

# CDC BRIEF

## Addressing Emergency Preparedness Needs of Individuals Living with Cognitive Impairment and Their Care Partners:

### *Role of the Public Health and Aging Services Networks*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alzheimer's Association have developed *The Healthy Brain Initiative: The Public Health Road Map for State and National Partnerships, 2013-2018*. This Road Map proposes 35 actions to increase the quality of life for people with cognitive impairment. An action item in the "Policy and Partnership" area is:

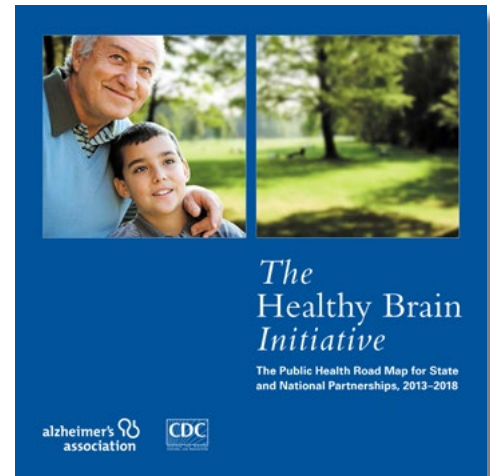
Policy-02. Integrate cognitive health and impairment into state and local government plans (e.g., aging, coordinated chronic disease, preparedness, falls, and transportation plans).

Public health and aging services professionals at the state and local levels are in unique positions to undertake critical activities to improve emergency preparations for older adults, particularly those living with dementia.

A recent survey of caregivers in Florida found that nearly half of those surveyed said they had not made plans or other preparations for a natural disaster such as a hurricane. Further, less than 10% had registered with their local emergency management agency for assistance in evacuating to a special-needs shelter. Learn more about "*Assessing the Needs of Elder Floridians*" survey.

Although potentially disruptive and frightening for anyone, emergencies and disasters place an additional burden on individuals living with cognitive impairments who may not be able to understand the nature of the emergency and the change in the pattern of regular life. Additionally, these individuals may have many additional needs they are unable to articulate or express that are critical to their activities of daily living and well-being. Thus, families and communities need to be well-prepared for natural disasters and other emergency situations. Among critical activities that public health and aging services planners and providers need to address the following:

- Develop special needs registries to identify people who may need help before and during a disaster.
- Implement first responders training to address the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers including law enforcement officials, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, and other appropriate audiences.
- Include people with dementia, their caregivers, and those with expertise in dementia in developing emergency preparedness plans at the state and local levels.



- Create specialized education materials and programs on disaster preparedness for people with dementia and their caregivers.

Messaging will vary depending upon the needs of individuals and local preparedness scenarios. Important messages for public health and aging services planners and providers need to consider incorporating into specialized materials and programs the following:

- Develop a personal disaster plan and a backup plan.
- Enroll the person with dementia in a safety program (for examples, see Home Safety for People with Alzheimer's Disease).
- Prepare an emergency evacuation kit that includes written instructions, emergency contacts, medical information, and a recent photograph of the person with dementia in a sealed plastic bag.
  - For hot-weather power outages, the kit should include water for dehydration, a wet washcloth, instant ice pack, battery fan, electrolyte fluids.
  - For cold-weather power outages, the kit should include warm clothing and ready-to-eat food.
  - As appropriate, kits should include incontinence supplies and durable medical equipment, and the caregiver should be prepared to have a supply of any needed medications on hand.
- Anticipate potential relocation sites should evacuation become necessary, including hotels or motels, homes of friends/family members, general shelters and, in some states, special needs shelters.

## Resources

### *Identifying Vulnerable Older Adults and Legal Options for Increasing Their Protection During All-Hazards Emergencies: A Cross-Sector Guide for States and Communities*

This CDC guide covers topic areas such as developing plans, partnering and collaboration, using data for action, building registries, using law-based solutions, sheltering, and caregiver preparedness.

### *Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults*

This CDC web portal provides links to information, tools, and resources to assist in multi-sector planning for older adults in all-hazard emergencies.

### *Emergency Preparedness and Response*

This Administration on Community Living website provides resources and strategies that can assist individuals and providers to better prepare for, and respond to emergencies and disasters.

### *Federal Emergency Management Agency*

This FEMA website includes hazard-specific information and relevant materials for family disaster planning.