

NJ SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY PANEL

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

For the time period covering October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008

INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Special Needs Advisory Panel (NJSNAP) acts as an advisory board to the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) and the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP) regarding issues affecting special needs populations in New Jersey before, during and after an emergency or disaster.

The NJSNAP identifies issues likely to affect special needs populations as they prepare to respond to an emergency, or issues likely to affect emergency management personnel as they attempt to assist persons with special needs before, during and after adverse conditions. The advisory panel may also make recommendations, develop solutions, draft proposed legislation, formulate memos of understanding, and devise products and programs to address identified issues, if requested by the NJOEM or NJOHSP.

The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management performs administrative responsibilities for the SNAP. Project Freedom Inc., a developer of accessible housing for people with disabilities, is the host site for meeting locations.

The second NJ SNAP Annual Report reflects projects which have been completed, or projects ongoing by SNAP member organizations and their strategic partners. It does not intend to capture *all* activity regarding disaster preparedness for special needs populations throughout the state. There is evidence - anecdotal and otherwise – that county and municipal OEM's, human service and health care providers, community-based organizations, voluntary agencies active in disaster and persons with special needs are involved in planning initiatives and working together to reduce risk to these populations during adverse conditions.

2007-2008 REVISED DEFINITION OF SPECIAL NEEDS

During the annual report time period, the NJ SNAP adopted the National Response Framework definition of special needs:

A function-based definition of special needs reflects the capabilities of the individual, not the condition, label or medical diagnosis. Before, during, and after an incident, members of functional-needs populations may have special needs in one or more of the following functional areas:

- Maintaining independence - Individuals requiring support to be independent in daily activities may lose this support during an emergency or a disaster. This support may include supplies, durable medical equipment, and attendants or caregivers.
- Communication - Individuals who have limitations that interfere with the receipt of and response to information will need that information provided in methods they can understand and use. They may not be able to hear verbal announcements, see directional signs, or understand how to get assistance all because of hearing, vision, speech, cognitive, or intellectual limitations, and/or limited English proficiency.
- Transportation - Individuals who cannot drive or who do not have a vehicle may require transportation support for successful evacuation. This support may include accessible vehicles (e.g., lift-equipped or vehicles suitable for transporting individuals who use oxygen) or information about how and where to access mass transportation during an evacuation.
- Supervision - Before, during, and after an emergency individuals may lose the support of caregivers, family, or friends or may be unable to cope in a new environment (particularly if they have dementia, Alzheimer's or psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia or intense anxiety). If separated from their caregivers, young children may be unable to identify themselves; and when in danger, they may lack the cognitive ability to assess the situation and react appropriately.
- Medical care - Individuals who are not self-sufficient or who do not have adequate support from caregivers, family, or friends may need assistance with: managing unstable, terminal or contagious conditions that require observation and ongoing treatment; managing intravenous therapy, tube feeding, and vital signs; receiving dialysis, oxygen, and suction administration; managing wounds; and operating power dependent equipment to sustain life. These individuals require support of trained medical professionals.

Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include those who have disabilities; who live in institutionalized settings; who are elderly; who are unaccompanied children; who are from diverse cultures; who have limited English proficiency; or who are non-English speaking; or who are transportation disadvantaged.

They have typically exhausted all other resources (family, neighbors, public transportation, etc.) and still need assistance for evacuation and/or sheltering before, during, and possibly after a disaster or emergency. These individuals typically reside in single homes or multiple family dwellings in the State and are not residents of hospitals, residential health care facilities, or any State or Federally-funded community-based residences or services that are already subject to emergency planning requirements.

SNAP MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Below are SNAP member organizations for the time period covered in this report:

Advancing Opportunities
American Red Cross of NJ
City of Atlantic City
Brain Injury Association of NJ
Catholic Charities Disaster Response Program, Diocese of Trenton
Easter Seals
Family Support Center of NJ
Health Care Association of NJ
Home Care Association of NJ
National Church Residences
New Jersey Office of Emergency Management
NJ Association of Community Providers
NJ Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
NJ Citizen Corps Program
NJ Council on Development Disabilities
NJ Department of Children and Families
NJ Department of Community Affairs
NJ Department of Health and Senior Services
NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing
NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health
NJ Department of Human Services Office of Emergency Management
NJ Department of Human Services Division of Development Disabilities
NJ Department of Human Services Division of Disability Services
NJ Hospital Association
NJ Protection and Advocacy
NJ State First Aid Council
Mercer County Division of Public Health
Mercer County Office for the Disabled
Progressive Center for Independent Living
Project Freedom
Salem County Office for the Disabled
Salvation Army
Total Living Center
Trans-Atlantic Renal Council
Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NJ)

SNAP STRATEGIC PLAN:

The multi-year NJ SNAP Strategic Plan is on file at the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management.

