



## *Integrating Homeless Populations into Disaster Planning*

People experiencing homelessness can be particularly vulnerable to disasters' adverse impacts due to the compounding effects of chronic disease, lack of shelter, and extreme poverty. Communities are not always well prepared to meet the disaster-related needs of homeless individuals, who are often excluded from emergency planning activities.

VEMEC, ASPR, and SNAPS are leading a diverse interagency collaborative that includes governmental, non-profit and private sector agencies. Together, we are developing a **Homeless Disaster Planning Toolkit** to help practitioners and policymakers more effectively integrate homeless populations into disaster preparedness, planning, and response. Workgroups have been established to develop materials that focus on three identified priority areas:

- **Clinical Guidance for Health Care Providers**
- **Communication and Coordination**
- **Training and Technical Assistance**

### Clinical Guidance for Health Care Providers

Chronic physical and behavioral health conditions within the homeless population are often exacerbated during disasters. Clinicians with experience caring for homeless individuals are critical during disasters, but pre-event training and just-in-time guidance enhances the ability of non-specialty clinicians to provide care to this population.

*Topics addressed include:*

- » Health care facility and provider capabilities
- » Chronic and behavioral health conditions during disasters
- » Substance use disorders and drug supply continuity
- » Communicable diseases, sexually transmitted infections, and contraception

### Communication and Coordination

Targeted planning is necessary to ensure emergency communications are accessible to homeless populations and ensure individuals know what to do and what services are available during a disaster.

*Topics addressed include:*

- » Culturally competent emergency risk communication and messaging
- » Effective vehicles for emergency messaging and outreach
- » Access and functional needs in communications
- » Collaboration and coordination among community-based organizations (CBOs)
- » Collaboration and coordination between CBOs, and emergency management organizations before, during, and after disasters

### Training and Technical Assistance to CBO Service Providers

Training and technical assistance is needed to ensure that CBOs are able to meet the challenges of providing services to an even larger homeless population during and after disasters.

*Topics addressed include:*

- » Organizational readiness for disasters
- » Continuity of service operations planning
- » Providing essential services: shelter, food, health care, and case management
- » Surge capacity to meet client demand following a disaster
- » CBO collaboration and integration into emergency management

For more information or to participate in one of the workgroup areas, contact:  
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### SNAPS

HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) supports the nationwide commitment to ending homelessness by providing approximately \$2 billion annually in funding to nonprofit organizations and State and local governments for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs. The SNAPS Office is responsible for reporting annually to Congress on the numbers of homeless persons nationwide. The SNAPS Office also works with more than 400 Continuums of Care to support the inclusion of homeless families and individuals in community disaster response and recovery.



### VEMEC

The Veterans Emergency Management Evaluation Center (VEMEC) is a leading center for the study and development of best practices in emergency management. It helps the US Department of Veterans Affairs and other organizations optimize disaster risk management and integrate it into their strategy and operations, improve their ability to function during a disaster, and strengthen communities locally, nationally, and globally. Core funding for VEMEC is provided by the Office of Public Health, Department of Veterans Affairs.



### ASPR

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Division for At-Risk Individuals, Behavioral Health, and Community Resilience (ABC) provides subject matter expertise, education, and coordination to internal and external partners to ensure that the access and functional needs of at-risk individuals and behavioral health issues are integrated in the public health and medical emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities of the nation to facilitate and promote community resilience and national health security.