Appendix B: Making the Case

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Making the Case to the Health Care Sector

During disasters, health care systems often must adjust the ways in which services are delivered by moving care out of hospitals and into communities and by using team-based strategies to meet the multifaceted needs of survivors. Recovery offers an opportunity to leverage these disaster experiences, relationships, and resources to shift to new models of care. This restructuring, along with long-term recovery plans, can address chronic community health concerns such as access to and continuity of services.

**Advantages of Well-Designed Planning for Disasters in the Health Care Sector**

Pre-disaster recovery plans developed in a collaborative and comprehensive way can help to:

* Stabilize, strengthen, and integrate existing resources;
* Identify resources that should be replaced or rebuilt;
* Develop new preventive and health care delivery approaches that are sustainable and affordable;
* Predetermine which vulnerable populations’ demands for health care services are likely to surge during emergencies;
* Create a useful and aligned strategic model to focus the efforts of multiple stakeholders; and
* Open pathways to new resources that are available to reorganize health care infrastructures and modernize care.

**Possible Challenges in Disaster Recovery for the Health Care Sector**

After a disaster occurs, the greatest challenge in the health care sector is addressing the increase in urgent need for medical care while managing diminished capacity for that care due to disruptions in the delivery infrastructure. The effects are especially pronounced among already vulnerable populations and in communities with previously overburdened care delivery systems. For medically vulnerable individuals, disaster-related disruption in primary care can result in a secondary surge of increased demand for medical services due to exacerbated health issues.

**Benefits of Possible Recovery Strategies for the Health Care Sector**

In the short term, a thorough assessment of the capacity and vulnerability of the health care system, the establishment of health care coalitions and other coordinating groups, the development of continuity and recovery plans, and the establishment of a resilient health information technology system will provide opportunities for improving access to the health care system and the quality of care in the long term and for making the community healthier.

For more information, see Chapter 6 of IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2015. *Healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities after disasters:*

*Strategies, opportunities, and planning for recovery*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Making the Case to the Public Health Sector

Public health has a central role to play in the realization of a healthy community. Healthy communities are contingent upon the optimal functioning and integration of services, all of which can be disrupted during a disaster. In the short term, health will suffer directly after a disaster disrupts critical infrastructure, programs, and services, such as utilities, assistance programs, transportation, housing, and social services. The health consequences of long-term effects, such as the exodus of businesses and professionals, community disinvestment, and physical blight, will also need to be addressed. Successful recovery will depend on the knowledge and coordination of all organizations involved in population health outcomes. Public health agencies can play a focal role given that they traditionally serve as neutral conveners and have relationships with a range of sectors.

**Advantages of Well-Designed Planning for Disasters in the Public Health Sector**

Pre-disaster recovery plans developed in a collaborative and comprehensive way can help to:

* + - Provide a useful and aligned strategic model to focus the efforts of multiple stakeholders;
    - Develop comprehensive assessments of the community’s health;
    - Engage community stakeholders in pre-disaster community health improvement and recovery planning;
    - Ensure that public health community programs and services are integrated into healthy community and disaster recovery planning processes;
    - Promote more resilient design of new construction;
    - Promote consideration of quality of life in planning for community redesign (e.g., bicycle lanes, walking and jogging trails, parks and other green spaces, community gardens);
    - Identify priority areas for redevelopment that are informed by health disparities;
    - Develop strategies designed to retain the health services workforce; and
    - Promote access to care as part of action plans.

**Possible Challenges in Disaster Recovery for the Public Health Sector**

The public health sector must address a multisector recovery effort after a disaster while carrying out day-to-day functions of fostering good health, offering protection from unsafe or hazardous conditions, preventing disease, and disseminating credible health information. The trajectory of such recovery will depend not only on the characteristics of the disaster, but also on the pre-event physical and behavioral health and social well-being of the affected population and the extent of pre-disaster preparation for response and recovery.

**Benefits of Possible Recovery Strategies for the Public Health Sector**

Within the tragedy of a disaster lies a unique opportunity for a community to re-envision itself through the lens of a healthy community. By leveraging new funding sources, partnerships, and technologies and redirecting existing funding streams, the process of recovery can be leveraged to address previously identified gaps in a community, strengthen and expand existing programs and partnerships, and engage the community in a process of envisioning and building a better post-disaster future.

