



DISASTER RECOVERY Homelessness Toolkit



LOCAL PLANNING GUIDE

STEPS	CHECK	INVOLVE	COLLECT	IDENTIFY	IMPROVE	PREPARE
	1: Find out what disaster planning has taken place	2: Get the right people together	3: Obtain data on your homeless population	4: Gather information about your provider network	5: Expand your plan	6: Define roles, maintain the plan, and prepare
Why you should do this step...	Some disaster planning probably has already taken place in your community. No need to reinvent the wheel. Find out who was involved and what was accomplished. Were homeless and vulnerable populations addressed? Were they consulted? Does the plan identify special actions for these populations such as sheltering, mass evacuations for people without vehicles, mental health services? Do not be alarmed if these populations aren't mentioned. Here is your chance to make that happen.	No individual has all the knowledge and skills needed to identify issues and solutions for homeless populations in a disaster. You will need to build a network of people who have deep understanding of your community, disaster planning, and homelessness. All communities have a Continuum of Care (CoC) organization that coordinates work to end homelessness (note that your area could be covered by a "Balance of State" CoC if there is not a CoC in your city or county). Work with the CoC leadership. Let homeless service providers know about existing disaster preparedness plans, involve them and their clients in developing knowledge about persons experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations, and gain their commitment to working on plan improvements.	Identify and review existing data from the Con Plan, the Continuum of Care, and qualitative accounts from local service providers, to get a clearer picture of the numbers, characteristics, and locations of homeless people in your community.	Your service provider network has skilled staff, facilities, and protocols for addressing homelessness that can support the disaster response. You will want to take advantage of these assets in your response. But a disaster can disrupt or overwhelm the organizations' operations. You need to understand the assets that are available as well as potential service gaps if a disaster hits.	After analyzing existing plans, creating a network, and using data to understand community needs and resources, you're ready to enhance your community's existing disaster plans to address any gaps that overlook homeless people and other vulnerable populations. You will need to have solutions tailored to your community, but you don't need to come up with everything on your own. Best practices gleaned from other communities are covered in Parts 2 and 3 of this Toolkit.	Do not let all your good work go to waste. Take immediate steps to prepare, including training, outreach, and public education. Clarify roles and sign agreements to codify them. Stay in touch with stakeholders. Community information will change over time, so update your plan regularly.
What you will get from doing this step...	An understanding of your community's gaps in planning for homeless and vulnerable populations in disasters.	A team that has the knowledge, skills, and commitment to plan an effective response to the needs of homeless and vulnerable people after a disaster.	Increased knowledge of your homeless populations, including location of outdoor camps, scope and size of substance use disorders, common mental and physical challenges, and other key information that will help you craft a plan that addresses the real vulnerabilities in the community. Without this knowledge, you risk leaving people out and putting them in danger.	An inventory of the capacity, skills, and services that your service provider network can provide to assist homeless and other vulnerable people during and after a disaster as well as information about potential gaps in the network post-disaster.	An improved disaster plan that effectively integrates the needs of homeless people and other vulnerable people.	A commitment to and practical approach for the community to assist persons experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable people in a disaster.



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The biggest issue you might face in completing this step...	Relevant resources might be scattered across various agencies and points of contact. Neighboring Community Development Block Grant Entitlement Communities may have overlapping plans. Consider state, county, and city plans. Cast a wide net to locate all the information you can on any existing plans and find out who is responsible for maintaining plans for your community.	Many team members are pressed for time and resources. As you assemble the team, communicate the urgency of this issue and a commitment to using their time wisely. Be clear about the challenges associated with disasters and homelessness and the role that each team member plays in addressing them.	Quantitative data does not tell the whole story, so other reliable sources will be needed to complete the picture. Contact service providers, people experiencing homelessness, and other experts to get their qualitative accounts of the obstacles homeless people face in your community. Include information on their travel patterns and problems they may face during and after a disaster.	Ensure that service providers' assessment of their post-disaster resources is realistic. Recommend conservative estimates, especially for large-scale disasters when service providers will need to attend to the well-being of themselves and their own families.	You do not want to create documents that sit on the shelf. To help ensure implementation, create action steps with clear lines of communication. Be specific. Include names of key contacts, titles and agencies, critical actions, responsible parties, and timelines.	Ongoing communication across the community's planning network can be difficult. Include disaster planning on the agenda of agency and community meetings to help keep formal and information relationships intact. Make sure you continue to listen to people who have experience being homeless.
If you can only do one part of this step, you should...	Identify who is responsible for disaster planning in your jurisdiction. Get in touch with that person or group to understand how homeless and vulnerable populations were included in earlier planning.	Hold at least one meeting where current planning documents are reviewed and the team identifies and adds missing topics.	Consult the local homelessness data expert to collect the most recent critical statistics about numbers, characteristics and locations of homeless people.	Create a comprehensive list of service providers, their contact information, and resources. You can use your Con Plan, CoC, and 211 provider to get a quick start.	Ensure the improved plan addresses the major issues that are key to disaster planning for homeless people: outreach, transportation, shelter, and services.	Appoint a different network member organization each year to be responsible for updating contact information, ensuring any Memorandums of Understanding or Memorandums of Agreement are up-to-date, and making other changes to keep the plan relevant.
Tools from this Guide to use for this step	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find Your Local Disaster Plans Assess Your Local Disaster Plans More Information for Disaster Planning Standard Terms: Disaster Planning and Homelessness Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Your Stakeholders Meet with Your Stakeholders Get to Know Your Stakeholders Planners and Providers: Bridging the Gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness Data Sources Collect Data on Homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect Information about Your Provider Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate the Needs of Homeless People into Your Disaster Plan Sample Plans and Guidance Documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execute an MOU Maintain Your Plan and Prepare Your Team