Challenges and Benefits of Regional Coalitions: How to Overcome Barriers, Best Practices – the New Jersey Experience

Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery Considerations for Children and Families: An Institute of Medicine Workshop

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June 10, 2013
New Jersey: Before Sandy

State Government Structure

* Dept of Children and Families
* Dept of Health
* Dept of Human Services
  - Responsibility for emergency services
* Homeland Security
  - Responsibility for state supported sheltering
* State Office of Emergency Management
New Jersey: Before Sandy

County Government Structure

* Dept of Human Services
  - Sheltering (Homeless/Boarding Homes, Emergency)
* Dept of Health
* Office of Emergency Management

- Boards of Social Services (TANF, Emergency Assistance, Housing Assistance)
NJ Experience

- Superstorm Sandy touched down in NJ on October 29, 2013

- In NJ, the DHS has the lead for emergency preparedness and sheltering

- In child welfare, opportunities existed for lessons learned from other jurisdictions
Lessons Learned

* Absence of Communications Plan and Technology Limitations in Louisiana
  * Foster children moved out of state with foster parents, missing for two years in some cases
  * Medications/prescriptions lost for foster children for extended periods of time
  * Paper records destroyed and lost
Established our child abuse hotline as the hub/central point of communication
Notification to all children’s service providers and women’s service providers
Notifications to all foster parents
Moved vehicles used to transport children to higher ground
Immediate Response

- No data on children in shelters

- Created well-being teams to visit the families in shelters

- Case management conference calls

- Tapped into existing statewide network of community supports

- Relationships, relationships, relationships
Immediate Response

- Never lost power at the hotline
- Daily conference calls with Exec Mgt Team + other MVP
- Calls to every foster parent in the state within first five days
- Provided access to gasoline to service providers so they could transport children to NORMAL apts.
Coalition Building: Activating Existing Resources and Relationships

* Immediate contact with human service directors in impacted counties
* Linking DCF funded community supports to the shelters and the FEMA supported DRCs
* Linking DCF funded community supports to the individual county long-term recovery committees
Coalition Building: State Led Child Task Force

* Created within days of storm touching down – FEMA advice

* Leadership provided by DCF

* Membership comprised of:
  - DOH
  - AAP
  - DHS
  - NJ VOAD
  - DOE
  - TLC
  - FEMA
  - Montclair State
  - ACF
  - Save the Children
State Led Child Task Force

- Link to other state led disaster recovery groups (ie, Housing, Mitigation)
- Identification of immediate, short-term and long-term needs of children and families
- Identification of existing systems to be mobilized at no extra cost
- Identification of communication strategies
- Development of Needs Assessment
County Long Term Recovery Committees

- Comprised of government and nonprofit leaders
- Charged with identifying greatest needs and gaps
- Collaborate with state to determine what can be developed locally and where state/feds need to step in
- Valuing the unique needs of individual communities
State Long Term Recovery Plan/Actions

- Governor’s Office on Recovery and Rebuilding
- Joint Field Office (all state/federal agencies)
- Working Groups on identified domains
  - WG on Public Health/Social Services/Children and Families
- Website and Communications Plan
- Performance Indicators and Outcomes
- Surveillance Data and Coordination
January 2013

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Planning to Support Children and Families in the Aftermath of Superstorm Sandy

A FOCUS ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY

Allison Blake, PhD, LSW
Commissioner
With a goal of keeping families strong, preventing the potential negative impacts of the disaster on children and families, and providing swift support and intervention, DCF has identified the following three (3) targeted areas of focus:

1. Strengthening Families and Preventing Instances of Child Abuse Exacerbated by Super Storm Sandy’s Impact

2. Preventing Violence and Exploitation Exacerbated by Super Storm Sandy’s Impact

3. Building Resiliency and Supporting Recovery
Strengthening Families and Preventing Instances of Child Abuse Exacerbated by Super Storm Sandy’s Impact

- Strategically bolster DCF’s network of Family Success Centers to enable the centers to continue to be a resource to families during the long-term recovery phase.

- Provide direct assistance to foster/resource homes displaced by the storm to maintain stable home environments for children under the care of DCP&P.

- Ensure child protection worker caseload sizes remain at appropriate levels to be able to effectively and efficiently respond to allegations of abuse or neglect.

- Expand respite services for families with children with special needs.

- Engage pediatric primary healthcare practices in a partnership to assess, identify, and intervene in a coordinated manner to mitigate the potential negative impacts of this disaster.
Preventing Violence and Exploitation Exacerbated by Super Storm Sandy’s Impact

- Broaden existing domestic violence prevention programming.
- Prepare the domestic violence intervention system for the expected increase in incidents of domestic violence.
- Strengthen programs for homeless youth and victims of human trafficking.
Building Resiliency and Supporting Recovery

- Expand access to mental health services for children.
- Provide evidence-based psychosocial disaster recovery programming in schools.
- Provide psychosocial programming for child care centers and other early childhood centers to promote positive early childhood development and build resilience.
Next Steps

* Additional Stakeholder Outreach
* Tracking and Adjusting – in coordination with coalitions
* Preparing for the upcoming hurricane season – with new working group/coalition in place