Minnesota Department of Health

Who Might be Considered "At Risk" Populations During Disaster and Crisis

Background

Some individuals have and may have greater difficulty accessing the public health and medical services they require following a disaster or emergency. At-risk individuals may also have needs in one or more of the following functional areas:

CMIST:
Communication
Medical
Maintaining **I**ndependence
Supervision
Transportation

At-risk groups may include children, senior citizens, and pregnant women as well as people who have disabilities, live in institutionalized settings, are from diverse cultures, have limited English proficiency or are non-English speaking, are transportation disadvantaged, have chronic medical disorders, or have pharmacological dependency.

Other factors may also place a person's risk of negative outcomes of health safety, and well being. They may experience significant barriers in maintaining medical care, food, shelter, and other basic needs. Factors that increase the risk of harm during crisis and disaster may also include:
1. Economic disadvantage – unable to stockpile supplies that may be needed during crisis and disaster
2. Absence of a support network - some children; homeless; travelers; and the socially, culturally, or geographically isolated

While these additional factors do not automatically make someone at risk, three overarching principles to remember when determining who may be considered "at risk,"

1. Not all people who are considered "at risk" are at risk
2. One cannot automatically tell who is "at risk" simply by appearance
3. There may be differences in who is more "at risk" than others depending on the type and or kind of crisis.
4. CMIST is a useful tool but is just a starting point

For more information

Provide resources for more information, including web sites and publications

Minnesota Department of Health

http://www.health.state.mn.us/oep/

The American Red Cross
http://www.redcross.org

Ready.gov

http://www.ready.gov/

Disability Preparedness.gov

http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/

Centers for Disease Control Bioterrorism

https://emergency.cdc.gov/bioterrorism/

Office of Emergency Preparedness
Don Sheldrew
651-201-5738
Don.sheldrew@state.mn.us