For more information, see Chapter 5 of IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2015. *Healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities after disasters:*

*Strategies, opportunities, and planning for recovery*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Making the Case to the Behavioral Health Sector

Behavioral health disruptions are among the most frequent adverse health effects after exposure to a disaster. Almost everyone in a community that is struck by a disaster will feel some type of emotional effect. For most, functional recovery will occur without intervention, but for some individuals, the impacts of a disaster on behavioral health will be severe and long-lasting and can impede their recovery. Therefore, it is critically important to identify those individuals at risk and connect them with appropriate preventive and/or rehabilitative services. Doing so will require pre-disaster planning to establish clear roles and responsibilities for the stakeholders at all levels, an agile and resilient system for delivery of behavioral health services, and a process for evaluating the needs for those services so that those in need receive timely and efficient treatment.

**Advantages of Well-Designed Planning for Disasters in the Behavioral Health Sector**

Pre-disaster recovery plans developed in a collaborative and comprehensive way can help to:

* Identify activities that mitigate adverse behavioral health effects in survivors;
* Ascertain the gaps in the current system for addressing behavioral health needs;
* Recognize opportunities to strengthen the behavioral health sector by leveraging disaster-related resources and experiences;
* Integrate behavioral health activities and programming into other sectors;
* Maximize the participation of local available resources in behavioral health; and
* Identify and build upon local capacities and networks.

**Possible Challenges in Disaster Recovery for the Behavioral Health Sector**

When a disaster occurs, the distress of the event and the recovery process can generate a wide range of responses in community members’ lives.The multiplicity of individuals and organizations with key roles in supporting behavioral health necessitates effective leadership and coordination at all levels. Behavioral health services may not meet a community’s behavioral health needs, especially for underserved populations, and these capacity issues are likely to be exacerbated by a disaster. Finally, current disaster behavioral health programs and funding focus primarily on the immediate response and not on the long-term behavioral health and emotional well-being of survivors and responders.

**Benefits of Possible Recovery Strategies for the Behavioral Health Sector**

Disasters often, of necessity, result in an expansion of community-based services and cross-sector collaboration. Planning activities can strengthen the existing system and its physical infrastructure by ensuring that behavioral health providers are prepared to function as part of a coordinated system. In the aftermath of a disaster, increased attention to mental health issues and the emergence of creative approaches to meeting disaster-related needs can be leveraged to transform long-term behavioral health care and reduce barriers to care.

For more information, see Chapter 7 of IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2015. *Healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities after disasters: Strategies, opportunities, and planning for recovery*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Making the Case to the Social Services Sector

During disasters, social service providers play a crucial role in meeting basic human needs and providing psychosocial and behavioral health support for survivors. A wide range of providers act to directly assist individuals and families who have insufficient resources to meet their needs. Recovery offers an opportunity to build a stronger social service system by leveraging new resources, lessons learned from the response, and new partnerships to increase capacity and coordination among providers. A stronger system can improve the community’s health and better address the causes of social vulnerability.

**Advantages of Well-Designed Planning for Disasters in the Social Services Sector**

Pre-disaster recovery plans developed in a collaborative and comprehensive way can help to:

* Define roles and responsibilities for different social service providers;
* Enable better sharing of records and information on clients during disasters;
* Improve access to recovery resources, information, and programs;
* Reduce redundant efforts and free up time and resources previously dedicated to those efforts;
* Anticipate and meet workforce needs for social service agencies during recovery;
* Strengthen social support networks by facilitating efforts to reunite families and promote community resilience;
* Enhance efforts to increase accessibility and reach the most vulnerable populations to better provide needed social services; and
* Create compatible structures, policies, and procedures that improve coordination across federal, state, and local social service systems.

**Possible Challenges in Disaster Recovery for the Social Services Sector**

Disasters can generate increased demand for social services because of their impacts on existing vulnerable populations and the creation of newly vulnerable populations. At the same time, capacity to provide social services is decreased during a disaster as a result of interruptions in service delivery and displacement of both providers and clients. Disruptions in social services can have negative consequences for the health and well-being of a community and in the long term, magnify pre-existing inequalities for vulnerable populations.

**Benefits of Possible Recovery Strategies for the Social Services Sector**

Establishing forums for collaboration, establishing mechanisms for information sharing, and planning for fluctuations in social service workforces can help create a more resilient and sustainable social service system. Such a system can make a community healthier and more self-sufficient and better support the social and economic well-being of its members.

