

# Maine January 2007 Quarterly Report

## I. General Information

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## II. State Delegation Meetings/Teleconferences

**Date:** October – December 2006

**Outcome:** Several meetings were held in October, November and December, 2006, which included some of the delegates listed above as participants, to develop plans for a statewide conference (scheduled for April 10, 2007), titled “Reaching Vulnerable Populations in Public Health Emergencies”. This conference is being hosted by the Maine Center for Public Health.

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**Date: October – December 2006**

Initial meetings were held in two regions of Maine, convened by members of the State team, to begin planning for a series of 7 – 8 regional conferences following the statewide conference on April 10, 2007. .

**Outcome:** Planning is underway for the conferences, with two regional meetings held this quarter and several additional planning meetings scheduled in January 2007 in other regions of the State. These regional conferences are intended to facilitate increased involvement of people with disabilities and elderly persons in local emergency preparedness planning efforts, and greater understanding among all participants about the needs and capabilities of first responders, individuals with disabilities and their families, and elderly people living in the community.

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**Date:** October, 2006

A conference was held in October for state case managers with a panel discussion in the area of emergency management and pandemic flu. A follow-up breakout session was held.

**Outcome:** Approximately 100 state case managers were given information about emergency management for people with disabilities and issues regarding a possible pandemic flu outbreak.

### III. Emergency Planning Highlights

- **County Emergency Management Agency Leadership**

In Maine, the County Emergency Management Agency Directors work with local level officials and responders to develop emergency response plans. They have been asked by the State Emergency Management Agency to ensure that planning for people with disabilities and the elderly is included in those efforts. The involvement of the County Directors will be to help identify the regional considerations for response and availability of resources that might be needed.

The statewide and regional conference beginning in April, 2007 will provide additional guidance for County Directors and others to facilitate comprehensive planning that includes representatives of the disability community and the elderly. These regional conferences will be designed to include some non-traditional partners, such as regional transportation services (bus services in both rural and urban areas that serve people without vehicles), utility workers (who already have programs in place to help identify folks who may be in trouble) as well as public officials, public safety representatives, people with disabilities, people who provide in-home care for persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and other service providers.

- The State Emergency Management Agency is also reaching out to network with non-English speaking communities, especially within some of the larger metropolitan areas where little has been done to-date to assure that preparedness efforts address the needs of these communities.
- A County Emergency Management Director presented a talk on emergency preparedness to a conference of caseworkers for elderly persons in November that was very well received.
- A Pandemic Planning Conference was held in Southern Maine in December, hosted by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, with about 160 participants. These folks were reminded to ensure that appropriate planning was included for persons with disabilities and the elderly.

#### IV. Emergency Preparedness Highlights

- **Legislative Task Force on Homeland Security addresses key issues**

Representatives of the Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Maine DD Council presented testimony and participated in the work sessions of the Task Force in November and December, 2006. Based on recommendations from these agencies, the Task Force voted to include recommendations in its report and draft legislation to (1) expand access to emergency pagers for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in Maine, and (2) direct the development of a plan to implement a voluntary “disability indicator” program across the State, that will allow individuals to provide additional information about specific needs related to disability or chronic illness that can be associated with their home phone number/address, to facilitate appropriate assistance by first responders in emergencies.

- **Curriculum for Emergency Preparedness Training for Persons with Cognitive Disabilities**

Under the direction of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, work continued this quarter on finalizing the curriculum and scheduling trainings for persons with cognitive disabilities who live independently in local communities, to support their individual emergency preparedness efforts. An initial series of trainings will be provided to reach 250 individuals in the first quarter of 2007.

- **Emergency Go Bags**

The Maine DD Council ordered and received a first batch of 500 *Go Bags*, for distribution to promote individual emergency preparedness efforts. The Maine DHHS purchased 250 of the *Go Bags* to provide as part of the trainings being conducted next quarter (see item above). The DD Council also provided *Go Bags* to each member of the Legislative Task Force on Homeland Security, and is promoting their availability to other groups in Maine.

The bright orange bags, with zip closure, include a laminated double-sided listing of supplies to be kept in the *Go Bag*, and other items for the home to be prepared for potential emergencies.

- Maine's Northeastern Regional Resource Center (covering 2/3 of the area of Maine and 1/3 the population – mostly rural to frontier) has begun two initiatives including the emergency management communities. These are:

- **Portability of Medical Information**

The first initiative is to facilitate the portability and transferability of medical information for the care and treatment of patients who may be dislocated because of emergency or disaster and the availability of information for emergency planning and preparedness activities.

- **Including Migrant Workers in Planning and Preparedness Activities**

The second initiative is to identify and include migrant workers and their dependents in the planning and preparedness activities. This will include the full spectrum of providers of services and the employers of migrant workers as well as the Maine Department of Education and Department of Labor. This population group has not been targeted for emergency preparedness because of the transient nature of their existence. This effort will attempt to locate and quantify this population as well as identify special needs they may have regarding transportation, language and cultural interpreters, etc.

- **School Crisis Plans to be more inclusive**

In Maine, public schools are required to develop crisis plans. They are now being directed by the State to pay special attention to meeting the needs of students with disabilities in both planning and drills to train students and staff.

- **Other highlights**

- A web-based training program is being developed, entitled "Protecting Maine's Elderly in Emergencies". The Maine Emergency Management Agency has been invited to participate.
- Representatives of the statewide self-advocates' organization (Speaking Up For Us) are working on converting some of the preparedness guidance to more accessible formats. This offer was immediately accepted and we look forward to the assistance.
- The Maine Department of Health and Human Services is in the process of creating a continuity of operations plan in the event of a pandemic. This will ensure the needs of the people served by the department are met when staffing may be low.
- The Maine DD Council finished the first year of its new Leadership Institute, with two of its 13 participants choosing to do their second-year internships in efforts related to emergency preparedness. One started working with her local school district on improving emergency preparedness educational activities to better include students

with disabilities, and the other volunteered immediately to be on the committee planning the regional conference on emergency preparedness for her county. She was also involved in the work to assist the Maine Emergency Management Agency with putting its informational materials into more accessible formats for persons with cognitive disabilities.

## **V. Emergency Response Highlights**

### **Behavioral health disaster resource books**

Behavioral health disaster resource books are being created in every county in Maine. This will help aid the response to a disaster and provision of behavioral health support to victims, families and responders. In many counties there is representation from the first responder field at these planning meetings. They have been very receptive to these resource manuals and would like to use them in their everyday practice to provide support to those that they serve. The resource books not only encompass local behavioral health resources, but also resources such as housing support, case management, and financial assistance.

## **VI. Emergency Recovery Highlights**

**NOTHING TO REPORT IN THIS AREA FROM MAINE.**

## **VII. Next Steps**

### **Significant Planned Activities:**

- First quarter 2007 – continuing planning for statewide and regional emergency preparedness conferences
- Discussion of the medication needs and availability during a pandemic or other disaster.

### **Products under Development:**

- **Conversion of printed preparedness guidance documents to accessible formats.**

## **VIII. Other**

**NOTHING TO REPORT IN THIS AREA FROM MAINE.**