



Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) – Hawai'i Island Fosters Disaster Preparedness through Person-Centered Emergency Planning

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Aging and Disability Resource Center – Hawai'i Island, part of the Hawai'i County Office of Aging, developed and implemented a Person-Centered Emergency Planning Program to encourage greater disaster preparedness among older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers and to strengthen people's connections to community resources and natural supports.

Impetus

The rapid and far-reaching impacts to the COVID-19 pandemic have been a catalyst for creative programming among aging and disabilities network agencies. On the Big Island of Hawai'i, when communities went into lockdown as the pandemic spread, access to services and supports for kupuna (Hawai'i's elders), people with disabilities, and caregivers became very limited. Drawing on the ADRC's person-centered culture, and recognizing that preparedness is integral to emergency response, the ADRC team developed a new Person-Centered Emergency Planning Program.

The program is designed to help community members identify, learn about, and connect with community organizations as well as natural support resources such as neighbors and family that can provide assistance during emergency situations. The program seeks to encourage people to be proactive in planning for disasters and to identify support options

even when community services may not be available. Although the pandemic spurred the creation of the program, it is relevant to a wide range of emergency and disaster situations. The person-centered structure of the program allows it to be responsive to individuals with diverse needs.

Implementation

The Person-Centered Emergency Planning Program is comprised of several components. At the core of the program is an Emergency Planning Workbook that results in an individualized person-centered emergency support plan. The workbook gathers key personal and medical information; encourages individuals to consider potential needs such as transportation and grocery shopping and to identify resources that could help; lists important items for an emergency kit; addresses sheltering in place and preparing for emergency

shelters; reviews important documents and safe storage; has support plan tips; and includes county and other contacts. Reflecting person-centered practices, the workbook has a template for a one-page profile and for a ‘talk story’ which is a practice that strengthens rapport and is essential in Hawaiian culture.



PERSON CENTERED EMERGENCY

SUPPORT PLAN FOR:

My One-Page Profile

Name:

Age



Picture

What people appreciate about me:

What is important to me:

How to support me during an emergency

Talk Story

This is a great place to share more about who you are, your history, where you worked, who your family is, what makes you happy, what makes you scared. Include what things you may need help with and what things you like to do on your own. Who is important in your life and how may they help you if needed. What is your primary language?

To support individuals in completing the workbook and developing their plan, the program includes online and in-person training. While the original program implementation plan emphasized in-person training, as COVID restrictions increased, adaptations were made. The program team quickly pivoted and developed a training video that individuals can access from the agency website (visit <https://www.hcoahawaii.org/programs-and-trainings>). Additionally, options for one-on-one phone sessions were implemented for people requiring more support to complete their plans or lacking internet access. Currently, as COVID restrictions have lifted, the option for in-person group training is available. Over 300 people have completed training with more trainings scheduled in the months ahead. The training draws on a strengths-based approach to planning and focuses participants' attention on what they can do and on the resources and natural supports available to them.

A third component of the program addresses another critical element of disaster readiness which is preparing an emergency kit. Program participants are provided with items to start their own personalized emergency kits and the workbook helps them identify additional items important for their situation. Emergency kit items, which are provided in ADRC-branded insulated bags, include, for example, face masks, hand sanitizer, a lantern, a first aid kit, a blanket, and a water cube. Funding through the CARES Act will cover the costs for a total of 900 starter emergency kits.

Implementation of the Person-Centered Emergency Planning Program has been a collaborative effort since program development began in 2020. The ADRC team was instrumental in developing the program components. The Hawai'i County Office of Aging administrative team helped in purchasing starter kit items and provided support with collecting participant feedback. The agency's I&A staff contributed ideas and feedback for program development, have assisted in developing and distributing kits, and helped with processing participant feedback data. The ADRC collaborates with

local non-profits, the county nutrition program, Coordinated Services for the Elderly, case management agencies, and programs supporting older adults and people with disabilities to help promote and offer training, distribute emergency kits, and schedule workbook support sessions.

The program is funded in part by the County of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i State Executive Office on Aging, and through CARES Act funding. In terms of program sustainability, the training and workbook components can be incorporated into ongoing agency operations. The majority of program costs are for emergency kit items currently covered by CARES Act funding. In the future, the program could continue with a smaller emergency kit or without a kit. The ADRC could also seek other funding sources.



After Action

Through a consumer satisfaction survey, the ADRC team has been able to measure the benefits of developing a personalized emergency support plan to program participants. Along with quantitative survey findings, many participants shared that they feel greater peace of mind now that they are better prepared for emergency situations.

In addition to benefits to participants, the program has also benefited staff and the agency. Developing and implementing the program provided an avenue for the ADRC team to make a difference and to offer a

meaningful resource to people in a difficult and scary time. For the agency more broadly, emergency planning can foster greater preparedness and independence among the ADRC's target populations. From an I&A perspective, the program strengthens participants' connections to community and natural supports which can allow I&A staff to focus efforts on those most in need when an emergency occurs. Proactive person-centered emergency planning creates greater resilience in the community in blue sky and emergency times.

The Benefits of Emergency Preparedness

98% found the material to be helpful in planning for an emergency

74% reported they completed their Emergency Support Plan Workbook

80% completed their Emergency Kit

93% reported they felt more prepared for an emergency after completing the training

96% felt they learned about new resources available to help when needed

98% stated they would recommend this training to others

Visit the Aging and Disability Resource Center - Hawai'i Island at: <https://www.hcoahawaii.org/>

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