

Key Principles of Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness involves planning and preparing for potential emergencies to minimize their impact on individuals and communities. Effective preparedness can save lives, reduce injuries and mitigate property damage. It ensures a coordinated response and recovery, enhancing community resilience.



Community Health Workers' Role



CHWs are often trusted, effectively disseminating information and mobilizing resources.



They can act as first responders, providing immediate assistance during emergencies and help coordinate resources and services, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the necessary support.



CHWs educate the community on emergency preparedness, ensuring that individuals know how to respond effectively.

Ensure Personal and Community Preparedness



Establish clear communication channels for disseminating information before, during and after an emergency.



Develop and regularly update plans that outline roles, responsibilities and procedures during an emergency.



Maintain a list of key contacts, including emergency services, local authorities and community leaders.



Encourage individuals and families to prepare emergency kits with essential supplies (e.g., water, food, medications, first aid supplies).

Resources:

It is essential to have a comprehensive list of contact information for local emergency services, support organizations and training opportunities.

This can include:

- Local fire departments
- Police departments
- Emergency medical services
- Local health departments
- Community support organizations



Federal Contacts and Resources:



Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- General Contact: 1-800-621-3362 (FEMA Helpline)
- Disaster Assistance: [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.fema.gov/disaster-assistance)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Emergency Preparedness and Response:
CDC Emergency Preparedness (800) 232-4636
Public Health Emergency Operations Center: (770) 488-7100

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR): (877) 696-6775
- Public Health Emergency: [phe.gov](https://www.phe.gov)

National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)

- General Information: [aspr.hhs.gov](https://www.aspr.hhs.gov)

Other Coping Resources

Crisis Text Line:

Free, 24/7 texting service for mental health support and crisis intervention. Text **HOME** to **741741** or visit [crisistextline.org](https://www.crisistextline.org).

United Way's 211 Network:

Provides multiple resources, including mental wellness care. Call 2-1-1, available 24/7, or visit [211.org](https://www.211.org).

National Domestic Violence Hotline:

Call **800-799-7233** or text **START** to **88788**.

National Sexual Assault Helpline:

Call **800-656-HOPE**.

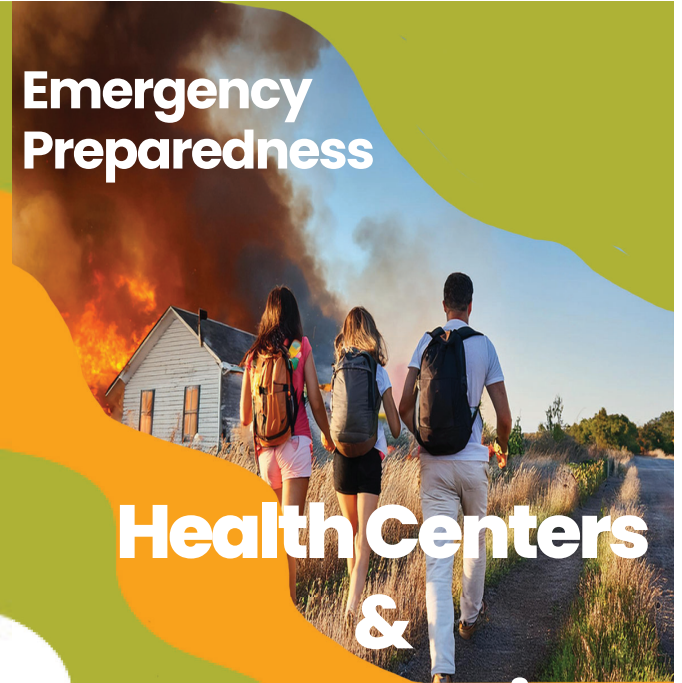
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

This provides free, confidential support to people experiencing mental-health-related distress. Call or text **988**, or visit [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

SAMHSA Distress Helpline:

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has a Disaster Distress helpline that provides counseling and support to survivors experiencing emotional distress. You can call **800-985-5990**, visit [samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov), or send a text to **66746** with phrase **TalkWithUs** for **English** or **Hablamos** for **Spanish**. This service is available 24/7.

Emergency Preparedness



Health Centers & Community Health Workers



Building Healthy Communities
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Emergency Preparedness Protocols

Creating a Family Emergency Plan:

Consider the specific hazards that could affect your area (hurricanes, earthquakes, floods). Include a shelter plan, evacuation route, communication plan and meeting point for you and family members.

Building an Emergency Kit:

Include the basic necessities like food, water and first-aid supplies. Also consider important documents, flashlight with extra batteries, cash and a whistle.

Communication Strategies:

Have a list of emergency contacts and a way to charge your phone, like a solar charger or a power bank. Use SMS or messaging apps. Social media can be helpful for updates and to let people know you're okay. Keep a portable radio for news and consider enabling Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs).

Available Resources and How to Leverage Them

Local Agencies:

Collaborate with agencies and organizations that provide services to special populations (e.g., disability services, senior centers).

Community Networks:

Utilize community networks to disseminate information and provide support during emergencies.

Training and Drills:

Conduct regular training and drills to ensure that special populations and their caregivers are prepared for emergencies.

Technology:

Use technology (e.g., apps, and social media) to provide the community with real-time updates and resources.

Identifying Special Populations: Who Are They?



Elderly: Older adults who may have mobility issues or chronic health conditions.



Disabled: Individuals with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities.



Non-English Speakers: People who may need help understanding emergency instructions in the primary language emergency services use.



Children: Young children who require special care and attention.



Low-Income Families: Households that may lack resources to prepare adequately for emergencies.

Tailoring Emergency Plans

Accessibility:

Ensure that emergency plans and communication are accessible to all, including those with disabilities (e.g., using sign language interpreters, braille, and easy-to-read formats).

Language:

Provide emergency information in multiple languages to cater to non-English speakers.

Special Supplies:

Include specific items, such as medications, mobility aids and infant care supplies, in emergency kits for special populations.

Personalized Plans:

Develop personalized emergency plans that consider the unique needs of each particular population group.

Training and Resources

Regular training and skill updates are crucial for maintaining preparedness. Health centers should ensure staff participate in regular drills and exercises to prepare for emergencies.

Response Protocols During Emergencies

Initial Response Steps

Panic clouds judgment. Clear thinking is your best friend in an emergency. Stay calm and assess the situation. Is there immediate danger? If so, move to safety. Use your communication strategies to inform others about your status and gather more information. Activate your emergency plan.

Coordinate With Other Agencies

Identify key partners (fire department, police, EMS and public health agencies). Establish relationships with these organizations prior to an emergency by attending community meetings. Stay informed by knowing your local emergency management plan, including protocols.

Provide Support

Keep in mind that everyone handles an emergency differently. Emotional and practical support goes a long way. Start with just being there and listening, validating feelings and offering reassurance. Practical support can include providing food, clothing or a place to stay. Help others navigate resources and services they might need.