

Adult Foster Care Home Emergency Preparedness

Background

Beginning in the spring and over the summer of 2009, members of the [Adult Foster Care Advisory Council](#) began meeting with Division leadership to discuss and develop concepts and potential guidance for Michigan licensees on becoming better prepared for emergencies.

Some of the following content may be considered “Best Practices” and should not be confused with [licensing requirements](#).

The Council believes any of the ideas that follow, might save lives and reduce or eliminate suffering from further potential disaster inside and outside facility premises. Highlights of these emerging “Best Practices” topic areas include:

- [Admission Practices](#)
- [Resident Assessment Issues & Opportunities](#)
- [Resident Education](#)
- [Alarm Device Selections & Deployment](#)
- [Staff Levels & Training](#)
- [Emergency & Evacuation Strategies & Devices](#)
- [Licensee Relationships with First Responders](#)
- [Post-Evacuation Planning & Arrangements](#)

Admission Practices

- Discuss and provide standards, practices, and expectations for emergency evacuation drills with new residents during the application interview process
- [Admission forms](#) and [assessment tools](#) should be reviewed and reconsidered on an on-going basis
- Consider how the new resident’s emergency evacuation needs will be met, and how that prospective new resident’s emergency assistance requirements may impact staff’s ability to evacuate.

Resident Assessment Issues & Opportunities

- Evaluate existing residents’ capacities and needs for reacting to and participating in building evacuations
 - Knowledge should be gathered and maintained on a current basis for each given person’s abilities and challenges, taking all of the following into consideration:

- Vision
 - Hearing
 - Cognition
 - Nerve Sensitivities to temperature extremes
 - Mobility
 - Resident knowledge and learning ability regarding emergency preparedness
 - Resident's behavioral challenges
- Use tools such as [e-scores](#), [resident assessment](#) forms, and internal procedures, which may be helpful in learning about resident abilities and challenges
- Watch for changing resident conditions and regularly update assessments, and evacuation plans.
- Anticipate situations and select tactics for getting all residents, with each of their evacuation challenges out of the building

Resident Education

- Establish and maintain awareness and understanding levels of evacuation procedures with each resident
 - [Care Agreements](#) can include information regarding the expectation of the resident's participation in evacuation drills/practice
- To every extent possible, residents should be educated as to what their own reactions should be in the event of an emergency
 - Fire
 - Flood
 - Extreme weather
 - Power outage
- Plan for and schedule ongoing discussion and review to assure meaningful, optimal retention of information
- Use behavior modification, as approved in resident behavior plans, when conducting practice drills

Alarm Device Selection & Deployment

- Investigate alarm systems
 - New installations
 - Retrofits
- Consider individual resident needs/abilities
 - Can he/she (as well as the staff):
 - See the alarm?
 - Hear the alarm?
 - Feel the alarm?

- React to the alarm?

Staffing Levels & Training

- Assure staffing ratios are adequate to safely evacuate all residents at all times of day and night
- Review and practice evacuation plans and emergency procedures as often as possible
- Consider additional emergency evacuation drills that do not involve actual residents, but could involve other staff, volunteers or weighted dummies created to role-play residents and simulate challenges staff may face during an actual emergency
 - Please note that practice drills not involving residents do not count as rule required drills

Emergency & Evacuation Strategies and Devices

- Develop specific evacuation plans for each resident, taking into account each person's individual care needs and mobility
- Coordinate evacuation policies and procedures with local emergency responders (further information to be found in the following section)
- Practice drills with different simulated fire locations in the building
- Perform drills on days when new staff or residents are present

Licensee Relationships with First Responders

- Ensure that community emergency services and rescue networks have full and current knowledge of local AFC providers' locations and alternative access routes.
- Reach out to First Responders
 - Share resident profiles
 - Allow first responders to tour the facility
 - Receive input from the emergency personnel regarding property landscaping and address marking(s) to make the home visible, identifiable, and easy to access.
 - Check with local First Responders regarding any transportation of residents to a safe place during an emergency in the facility or bringing buses to temporarily shelter the residents in extreme weather, while the emergency is investigated.

Post-Evacuation Planning & Arrangements

- How will communications be maintained following an emergency evacuation and who is responsible for making contacts/calls?
 - Family
 - Staff
 - Emergency Personnel
 - Contract Agencies
 - Facility licensing agency
- Where will residents stay if returning to the building is not an option?
 - Pre-arrange alternate housing for residents
 - Local motels/hotels
 - Other licensed group homes/long-term care facilities
- Keep in mind the ongoing medical needs of residents
 - Will the pharmacy be able to provide extra medications and/or a current list of meds for each resident as well as any durable medical equipment required
 - Where are resident medical records located?
 - If in the home, what is the backup plan?
- Emergency plans must be kept available, current and up to date by reviewing plans on a regular basis

Conclusions and Getting Started

- Create (Update) a solid emergency plan for the most likely disaster-Fire, Flood, or Storm/High Winds
 - Contact the Fire Marshall or County Emergency Preparedness Office and invite them to walk through the facility for evacuation suggestions and emergency plans.
 - Develop in writing clear lines of communication
 - First Responders -- Identify Leaders
 - Staff
 - Licensee chain of command with back-ups for direct care staff to contact
 - Family
 - Define when residents can shelter-in or out and have alternate means available if original plan or location falls through
- Maintaining information and basic necessities will be crucial for an emergency
 - Create a 'Grab and Go' kit
 - Medications or current list of medications
 - Resident information including family contacts, medication information, and medical conditions
 - List of staff with contact information
 - Weather ban radio

- Have backup resident information in a secure location including:
 - Off location server/network
 - Paper copies in an alternate location
 - A portable drive/flash drive/disc that can be placed in the 'Grab and Go' kit
- Have backup food and water supplies
- Keep the emergency plan fresh
 - Drill, Drill, Drill! - Practice the plan
 - Staff
 - Residents
 - Emergency personnel
 - Update the plan

Licensee-*community* relations may be the most important part of meaningful emergency preparedness and successful crisis response. Invest time in building and maintaining positive, ongoing, relationships with neighbors, neighborhoods, and community partners of all kinds, which may find fewer negatives during an emergency when others are familiar with the residents, staff, and operations. For positive outcomes, share your vision of your emergency preparedness plans with your community.

Don't get overly concerned about the best place to start or even that there is one. Topics listed here might indicate a logical sequence for developing community relations, modifying agency procedures, and expanding emergency plans. Once you begin this process, it might become apparent for the need to implement stop-gap measures until more strategic plans can be implemented. First steps are always first steps and hugely better than taking none at all, or waiting too long -- again these best practices are just a guide to aid you in the process of determining the best emergency preparedness plans for your facility.

Disclaimer:

This resource information pertains specifically to adult foster care homes. Nevertheless, many of the suggestions presented may also be of value to homes for the aged.

Additional Resources

- <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/hhs/phs/APC/apcnursinghomeassess.pdf>

- <http://www.ready.gov/>

- <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>

- <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>

- http://beprepared.com/article.asp_O_ai_E_184_A_name_E_Michigan#top

- <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/index.html>

- <http://www.michigan.gov/michiganprepares>

- http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3507---,00.html

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