

Region 5: Engaging Dialysis and Home Care

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With federal emergency preparedness requirements for healthcare entities changing regularly, the engagement and inclusion of the State's many healthcare organizations is a top priority for all Michigan preparedness regions. The Region 5 Healthcare Coalition meets monthly, on the second Tuesday of every month (except August), with attendees from various healthcare organizations. Hospitals, EMS, emergency management, public health, and long term care are all represented at meetings. In an effort to broaden preparedness for healthcare organizations in southwest Michigan, Region 5 hosted workshops for dialysis providers and home care agencies in June of 2015.

The stringent day-to-day operational requirements placed on dialysis centers has fostered a good handle on preparedness overall. Relationships with hospitals and sister/partnering agencies are strong and the group felt comfortable that assistance would not be an issue in an emergency situation. Concerns that were raised during the workshop related to the availability of transportation for patients during inclement weather and the proper notification of scheduled water shut-off/alterations to the water supply from municipalities. The group agreed to meet bi-annually, with the next meeting scheduled in December of this year. The focus of the upcoming meeting will be on the use of EMResource (an internet-based platform that is used throughout Michigan for information and status sharing) and possibilities of emergency management-facilitated transportation for clients during bad weather.

Preparedness for home care is a complex challenge, as it not only involves preparedness for the agency, but preparedness for the agency's clients in their homes. Important first steps identified during this workshop were the importance of doing basic hazard vulnerability assessments (HVAs) for clients and the agency developing a relationship with its respective emergency manager(s). Positive discussions were had on developing family-reunification plans for clients and ensuring that all important phone numbers were accessible in case of evacuation or sheltering situations. This group plans to meet twice annually and will be meeting again in January of 2016. Future projects may include the development of a Region 5 emergency preparedness packet for home care providers, developing a registry of individuals receiving home care services (similar to the Michigan Care Improvement Registry) for emergency management use and working on mechanisms to ensure paperwork related to care needs (and desires) is readily available for not only home care providers, but also to emergency medical services.

The inclusion of dialysis and home care into Coalition activities is a valuable addition to the Region's preparedness efforts. Discussions with both groups have brought to light concerns not previously discussed by the Region 5 Coalition membership. It is hoped that the solutions developed through interactions at these workshops will lead to an even more widely and inclusively prepared Region 5.