



THE COASTER

Disaster and Emergency Preparedness

- Health Planning Councils

The 9/11 tragedy, continued terrorism threats, and the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes caused human service providers to assess emergency preparedness of Floridians with disabilities. The *Disaster and Emergency Preparedness: Report of the 2006 Regional Census and Survey Persons with Disabilities* summarizes the findings of an initiative of the Florida Department of Health and the Taskforce for Persons with Disabilities and Preparedness to gather information on the issues faced by people with disabilities during catastrophic events, and to serve as a basis for future disaster and emergency planning. A census and survey was administered to 2,404 people with disabilities selected from the following counties: Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, Lee, Sarasota, Palm Beach and Okeechobee.

Findings were organized to address the five purposes of the survey: how people with disabilities accessed health care services, potential solutions and accommodations that may improve health care access, issues involving communications and mobility, issues involving personal preparedness, and the identifications of individuals to participate in future disaster exercises.

Health Care Access: Numerous participants (64%) reported that their disabilities require regular visits with health care providers. The vast majority of participants reported access to a primary provider (physician or nurse) when ill, and providers and office staff frequently made accommodations for their disabilities. Participants often received care through hospital emergency rooms, and more than one third (1/3) reported having used an ambulance to go to a hospital. Communication difficulties were common with health care providers, although 45% of participants were able to explain their conditions to their providers.

Solutions and Accommodations for Health Care: These included a wide range of disability and non-disability suggestions: bathroom adaptations, service animals, talking books, magnifiers, communication aids, special beds, Spanish / Creole / ASL interpreters, Med Alert and ID bracelets, and mobility aids. Suggestions also included staffing; patient liaisons; assistants to help with feeding, moving, toileting, and other basic personal functions; access to social or psychological support, and other staff interaction suggestions (e.g., empathy and compassion in patient care).

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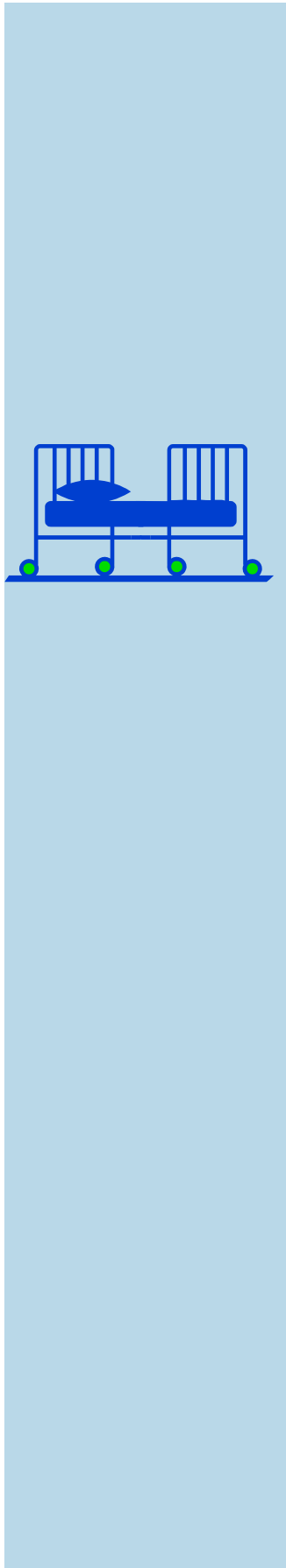
New Websites Help Consumers

Over the last two years, Florida's Agency for Health-Care Administration has been working diligently to create a 21st Century health care delivery system for the citizens of Florida.

Florida is leading the nation in providing quality and pricing information regarding health care services. Through many efforts, health care consumers can now find pricing informa-

