



**Laura M. Stough, Ph.D.**

**Department of Educational Psychology**

**Project REDD:**

**Research and Education on Disability and Disaster**

**Center on Disability and Development**

**Texas A&M University**

***From Hurricane Katrina to Paradise Wildfires, Exploring Themes in  
Disaster Human Services:  
Children and Youth with Special/Complex Needs***

**National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine**

**July 22-23, 2020**

# Research on People with Disabilities

- Have higher mortality rates
- Have proportionately higher property loss
- Are equally prepared for potential disasters
- May or may not evacuate expediently
- Have higher support needs during evacuation and sheltering
- Require more intensive case management during the recovery period
- Take longer to recover

Stough, L. M., & Kelman, I. (2018). People with disabilities and disasters. In H. Rodriguez, J. Trainor, & W. Donner (Eds.), *Handbook of Disaster Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. pp. 225-242). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.



# Children and Youth with Special/Complex Needs



# Emergency Preparation and Children with Special Health Care Needs

- Children with disabilities often rely on educational and community supports which can be disrupted in disasters (Peek & Stough, 2010)
- Studies on families with children with special health care needs find varying levels of emergency preparedness (Baker et al., 2010; 2013; Wolf-Fordam et al., 2015)
- Some successful small-scale public health interventions for CSHCNs and their families exist (e.g. Bagwell et al. 2016)
- Families of children with disabilities may require tailored disaster information to best meet their needs (Hipper et al., 2018)






Stough, L. M. & Ducey, E. M. (2019, June). Evacuating under fire: Children with special healthcare needs in disaster. *Research Counts*. Boulder, CO. Natural Hazards Center

# Findings

- Parents did not receive preparedness information or evacuation support specific to disability-related needs
- Difficulties in evacuating children with disabilities along with their durable medical equipment and assistive technology
- Parents often evacuated alone with their child
- Multiple temporary housing situations created repeated difficulties in accommodating disability-related needs
- Psychological supports post-disaster were not adapted for children with disabilities

# Psychological Factors

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- Few studies on the psychological experiences of children with disabilities experiencing disaster
  - People with developmental disabilities may have difficulties when encountering unusual and unexpected stimuli, such as often occur in emergency situations
  - Interventions which are adapted for children with cognitive disabilities or autism are particularly lacking

Stough, L. M., Ducey, E. M., & Kang, D. (2017). Addressing the needs of children with disabilities experiencing disaster or terrorism. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 19(24), 1-10.

# School Safety and Students with Disabilities

- Schools have the responsibility to ensure whole community drills, evacuation plans, and sheltering-in-place
- The needs of children with disabilities are often excluded in school disaster planning (Fifolt, Wakelee, Eldridge-Auffant, Carpenter, & Hites, 2017)
- Students with disabilities are also often excluded in disaster education efforts (Boon & Pagliano, 2013; Stough, Ducey, Kang, & Lee, 2020)
- However, several studies have demonstrated students with disabilities can effectively participate in disaster education with curricular modifications (Ronoh, Gaillard, & Marlowe, 2015a, 2015b)





# Teachers and Students with Disabilities



- Despite being affected by disasters themselves, teachers provide essential support to students and their families throughout all phases of the disaster
- Teachers' roles often expand to include instrumental and psychological supports
- Special education teachers provide support even while schools are closed and students displaced from home school district (Christ & Christ, 2002; McAdams Ducey & Stough, 2011; 2019)
- School personnel need to be well-trained and knowledgeable across school contexts (Stough, Kang, & Lee, 2019)
- School personnel are themselves also directly affected by disasters

# Voluntary and Non Profit Organizations in Response



- People with disabilities are often overlooked by volunteers (Parr, 1987: National Organization on Disability, 2005)
- Few VOADs focus specifically on the needs of people with disabilities (Katrina Aid Today, 2008; NVOAD, 2020)
- Increasing participation of disability-related organizations in issues surrounding emergency management and disaster risk reduction (AUCD, 2020)
- Disability-related organizations often are not connected with local emergency management (Project REDD, 2020)

**Dr. Laura M. Stough, Professor**  
**Department of Educational Psychology**

4225 TAMU  
704 Harrington Tower  
College Station, TX 77843-4225

Phone:(979) 845-8257

[lstough@tamu.edu](mailto:lstough@tamu.edu)

redd.tamu.edu  
resourcedirectory.tamu.edu