Assessing the Preparedness of Individuals with Disabilities Utilizing the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) Service

Lisle Hites, PhD\(^1\); Jessica Wakelee, MPH\(^1\); Renae Carpenter, LCSW, PIP\(^2\); Laurie Eldridge-Auffant MPH\(^2\); Matt Fifolt, PhD\(^1\); Grant Cochran, MPH\(^1\); Ariann Nassel, MA\(^1\)

1. Evaluation and Assessment Unit, UAB School of Public Health 2. Alabama Department of Public Health

**Introduction**

The State of Alabama Independent Living Service (SAIL) provides specialized in-home education and counseling, attendant care, training, and medical services to Alabamians with severe disabilities. The SAIL program has seven community-based offices located throughout the state to serve residents in all 67 counties. The State of Alabama, in conjunction with the State Independent Living Council, has pursued a new State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) to include elements of emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities.

**Methods**

Emergency preparedness assessments were administered by case managers between June 21 and December 9, 2013. Assessments followed a survey protocol and were delivered in-home to persons with disabilities. Respondents were frequently assisted by home care attendants to accurately record their responses.

**Participants**

A total of 364 surveys were collected representing 44 of Alabama's 67 counties. The distribution of responses by county is depicted in the map below.

**Results (n=364)**

- **Do you have an Emergency Plan?**
  - Yes: 96%
  - No: 4%

- **Do you have an Emergency Kit?**
  - Yes: 54%
  - No: 46%

- **What members of your personal support network are aware of your emergency plan?**
  - Parent(s): 71%
  - Sibling(s): 58%
  - Caretaker: 72%
  - Coworker(s): 49%
  - Friend(s): 28%
  - Employer: 15%
  - Neighbor(s): 10%
  - Other*: 10%

- **Do you have the following tools necessary for a successful evacuation?**
  - Flashlight: 64%
  - Keys: 50%
  - Fuel: 48%
  - Food: 48%
  - First aid supplies: 48%
  - Other: 10%

- **What is included in your emergency kit?**
  - Water: 76%
  - Medications: 78%
  - Personal care items: 74%
  - Personal documents: 71%
  - Other: 10%

**Discussion**

Results indicate that approximately one-fourth of the individuals (90) who were surveyed did not have an emergency preparedness plan. However, those with a plan indicated that they have the appropriate resources and are knowledgeable and capable of executing their plan with the assistance of others and/or a caretaker, if applicable. Many respondents have an established personal network to assist with their emergency plan, and nearly all respondents have appropriate resources for a successful evacuation.

Over half of respondents reported having emergency kits, and most of those kits were reported to include the “Get 10” Campaign items published by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

**Conclusions**

As a result of this assessment, investigators concluded that persons with disabilities have a significant need for emergency kits as well as information regarding appropriate steps for preparing emergency kits. Further, persons with disabilities participating in the SAIL Program may need additional assistance acquiring appropriate resources for emergency situations.