2007-2008 SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES:

PLANNING

The NJOEM launched Special Needs Planning Guidance for county and municipal offices of emergency management during the report period. This guidance consists of a standardized checklist which can be used by municipal and county OEM's for the development of a Special Needs attachment to the Health and/or Social Service Annex of the local Emergency Operations Plan. It is also compliant with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's "Comprehensive Planning Guidance 301: Special Needs Planning." During the report period, the Mercer County Office for the Disabled field-tested the planning template, and a training session on the guidance was held in Camden County, in September 2008, for approximately forty participants.

Work continues on integrating functional needs populations into the State EOP.

TRAINING

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's "**Emergency Planning for Special Needs Populations**" (G197) course was held on the following dates:

October 23-24, 2007 - Hudson County Office of Emergency Management

February 28-29, 2008 – Rutgers University Inn & Conference Center

May 22nd – Gloucester County (workshop)

The NJOEM delivered these programs. Approximately 75 students were trained during these sessions; ninety-five percent of the students rated the course excellent or better in the following areas: presenters' preparation, course content and on-the-job relevance.

Social service and community health care providers, voluntary organizations active in disaster and community-based and faith-based organizations have unique knowledge, skills and experiences which can inform planning, improve response, and help insure that special needs populations have access to emergency facilities, communication and programs. The SNAP intends to increase these organizations' level of disaster resilience through business continuity planning.

During this annual report period, the NJ SNAP continued to deliver and improve the "**Business Continuity Planning for Human Services Organizations**" course. One program was held at the following location:

Tony Canale Training Center, Atlantic County – October 4, 2007

Approximately 30 participants attended this session, which was rated very good or excellent by ninety-five percent of the attendees.

During the report period, the Governor Corzine also signed A1908/S1217, which requires the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Human Services to develop an autism, intellectual and developmental disability training course and curriculum for first responders, including emergency medical technicians, police officers, and firefighters. New EMTs, volunteer and paid firefighters and local police officer recruits would be required to complete the training as a condition of certification. EMTs, firefighters and police officers who are currently licensed in New Jersey would be required to complete the training as a continuing education course within three years of the bill's enactment date, which is September 9, 2008.

REGISTER READY - NEW JERSEY'S SPECIAL NEEDS REGISTRY FOR DISASTERS

Register Ready-- New Jersey's Special Needs Registry for Disasters (www.registerready.nj.gov) is a free, voluntary and confidential program designed to assist people with special needs who may find it difficult to get to safety in the event of an emergency. Initially introduced as a pilot program in the spring of 2008 to New Jersey's coastal counties, Register Ready has expanded to eleven counties: Atlantic, Cape May, Ocean, Monmouth, Salem, Cumberland, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Mercer and Union. Currently, more than 7,200 New Jerseyans with special needs have registered.

During the report period, 343 county and local representatives attended training on the use of the registry software. Residents may also teleregister through NJ 2-1-1, and during the report period, NJ 2-1-1 took nearly 100 calls.

SPECIALIZED SHELTERING

A critical consideration when addressing evacuation planning for persons with special and functional needs is the importance of identifying, locating, inventorying, and assessing physical site locations that are ideally suited to serve as specialized shelters during times of crisis.

During the report period, and in conjunction with the launch of Register Ready, specialized shelter guidance was developed via contract with the Delta Development Group of Mechanicsburg, PA. The recommendations and guidance focus on three key areas: identifying potential specialized shelters, identifying the resources needed to operate specialized shelters, and developing a strategy to successfully staff and operate them.

