

Emergency Planning for Vulnerable Populations

Information and tools to address the disaster needs of
people experiencing homelessness

June Gin, PhD

Veterans Emergency Management Evaluation Center (VEMEC)

National Policy Institute on Emergency Response and Management

National Association of Elected and Appointed Officials

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Today's Presentation

1. Homeless populations and disasters
2. Homeless disaster preparedness toolkit
3. How to connect homeless services & emergency managers
4. The emerging crisis of aged homelessness (and how local communities can prepare)

Community Disaster Response

“How you do things during normal times is usually how you will do things in a disaster.”

- Rob Dudgeon, Former Deputy Director, San Francisco Department of Emergency Management



Photo Credit Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Community Disaster Response

“Every population you don’t include in your plans before a disaster will take up 80-90% of your allocated staff resources during a disaster.”

- Former New York City Emergency Manager



Homelessness in the U.S.

On a single night in Jan 2018-

- 553,000 individuals were homeless
- **Jan 2018- 3,900 people were living in disaster shelters**
 - Aftermath of 2017 hurricanes & wildfires

Source: HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, 2018

Homelessness and Disasters

A Vulnerable Population

- Vulnerable to environmental hazards
- Lack resources to prepare, evacuate, recover, disconnected from information
- Pre-disaster trauma
- Lack of trust in authorities, especially law enforcement
- Often excluded from disaster shelters & disaster relief



Photo Credit: US Department of Veterans Affairs

CBOs and Homeless Populations in Disasters

- Unique Skill Set as “trusted agents” for homeless populations
- Homeless service network is the daily safety net in community
- CBOs address gaps in government response & recovery
- Likely to experience surge in demand for services after disaster



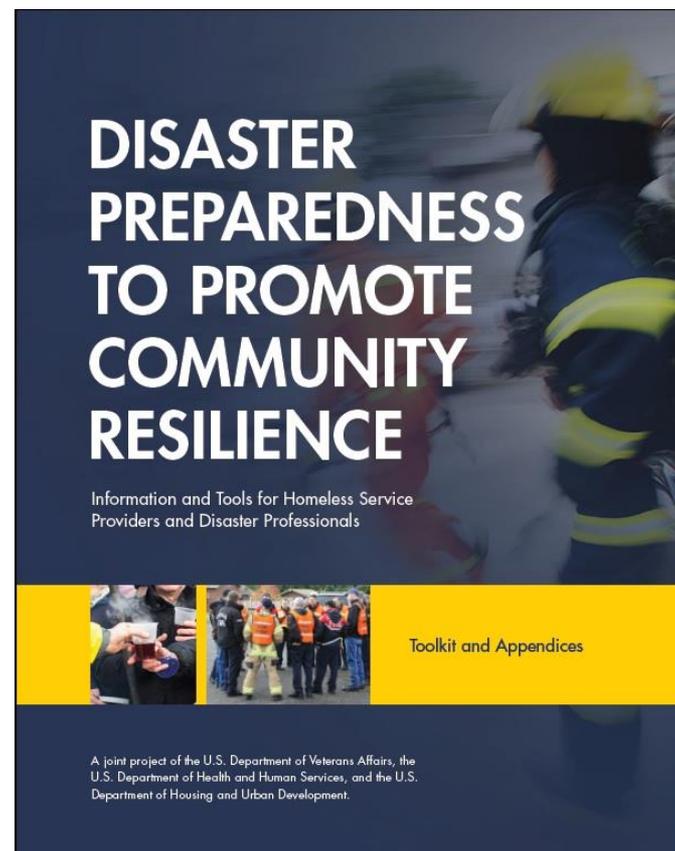
CBOs and Disasters

Homeless service providers (CBOs) are the safety net

- Most social service crises happen > 6 mo. after a disaster
 - Suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse, child abuse
- CBOs are fragile - 40% of small businesses never reopen after a disaster
- 55% of nonprofits & church agencies in Louisiana deemed NOT eligible for reimbursement after Hurricane Katrina, despite sheltering as many people as Red Cross