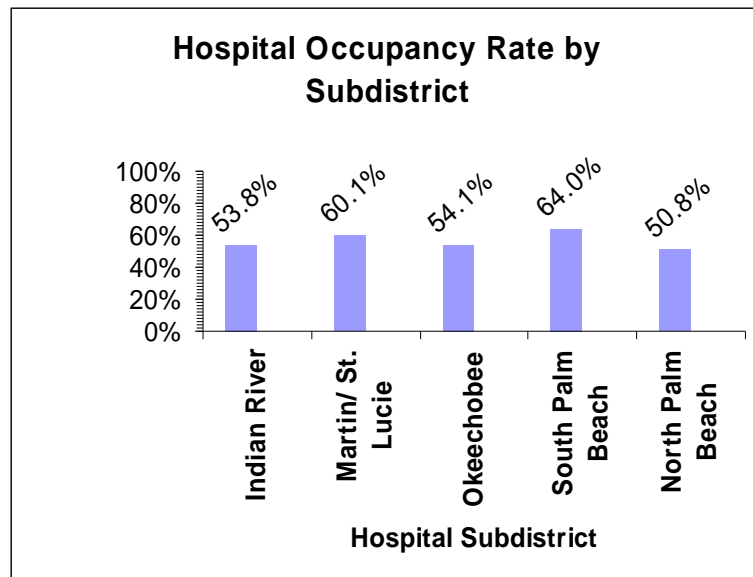


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Hospital Utilization Data

TCHC is required by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to collect monthly utilization data from licensed hospitals and nursing home facilities for District 9. This data is compiled on a quarterly basis and forwarded to AHCA. The data is also sent to annual data subscribers (hospitals, nursing homes, and consultants) that use the information for market analysis and to identify trends. For more information on utilization data or to become a subscriber of the data, please contact Louis Kolber at (561) 844-4220 ext. 36 or at lkolber@tchealthcouncil.org.



*Data range from July 2006 through December 2006.

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Communication and Mobility: Issues involving communication and mobility included the impact of telephone outages as a complicating factor for people with communication disorders, the double impact of electrical outages on people with communication devices and mobility aids, the impact of communication challenges on citizens' ability to gain information needed for recovery efforts, and mobility challenges that people faced within their own homes. Creative solutions were suggested as a means of improving communication and mobility.

Personal Preparedness: Several findings related to personal preparedness for disaster events were encouraging. For example, persons with disabilities across all counties reported a high degree of family or personal planning for emergency events. Nevertheless, even good

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Palm Beach County Needs Assessment

- Sonja Swanson, Care Council Health Planner

The Treasure Coast Health Council has conducted a comprehensive needs assessment for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Palm Beach County. This project was funded by Palm Beach County's Department of Community Services and the Florida Department of Health. The information gathered will aide the Palm Beach County HIV CARE Council in their decision-making process. The CARE Council is the planning body for Ryan White funded HIV services in Palm Beach County. This group was formed in 1997 when Palm Beach County first received Ryan White Title I monies.

The comprehensive needs assessment is conducted every three years. There was

a large focus on surveying PLWHA that are aware of their status, but are not in primary medical care. It is estimated that in Palm Beach County 43% or 3,740 PLWHA that are aware of their status are not in primary medical care. These numbers may sound shocking, but we are not that far above the national average. This is a nation-wide concern. We are striving to get a better understanding of why some PLWHA are not seeking medical treatment. National experts have found that one of the main reasons why PLWHA that are aware of their status are not seeking medical care is due to the fact that they are not aware that free medical care is available through the Ryan

White program.

The results of the study will be available at the beginning of the fall season on the CARE Council website, www.carecouncil.org. If you would like more information regarding the needs assessment, contact Sonja Swanson, MPH, CARE Council Health Planner,



Sonja@carecouncil.org or 561-844-4430 ext.14.

Websites con't

tion on hospital procedures and on pharmaceutical drugs at the local pharmacy level. Two of the state's more prominent websites:

www.floridacomparecare.gov

www.myfloridarx.com

These user friendly sites enable Florida's health care consumer to make

more informed choices about their health care services.

Information provided by:

Lisa K. Rawlins

**Bureau Chief, Florida Center for Health Information and Policy Analysis,
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration**

www.ahca.myflorida.com

"It is estimated that in Palm Beach County 43% or 3,740 PLWHA that are aware of their status are not in primary medical care."

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disaster plans did not negate the need for attention to medical issues and the impact of interruptions to transportation or power interruptions on the continuity of medical care. In addition, issues related to hygiene, food and water, challenged many people despite a high level of preparedness.

Future Disaster Planning Exercises: A finding of the Census and Survey included the willingness of participants in the ten counties to engage in future disaster planning exercises. Overall, 31% of participants expressed a willingness to take part in future disaster planning exercises.

Several recommendations were made that would make a positive impact on persons with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who provide services for them. The full list of recommendations and the report can be viewed at the Broward Regional Health Planning Council website: <http://www.brhpc.org/render.asp?pageid=71>.

If anyone is interested in partnering with us to plan and implement the recommendations, please contact Barbara Feeney at (561) 844-4220 ext. 27.

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