The guidance differentiates specialized shelters from general population shelters and offers a baseline set of processes and procedures that will aid in the identification of resources - including physical assets and staffing - and provides the necessary guidance and direction in establishing and operating specialized shelters. It provides the minimal and optimal criteria for a specialized shelter and serves as an operational checklist for compliancy.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

The emergency preparedness work of health, human service and emergency management agencies is intrinsically linked to the survival of certain At-Risk Populations during adverse conditions. During the reporting period, the NJ DHSS funded and/or implemented the following projects:

- Funding to the NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health Services, Disaster and Terrorism Branch to deliver, statewide, behavioral health preparedness services to At-Risk Populations. At-Risk Populations include but are not limited to: children, senior citizens, pregnant women, people with a history of substance abuse/addictions, ethnic minorities who are disenfranchised, populations with special health needs, people with a history of serious mental illness, people who are physically disabled, first responders and other health/social service professionals.
- Funding to 11 Long Term Care Nursing Facilities to improve their technology and preparedness communication capabilities within the health care system.
- Funding to 5 health care associations (NJ Hospital Association, NJ Primary Care Association, Home Care Association of New Jersey, NJ Association of Homes & Services for the Aging and Health Care Association of New Jersey) to support their members' emergency preparedness efforts.
- Funding to 22 LINCS* Agencies statewide to enhance the capabilities of emergency-ready public health departments by upgrading, integrating and evaluating local public jurisdictions' preparedness for and response to terrorism, pandemic influenza and other public health emergencies. Priority Areas included the following: Public Information/Risk Communication, Communications, Epidemiology/Surveillance, Mass Prophylaxis & Immunization Planning, and Public Health Surge Capacity. A special Cross Cutting Area of the grant also addresses the specific preparedness needs of At-Risk Populations.

* "LINCS Agencies" are the designated lead County/City Health Departments for public health preparedness.

- Provided input to the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) in the development of At-Risk Populations Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidance for State, Territorial, Tribal and Local Health Departments. In addition, the NJDHSS represented the State of New Jersey at a 19 state regional At-Risk Populations Pandemic Influenza guidance roll out meeting in Arlington, Virginia.
- The Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Advisory Council developed an emergency medical treatment kit. Kits are designed to provide emergency care supplies in the event of a man-made or natural disaster. The kits, available to public and non-public schools in New Jersey can be used for either sheltering in place or an evacuation. Over 1000 emergency treatment kits have been distributed throughout New Jersey.
- Purchased a \$950,000 Mobile Care Facility (including medical equipment) which can be used for shelter and/or medical care at sites statewide during a response to any public health emergency.
- Launched a pandemic influenza operational plan that details specific activities to be performed during a pandemic. The Plan includes addressing issues of At-Risk Populations.

BERGEN COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE DISABLED

In December of 2008, the Bergen County Division of Disability Services, in partnership with the Bergen County Office of Emergency Management and the Bergen County Centers for Independent Living (CIL's), conducted New Jersey's first Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) course for persons with disabilities. Twenty people with disabilities were trained in the basic of preparedness and emergency response during times of crises. The training consisted of 8 weeks and 20 hours of instruction in disaster preparedness, fire suppression, medical operations, search and rescue, disaster psychology, CERT organization and terrorism awareness. A second class graduated in Spring of 2008. The agencies also continue to assist the Bergen County OEM with training emergency responders in awareness of persons with special needs.

SALEM COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE DISABLED

During the report period, Salem County administered and supported emergency preparedness outreach and education for persons with special needs. Activities included an "Emergency Preparedness Seminar" for municipalities and service providers in October 2007. In February 2008, the Salem County Office for the Disabled hosted a "First Responders Seminar" which included police departments, local OEM coordinators, EMS and Fire personnel, the Sheriff's Office and Department of Corrections. In July 2008, the "4th Annual Disability Awareness Day" included a refresher in Emergency Preparedness conducted by the Salem County OEM.

The Director of the Salem County Office for the Disabled interfaced with the Salem Housing Authority in July 2008 to introduce to the residents to emergency preparedness and the “Register Ready” program. County representatives enrolled persons with special needs in the online “Register Ready” program at the County Fair.

MERCER COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE DISABLED

The Mercer County Officer for the Disabled continues to place emergency preparedness high on its agenda. Projects include:

Files of Life - The Office for the Disabled has continued with the Files of Life refrigerator magnet project and distributed 3,000 more Files and 6,000 annual update cards. Every year, the Office for the Disabled purchases update cards and distributes them through the Mercer County Nutrition sites, the Mercer County Library System, Special Services School District and all agencies with whom the office contracts for services and programs. This project includes the refrigerator magnet, the centralized information card and two brochures written from the perspective of a person with a disability.

