

Preparedness in the Southwest Course

Module 4: Special Populations

Recent catastrophic disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, have provided many lessons learned for public health and emergency planners on assessing the unmet human service needs during and after a major emergency. Traditional methods of communicating health and emergency information often fall short of the goal of reaching everyone in a community. An essential preparedness activity must include a plan to address the needs of the entire population your agency serves. Identifying at-risk and hard-to-reach populations is an integral part of the planning process. This module will provide a guide to help define, locate, and reach special, vulnerable, and at-risk populations during an emergency.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define special populations and classify special populations into broad categories.
2. Describe the community engagement process for identifying special populations in your community.
3. Understand the importance of research and data collection of special needs groups.
4. Understand the importance of special needs support systems.
5. Identify barriers and unique challenges of persons with special needs that can impede their ability to be self-sufficient before, during, and after an emergency.
6. Identify non-traditional means of communications and alternative alert systems needed for hard-to-reach populations that require additional instruction or assistance.
7. Identify evacuation and shelter planning considerations for special needs populations.

CDC Core Competencies addressed:

Competency 1: Describe the public health role in emergency response in a range of emergencies that might arise.

Competency 4: Describe his/her functional role(s) in emergency response and demonstrate his/her role(s) in regular drills.

Competency 6: Describe communication role(s) in emergency response:

- within the agency using established communication systems.
- with the media.
- with the general public.
- personal (with family, neighbors).

Target Capabilities

Citizen Preparedness and Participation

Citizen Protection: Evacuation and/or In-Place Protection

Emergency Public Information and Warning

Medical Surge

Mass Care (Sheltering, Feeding, and Related Services)