Disaster Preparedness to Promote Community Resilience- A Toolkit

1. Building an Inclusive Emergency Management System
2. Preparedness for Homeless Service Providers
3. Guidance for Health Care Providers



How to Build an Inclusive System

Preparedness

1. Connect homeless service providers with disaster planners
 - a) VOAD (Voluntary Agencies Responding to Disasters, SF CARD)
 - b) HUD Continuum of Care (housing authority)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhurBdMXraM>

(Regional Catastrophic Planning NY-NJ-CT-PA)

2. Service provider rep in local Emergency Operations Center

Response & Recovery

3. Include service providers as resource in disaster shelters
4. Ensure that key CBOs are written into local government plans for disaster, preferably in human services contracts

Building an Inclusive System (for Agency Staff)

Prepare

1. Get to know the community
2. Design a strategy for collaboration
3. Establish or strengthen relationships with potential partners
4. Meet and discuss common concerns
5. Maintain relationships

Respond

6. Use/test the system

Recover

7. Sustain an inclusive system



CBO Case Study

Loma Prieta Earthquake, 1989 (Watsonville, CA)

- Salud Para La Gente- health clinic serving Spanish-speaking migrant farmworkers spent entire annual budget providing health services to disaster shelter residents in the first few weeks after the earthquake
- Worked with State of CA to file FEMA reimbursement
- Denied, appealed 3 times, ultimately rejected
- Awarded \$300,000 from State Disaster Fund

How to Ensure Service Provider Continuity

1. Key funders should include disaster preparedness standards & guidance in funding packages
2. Convene service providers for trainings on creating emergency plans & business continuity plans
3. Give them a reason to want to do preparedness
4. Have emergency managers & public health staff available to help non-profits
 - a) Free help always good, free supplies even better
 - b) What are the risks in your community?
 - c) Active shooter training, but also psych first aid

Preparedness Steps (for Homeless Service Providers)

1. Identify an internal champion and preparedness team
2. Identify technical assistance resources to initiate the planning process
3. Build organizational buy-in
4. Prepare staff
5. Meet client and staff needs during and after a disaster
6. Back up unique documents
7. Maintain financial operations



Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

How to Get Health Care Systems Ready

1. Ensure that local health care coalitions & public health preparedness office include homeless service providers
2. Recruit trauma-informed medical staff experienced in treating patients experiencing homelessness
3. Create “medical homes” providing integrated care for homeless populations— redirect them from hospitals & emergency departments
4. To ensure adequate community health resources, do (and support) these types of activities regularly:
 - a) **Project Homeless Connect**
 - b) **Stand Downs** (for homeless veterans)

Aged Homelessness- A Future Concern?

- Late baby boomers (born 1955-65) account for largest cohort of contemporary U.S. homelessness (1990-2010)
- Single adult males aged 46-54 in homeless shelters:
 - 1990- 1 in 8 (highest % were aged 31-33)
 - 2000- 1 in 5 (highest % were aged 40-42)
 - 2010- 1 in 3 (highest % were aged 49-51)
 - Population aged 65+ expected to peak in 2030
- Aged homeless population growth- 10 year trajectory
- Annual Per Person Cost, New York City- **\$28,457**

Source: Dennis Culhane et al 2019 *The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness*

Aged Homelessness- How to Respond?

Could housing be funded by service cost reductions? **Yes**

- Permanent Supportive Housing + Rapid rehousing, rental subsidies & rental vouchers
- LA County- projected annual cost reduction- \$33 million
- Reduced shelter, health & nursing home service costs

Disasters

- Include local area agency on aging & home health care
- Illustrates how non-profit preparedness & homelessness intersect with other populations- “Whole Community”

Source: Dennis Culhane et al 2019 *The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness*

Thank You!

Toolkit:

<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/nchav/education/VEMEC-Toolkit.asp>

Questions?

June Gin

june.gin@va.gov