For more information, see Chapter 8 of IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2015. *Healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities after disasters:*

*Strategies, opportunities, and planning for recovery*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

In most communities in the United States, some individuals and families live in housing environments that are not supportive of health. Disasters can exacerbate these conditions by causing significant damage to structures, resulting in increased exposure to new threats. Following a disaster, health hazards within homes must be mitigated, and those displaced or made homeless require immediate access to safe temporary housing. Incorporating a housing perspective into disaster recovery can enable communities to improve their health by addressing these concerns and creating healthier housing.

Making the Case to the Housing Sector

**Advantages of Well-Designed Planning for Disasters in the Housing Sector**

Pre-disaster recovery plans developed in a collaborative and comprehensive way can help to:

* Conduct housing vulnerability and capacity assessments;
* Assess housing needs;
* Prevent unnecessary displacement;
* Protect homeowners and recovery workers against health risks;
* Provide short- and long-term temporary housing that meets health and human service needs; and
* Develop programs and procedures to enable rapid rebuilding of healthy housing.

**Possible Challenges in Disaster Recovery for the Housing Sector**

Housing is a well-documented determinant of health, and the burden of disease associated with inadequate housing is great. In addition, low-cost housing, including rental properties, tends to be concentrated in more vulnerable locations and is often affected disproportionately by disasters. Finally, post-disaster use of temporary housing that contains chemical contaminants such as high levels of formaldehyde has been associated with respiratory problems, sensitization, and other adverse health outcomes.

**Benefits of Possible Recovery Strategies for the Housing Sector**

Disaster recovery planning encourages a number of beneficial outcomes through short- and long-term housing designs that are efficient, durable, and equitable; that contribute to the health of residents through the use of safe, responsible materials in construction; and that encourage walkability and safety. Disaster recovery plans also help to engage community members and preserve and promote social connectedness to ensure that the needs of all community members are met while survivors and recovery workers are protected from the health hazards associated with unhealthy or unsafe housing.

For more information, see Chapter 10 of IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2015. *Healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities after disasters: Strategies, opportunities, and planning for recovery*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Making the Case to Emergency Managers

Most communities have some kind of plan or policy for how to deal with an emergency situation. In these plans, communities identify an individual or team of individuals that will execute their emergency or disaster recovery plan; while those individuals may have a variety of titles, they are referred to here as emergency managers. These individuals probably do not need to be convinced that emergency planning is beneficial to them or their community. However, they may need some help in understanding that disaster response does not end once a disaster is over and short-term recovery has occurred. Given that these individuals are perhaps the most knowledgeable about a community’s disaster recovery plan, it is essential to have them attend this meeting and support the goal of long-term disaster planning and recovery.

**Advantages of Well-Designed Planning for Disasters for Emergency Managers**

Emergency managers know the advantages of having a well-designed plan that supports coordination among community stakeholders in organizing and agreeing upon everyone’s role in the event of a disaster. This meeting represents an opportunity for them to accomplish many of the goals already highlighted for other sectors, such as:

* Enable better sharing of records and information during disasters;
* Improve access to recovery resources, information, and programs;
* Reduce redundant efforts and free up time and resources previously dedicated to those efforts;
* Create compatible structures, policies, and procedures that improve coordination across federal, state, and local social service systems;
* Provide a useful and aligned strategic model to focus the efforts of multiple stakeholders;
* Develop comprehensive assessments of the community’s health;
* Engage community stakeholders in pre-disaster community health improvement and recovery planning;
* Promote more resilient design of new construction; and
* Identify and build upon local capacities and networks.

**Possible Challenges in Disaster Recovery for Emergency Managers**

Emergency managers may find it challenging to broaden their conception of disaster recovery to include long-term rebuilding efforts and to understand that if a community is rebuilt to be more resilient, the effects of future disasters will be diminished. These individuals may also worry that these rebuilding plans will stretch disaster recovery resources too thin.

**Benefits of Possible Recovery Strategies for Emergency Managers**

Besides giving emergency managers an opportunity to share their knowledge of the community’s current disaster recovery plan, this meeting will allow them to have a hand in long-term planning. Their specialized understanding of immediate post-disaster needs and response should enable other organizations and sectors to better understand how they can contribute to a successful long-term recovery.