Senior Sense – In conjunction with Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey, the Office for the Disabled has endorsed the use of the Senior Sense program, which was originally funded through the NJ Division of Addiction Services. As a part of the visits made to the Nutrition Sites, where the Coordinator for Senior Sense is presenting, the Director for the Office for the Disabled has educated the senior citizens in attendance regarding the use of *Senior Sense* as a part of a personal preparedness for emergency situations. *Senior Sense* is a wallet-sized version of the File of Life refrigerator magnet. Now people with disabilities and seniors can have their important insurance and medical contact information at home in a safe place and on their person, should an emergency occur while the person is not at home.

In working with the County *Office on Aging*, Mercer County has decided to include the most frail and elderly seniors into the registry projects, as many of them would need assistance in evacuating their homes and re-locating to a shelter. As a result of visits to Mercer County Senior Center and Nutrition Sites, approximately 3,000 seniors have been educated and received appropriate information.

Special Needs Registry Registration Project (ETEAM) – During the report period, the Office for the Disabled presented and distributed 20,000 copies of a registry registration and other important information on how to be prepared for emergency situations. Once completed, the information was being entered into the ETEAM Special Needs Registry component by the Director for the Office for the Disabled. Near the end of the report period, Mercer County was incorporated into Register Ready and is working with the School Systems, Mercer County Libraries, Senior Centers and One-Stop Career Center in

educating them that seniors and people with disabilities who do not have ready access to computers may need assistance in registering in this Registry.

Points of Distribution – The Directors for the Division of Public Health and the Office for the Disabled have worked jointly on developing a movable, accessible point of distribution (POD) that would be use throughout Mercer County for the purposes of distributing appropriate information and/or inoculating people with disabilities and the frail elderly throughout the local communities. Arrangements have been made with Mercer County Vo-tech School Administration that when a vehicle is located, the school system, as a part of their education set-up and curriculum, will then make appropriate changes to vehicle for said uses. Local community organizations such as the Lion’s Club and Rotary have been approached regarding the donation of such a vehicle and a few vehicles are being examined for possible re-adaptation.

NJ STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL/PROGRESSIVE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

New Jersey’s Centers for Independent Living are consumer-driven organizations, owned and operated by individuals with disabilities. New Jersey has a network of twelve CIL’s that provide the core services of information and referral, peer support, independent living skills training, and advocacy. In central New Jersey, the Progressive Center for Independent Living has identified emergency as an area of increased focus.

During the report period, representatives from the PCIL gave presentations on special needs disaster readiness to residents at Project Freedom in Mercer County, the Medical Reserve Corps of Morris County, the Medical Reserve Corps of Union County and to individuals with disabilities in Jersey City at an event sponsored by Heightened Independence and Progress.

The PCIL also obtained a committee seat on the Hunterdon County Emergency Planning Committee, and the Emergency Preparedness Community Council and have worked with the Lambertville Fire Dept. on adaptive equipment drills for first responders

Through the year two of a NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities grant, and in cooperation with the American Red Cross, the PCIL recruited 7 Persons with disabilities to serve as peer-to-peer Community Disaster Educators.

NJ DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH

During the report period, the NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health Services Disaster and Terrorism Branch conducted the following courses:

- Introduction to Disaster Mental Health and Trauma Counseling
- Critical Issues for Addressing Trauma and Substance Abuse
- NIMS 700/ICS 100

- Ethical Issues in Disaster Mental Health Service Delivery
- Cultural Diversity in Disaster Response
- Addressing Trauma in University-Based Student Services
- Family Assistance and Support Training
- Key Concepts in Psychological First Aid
- Managing the Psychosocial Consequences of Disasters and Emergencies (for first responders)
- Managing the Emotional and Behavioral Consequences of Pandemic Influenza
- Grief and Loss in Crisis Response
- Managing the Psychological Consequences of Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Events

A total of 1,864 individuals were trained during 34 training programs.

In addition, training on Disaster Psychology, Emergency Preparedness, Compassion Fatigue, Traumatic Stress Management and Hostility and Rage Management was provided to Community Emergency Response (CERT) Teams, the Civil Air Patrol, Therapy Dogs International; Boarding Home Operators, the New Jersey State Police, the Medical Reserve Corps, and New Jersey Department of Transportation Operating Engineers.

