disabled
Sick
Single Parents
Racial and Ethnic Minorities
New Comers
Low income
Marginally Housed
Travelers
Transient
Homeless
Developmental Disabilities
Battered Women
Children
Who is the vulnerable person?

- New comer to Canada
- 87 year old
- Someone who is blind.
- Family staying at the local hotel.

- Change the factors
Vulnerability Assessment

- Income
- Social status
- Personal Health
- Coping Skills
- Social Support Network
- Social Environments
- Biology & Genetic Endowment
- Gender
- Health Services

- Source Public Health Agency of Canada
Regular life issues

- Health challenges
- Financial insecurity
- Family responsibility
- Abuse
- Illiteracy
- Fragility
- Disability
- Dependence
In disaster preparedness, the terms vulnerable or special needs people or populations are used to define groups whose needs are not fully addressed by the traditional service providers. It also includes groups that may feel they cannot comfortably or safely access and use the standard resources offered in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

- California Emergency Preparedness Website
As an Emergency Manager how would you meet the human services needs?

- A homeless shelter.
- A drug rehabilitation center.
- An abused women’s center.
- A group home.
- Neighborhoods with high density populations of new comers.
- Neighborhoods where the elderly live.
- Low income neighborhoods
Ask Ourselves

- Are we ready?
- Short on solutions, suggestions and ideas!
- Blame!
- Chaos and survival of the fittest.
- If our present support structures do not meet their needs at the best of time so what can we expect at the worst of times
How many...........

- Hotel room
- Workplace
- Home
- Football stadium/hockey arena
- Supply of food and water at home
- Plans where you will stay inside your community or outside your community.
- We are in the business!
- Are we vulnerable!
Usual Strategies

- Registry
- Trained personnel
- Planning for “one stop shopping”
- Building individual and group support plans.
- Plan for places of employment
Strategies

- Personal Preparedness and knowledge are the most powerful tools to reduce the risk of loss.
- Although we want people to be prepared …generally they are not therefore……..
Great Quote

“A time of crisis is not a good time to begin developing community capacity.”
– Gail Fawcett Senior Research Associate at the CSSD
City of Winnipeg Plan

- Trained personal services workers
- Experienced personal services staff
- Partnerships (NGO’s & WRHA & FSH)
- Integrated response
Winnipeg

- Personal services unit
- Special tactical response teams
  - Forest Fires
  - Flood
  - Apartment block evacuations
Winnipeg

- Call Center
- Stay informed
- Linkages/Partnerships with Agencies
  - E.g. TTY for the deaf or hard of hearing
Example: Rural Manitoba

- Montcalm program
  - Guardian program (Marc Berard)
  - Software program
Pets and People
Other Suggestions

- Make people less vulnerable through social programs and support.
- Severe Weather warning systems
- Neighborhood plans
- Critical Customer Communication program.
San Francisco Local Governments

- Should require local registries.
- A neighborhood based system which identifies people with disabilities.
- Educational preparedness material should be available on large print and on audio cassette.
- Expanded program of individual home and apartment hazard removal.
- Telecommunications device for the deaf.
- Reception centers should be wheelchair accessible.
- Use sign language and other interpreters.
- Regular disability awareness training for ESS responders.
- Include people with disabilities in your planning sessions.
- Encourage and assist vulnerable populations to keep emergency preparedness response and recovery plans.
All Vulnerable Populations

- Personal Preparedness
- Advocacy
- Information
Create a support network

- Home, school work
- Have someone outside the area in your support network.
- Know the disaster plans at places you spend a lot of time.
- Pass a key to someone
- Create a communication plan
- Plan for a pet/service animal.
- Pet Identification
All Vulnerable populations

- Practice your plan regularly
- Practice how to communicate your needs
- Copies of your plan in several places.
- Have enough medication on hand
- Instructions for your care and treatment if hospitalized
  - Nova Scotia’s Guide for Disaster Preparedness
Persons with Mobility or Agility Disabilities

- Additional wheelchairs
- Can you transport people in wheelchairs
- Plan for when an elevator does not work
- Reception centers wheelchair accessible
- List of homes and hotels that can accept wheelchairs
- Plans in workplaces
- Chargers for wheelchairs
- Canes/walkers and other equipment
- List of local resources (equipment and expertise)
Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Interpreters
- Portable TTY’s
- Pads of paper, pens, blackberries, text messaging
- Sheet with American Sign language
- Reception center kit with pictures or phrases
New Comers

- Flash back
- Limited resources
Elderly

- Rid ourselves of stereotyped images
- Basic survivors
- Independent, resourceful, and resilient group
- Aware of health issues
- Need for medication
- Resistant to evacuation
- Distress and disorientation
- Strong and persistent verbal reassurance to displaced elders
- High expectations
- Lack resources and information
- Pre planned map pinpointing residences of the elderly.
- Home care registry
Voices of wisdom
Seniors cope with disasters

- Physical reactions to a disaster are normal
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover
- Asking for what we need can help heal us
- Focusing on our strength and abilities will help
- Accepting help from the community programs is healthy
- We each heal at our own pace
- We each have different needs and different ways to cope
Children

- Elementary schools
- Day Cares
- Separation
- Art
- Keep them busy
Persons who are blind or visually impaired

- Cognizant that noise and confusion will limit some of their skills
- Plan for service animals
- Folding mobility canes
Persons with developmental Disabilities

- Speak slowly and with simple language with instructions
- Look right at the person
People with Special health needs

- Personal support network
- Write out details of your medical situation
- Grab n go bag, emergency kit
Special Interest Groups

- Hostels
- Rehab centers
- Homeless shelters
- Group homes
Helping Vulnerable Populations at Reception Centers

- Lot's of Personal services staff
- Public Health personnel
- Home care personnel
- Assist those that are temporally upset
- Dignity
- Regular meals scheduled
- Low in sodium
- Verbalize their thoughts and feelings
- Much privacy and comfort as possible
- Accessibility
- Emergency lodging is close to the neighborhood as possible
Smaller Communities

- Identify people at risk
- Plan for partnerships
- Public education
Recovery

- Takes time to recover
- Promoting Social Equity During Disaster recovery
- Opportunity to improve existing social inequities and not just return people to their pre-existing situations
- Putting oneself in the situation of others, listening and involving
Helping with recovery

- Assistance with cleanup
- Consumer counseling service
- Emotional support.
- Helping with problem solving and decision making.
- Advocating for specific programs, funding
- Loss of neighbor or friend
- Avoiding the welfare image
- Extending the time period for Disaster service programs and benefit.
Planning

- “The only thing harder than planning for an emergency is explaining why you didn’t.”
Hope is the greatest lesson from Katrina

- A society more aware of the importance of preparedness.
- More aware of our duty to protect our most vulnerable citizens.
- A society which becomes engaged in actions to ensure the safety of our families and neighbors.

- Paul Kovacs Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction
Additional Credits

- Elderly & Disasters: Psychosocial Preparedness response and recovery planning guide. Health Canada
- Older People in disasters: HelpAge International
- Preparing a Personal family Emergency plan (Guide for people with disabilities) Toronto
- After Katrina: Urban Institute
- Emergency preparedness for employees with disabilities (FEMA)
Questions

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