

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES – A CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNITY MEDICAL PRACTICES

PRACTICE EMERGENCY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Planning

- Conduct hazard and risk assessments to identify likely threats to practice operations and prioritize planning based on probability and anticipated impact.
- Develop strategies to mitigate or reduce disaster impact on practice operations.
- Coordinate with health system and public health agency plans.
- Complete emergency planning for the practice to include:
 - Identification of command structure and roles and responsibilities for emergency operations.
 - Outline of plan for life-safety emergencies in facility.
 - Protection of medical records.
 - Protection of medical and non-medical supplies, including vaccines.
 - Continuity of operations, in the event of staff or supply shortages, or loss of access to facility.
 - Surge in demand for clinical services.

Communications

- Develop plan to communicate with staff regarding practice operations and sign up for local and state health alert networks.
- Develop plan for communication with:
 - Public health department.
 - Local emergency management agency.
 - Health system, local hospitals, local practices and clinics.
- Develop plan to communicate with patients before and during disasters:
 - Add disaster-related information to voicemail and website.
 - Use social media to convey status of practice and disaster-related recommendations.

Training and Exercises

- Train all new staff in practice emergency plans and procedures and annually provide updates for all staff.
- Plan drills to test elements of the plan, including coordination with local health system and government agencies.
- Evaluate plan and staff performance; revise plan as appropriate.

PREPARING PATIENTS WITH SPECIAL HEALTHCARE NEEDS FOR DISASTERS

- Use electronic record to develop panel or registry of high-risk patients who are vulnerable in disasters; those with chronic medical conditions, access and mobility challenges, reliance on assistive technology, and/or nutritional or respiratory support.
- Plan for targeted communications and outreach to these patients during and after disasters, using a range of communication channels.
- Provide patients with care summaries containing list of current diagnoses, medications and other up-to-date information after each encounter.
- Review key elements of disaster planning during medical encounters with high-risk patients.
- Encourage patients to:
 - Sign up for government special needs registries, enhanced 911 services, utility company priority lists, emergency notification and early warning systems, where available.
 - Plan for fire safety: smoke alarms, escape routes from each room with accommodations for wheelchairs if necessary; inclusion of caregivers, schools, and workplaces in plans.
 - Plan for electricity outage: generator, car battery, 12-volt inverter for automobiles.
 - Plan with durable medical equipment companies for equipment failure, back-up supplies.
 - Maintain a minimum one week supply of medications, medical supplies, food and water, pet food.
 - Prepare a “go-kit”: contact lists, medicines and supplies, insurance cards, medical information summary.