A total of 16 training courses were provided to 820 participants.

The needs of special populations are integrated into all aspects of training and technical assistance provided by NJDMHTB, including traumatized children and adolescents, first responders, mental health and public health providers and ethnic minorities. The training also includes a discussion of special populations that may emerge because disasters, such as people who are in danger of becoming homeless or losing their livelihoods.

NJ COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

During the report period, the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities launched its NJCDD “Emergency Preparedness Training Course” designed specifically for people with developmental disabilities. The training course explores core ideas of emergencies for consumers; e.g., what situations are emergencies, how people’s lives are impacted by emergencies, and identifying those who can provide help during an emergency.

The NJCDD recognizes that the daily routine of people with developmental disabilities is most influenced by day programs; and that it is important to have conversations about how an emergency would change schedules and/or possibly close day programs. At the end of the 3-hour training, participants leave with knowledge of whom to ask for help during an emergency, information about personal disaster plans, and instructions on how to assemble a supply kit and disaster “Go Bag.”

The NJDDC conducted the training in conjunction with National Preparedness Month in September 2008. The first training programs were provided to people living in group homes and supervised apartments.

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COMMUNITY

Through a collaborative effort among the NJ Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the NJ Office of Emergency Management and the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, New Jersey sponsored a training course developed by the Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network (CEPIN), “Emergency Responders and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community: Taking the First Steps to Disaster Preparedness.”

The course focuses on “...broadening the scope of awareness and preparedness between emergency responders and deaf and hard of hearing consumers prior to the occurrence of natural and man-made disasters...[and] by introducing the two audiences to each other, CEPIN encourages networking and communication between two groups who frequently encounter communication breakdowns.”

During April of 2008, sixty deaf/hard of hearing consumers and emergency responders successfully completed this program in three counties: Atlantic, Middlesex and Bergen.

PRESENTATIONS TO EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

The diversity of its membership positions the NJ SNAP as a unique information resource; during this annual report time period, presentations were made to the following organizations:

October 20, 2007 - Bergen County Annual Community Emergency Response Teams Day, Mawah

November 7, 2007 – Multiple Sclerosis Society of Northern NJ,

November 17, 2007 – NJ Emergency Management Association Annual Conference, Atlantic City

January 8, 2008 – National Organization on Disability Annual Conference, Washington DC

February 7, 2008 – Salem County OEM, Woodstown

February 20, 2008 – Ocean County Office of Disabilities, Toms River

February 26, 2008 – Mercer County Human Services Advisory Council, Lawrenceville

March 29, 2008 – Abilities Expo, Edison

June 9, 2008 – Removing Silos, NJODH, Hamilton Township

June 12, 2008 – Burlington Community Organization Active in Disaster, Westampton

August 12, 2008 – FEMA Urban Hazards Forum V: Conference on Emergency Preparedness for Special Needs Populations, New York City *

August 15, 2008 – NJ Domestic Preparedness Planning Group, Hamilton Township
September 3, 2008 – NJ DOH Risk Communicators, Hamilton Township

* This type of conference is a “first” for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The conference served as a forum to improve preparedness, conduct training, demonstrate exercises and share best practices for special needs individuals and communities. Various presentations and breakout sessions highlighted the advances and challenges related to ensuring emergency preparedness for special needs populations.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA

The NJSNAP uses mass media to promote SNAP goals and objectives. Below are links to articles highlighting SNAP activities:

The group was featured in an article published in the NJ Council on Development Disabilities “People & Families Magazine” January 2007 [“More Than a Motto: Be Prepared” <http://www.njddc.org/PF1-4.pdf>].

National Association of State & Territorial Health Officials - NJSNAP featured in “At-Risk Populations in Emergencies: A Review of State and Local Stories, Tools, and Practices” report April 2008, - http://www.astho.org/pubs/State_local_review_Final.pdf

The NJ Register Ready launch was featured in the following print, radio and television media outlets in 2008: Courier Post, Camden County, The Press of Atlantic City, The Trenton Times, The Asbury Park Press, The Salem Sunbeam, 1020 AM WIBG, 1400 AM WOND, 92.7 FM WOMB, News 12 NJ, NJN News, and www.nj.com. A radio, print and outdoor advertising campaign “Preparing is Caring – Are You Register Ready ?” also supported the registry deployment.