

Beginnings of Brookline, MA Vulnerable Populations and Emergencies Work:

- Invited representatives from Brookline town departments and others who work with vulnerable populations to introductory meeting.
- Meeting held with representatives from Police, Fire, EMS, Council on Aging, Health, Housing Authority, Recreation, Human Relations, MA DPH and Cambridge Health Alliance to discuss vulnerable populations and emergency planning in Brookline (Fall 2005).
- Meeting attendees decided that next steps should be to develop forms that can be used for vulnerable populations (with social workers and others who work with special populations) to prepare for emergencies.

Plans for Vulnerable Populations

- Form for Emergency Preparedness Supplies developed for vulnerable populations and information for caretakers, social workers written.
- Information sent to meeting attendees to review and critique.
- Feedback mostly positive, but suggestion made that materials should be “tested” with vulnerable populations focus groups.

Focus Group Development

- Groups contacted and Focus Groups identified: Seniors, Caretakers (Home Health Aides, etc..), Visually Impaired, Residential Facilities staff (mental health, substance abuse, homeless,etc.), Seniors who are visually impaired and also many with hearing issues as well.
- Plans made with Cambridge Public Health Alliance and Institute for Community Health to work on project with Brookline.
- Attend Deaf and hard of hearing conference and gather information helpful for focus groups.

Focus groups comprised:

- **Focus Group #1:** senior citizens active at the Brookline Senior Center
- **Focus Group #2:** home-care service workers employed through the Brookline Council on Aging Home and Escort Linkage Program (H.E.L.P)
- **Focus Group #3:** administrators, program managers, and social workers employed at substance abuse and mental health group homes, homeless shelters or psychiatric hospitals in Brookline
- **Focus Group #4:** visually impaired adults
- **Focus Group #5:** visually impaired (hearing issues also) senior citizens participating in a support group through the Brookline Senior Center.

Focus Group Process

- The Brookline Health Department worked with the Cambridge Public Health Alliance(CPHA) and the Institute for Community Health (ICH) to develop a guide for the focus groups. Focus Groups were held in spring and fall 2006.
- Focus Groups lasted for 1.5 to 2 hours with 8-12 participants.
- Focus Groups were facilitated and notes taken by CPHA and ICH.

Focus Group Outcomes/Lessons Learned

- **Understanding government response.** Citizens, to a certain degree, understand that they are responsible for being prepared in case of an emergency. At the same time, citizens expect their local governments to provide a variety of services in the case of an emergency. It is important for local governments to understand their role in the event of an emergency and communicate this information to the public.

Focus Group Outcomes/Lessons Learned

- **Communication is essential.** Citizens feel most at ease when they have all the necessary information that they need about emergency planning and response. It is important to communicate to residents about on-going town emergency planning, the location of shelters, and which hospitals to go to (and not go to) in the event of an emergency.

Focus Group Outcomes/Lessons Learned

- **Improve inter-agency coordination.** There are several resources that are currently being used by different Brookline governmental and non-governmental entities. Coordination of these resources needs to be improved upon in order to limit redundancies and increase reach and usage.

Focus Group Outcomes/Lessons Learned

- **Present information in multiple modalities.** Individuals with special needs often times utilize different forms of media to get basic information and news. Information must be presented in multiple modalities in order to effectively communicate with these groups.

Focus Group Outcomes/Lessons Learned

- **Staff training is essential.** For those individuals that require ongoing care and assistance from life service providers (e.g., individuals living in group homes), it is important to train staff and volunteers about being prepared for an emergency. It is also important to train staff about the need for personal emergency preparedness in order to reduce staff loss at these facilities.

Next Steps

- Meet with Brookline Emergency Management Team to review lessons learned and next steps (December 2006).
- Develop town wide committee of those who work with vulnerable populations to plan for the following.
- Re-format and re-design important emergency planning and communication resources.
- Coordinate development, outreach and usage of existing "vulnerable populations" resources.
- Develop emergency preparedness training for staff that serve vulnerable populations.
- Outreach from health department to local providers (group homes, medical facilities, etc..) about the need for Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP).



Town-Wide Committee

- Invitation sent to public and private human service/vulnerable populations providers to participate in committee to help design programs and materials.
- Members of Committee include: Brookline Housing Authority, Brookline Police Department, Brookline Fire Department, Brookline Council on Aging, Brookline Commission for the Disabled, Brookline Veterans Services, Brookline Human Relations-Youth Resources Commission, Brookline Department of Public Health, Arbour HRI Hospital, Cambridge Public Health Alliance, Specialized Housing, Inc., Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Brookline Community Mental Health Center, Brookline Public Schools
- Committee begins monthly meetings (January 2007).

Workshop Planned– September 2007

- Committee decides direction should be to plan an interactive emergency preparedness workshop for the staff/employees that serve vulnerable populations in Brookline. The focus of this workshop is to learn how to help clients (and staff) effectively prepare for emergencies using focus group outcomes as a guide.
- Developed an invitation list based upon contacts and information put together by Health Department.

Workshop Plans and Details

- Introduction to Brookline Emergency Management Team and plans that have been put into place (Police, Fire and Health)
- Introduction to Brookline Volunteer Programs (MRC and CERT)
- Introduction to programs available to Vulnerable Populations, including File of Life, 9-1-1 Disability Indicator Form and Project Independence
- Emergency Preparedness Begins at Home for attendees and clients/residents.
- Group activity to work on shelter in place and evacuation scenarios
- Outcomes of activity discussion, organizational needs and next steps
- 80 people attended

Next Steps after 2007 Workshop

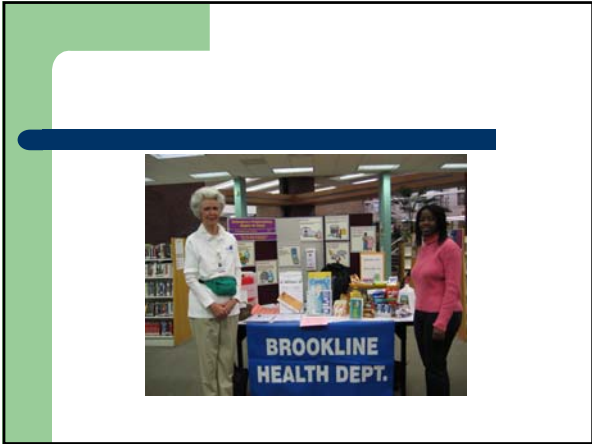
- Evaluations and discussion outcomes used to inform next steps.
- Local Funding from Community Foundation sought and received to assist with programming.
- Committee continues to meet and work on plans for the next year.

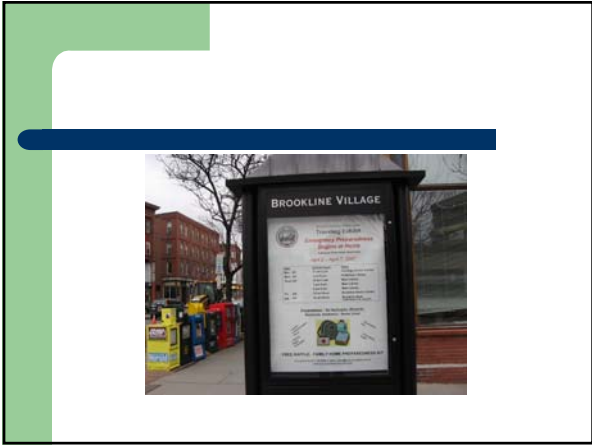
Committee Plans for Continuing Work

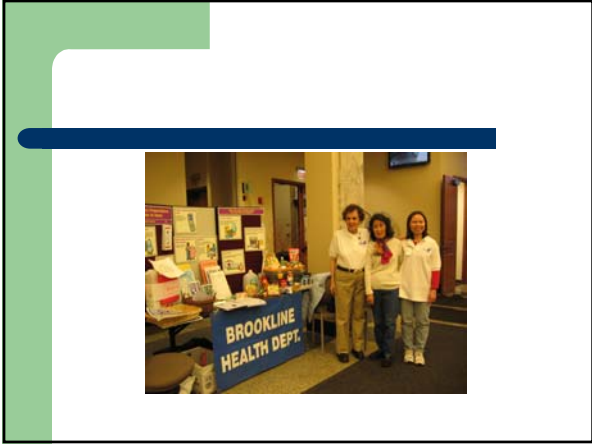
- Continue education of staff and develop Emergency Preparedness Program that can be used with staff and also given to residents/clients.
- Develop COOP program for organizations.
- Pilot programs for Committee and then contact Brookline organizations to present programs.

Results of Committee Work (2008)

- Emergency Preparedness Program developed based upon Cambridge model.
- Pilot program approved by Committee
- Programs presented by Health and Police Depts. more than 25 times April-September 2008 for service providers (including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, elderly service provider, visually impaired, housing authority, visually and cognitively impaired educational facility and a developmental disabilities workshop and residences program) throughout Brookline.
- COOP integrated into program.
- Evaluations and follow-up evaluations completed and used to help plan for October 2008 workshop.







Workshop October 2008 Plans

- Expand invitation list from 2007 to include daycare facilities, religious institutions, all private schools and colleges.
- Update attendees on emergency management activities and plans since 2007.
- Panel to present real life evacuation scenario of vulnerable populations building that occurred in Brookline in March 2008.
- Emergency Preparedness at Home presentation and COOP planning breakouts.
- 100 people attended.
- Evaluations summarized and will use feedback for 2009 planning.

Where are we now?

- More targeted programs need to be focused upon programs that serve children– day cares, pre-schools, etc.
- More outreach to those organizations who have not participated in any of the programs offered.
- More work with organizations on development and practice of COOP.
- Continued follow-up with organizations regarding educating staff, clients, residents, families, etc.
- Do we have a third workshop in the fall of 2009?
- Long term plan for the committee needs to be developed, in conjunction with reviewing our goal and objectives.

Additional information that I can provide:

- Copy of information folder given at staff/employee trainings.
- Copies of Moderator guide from focus groups.
- Copy of train the trainer information given to management staff at employee/staff trainings.
- COOP and other information given out at September 2007 and October 2008 agency workshops.
- Disk of resource materials.

For More Information, please contact:

Dawn Carmen Sibor
Emergency Preparedness Coordinator
Brookline Health Department
11 Pierce Street
Brookline, MA 02445
617-730-2656 Telephone
617-730-2296 Fax
Dawn_sibor@town.brookline.ma.us
