

VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN DISASTER

Lori Chorpenning, RN, MS
Instructor
University of Portland

Vulnerable Communities

- ❖ What are Vulnerable communities?
Used to be called “Special Needs”
 - disabilities
 - mental illness
 - non-English speakers
 - children
 - elderly
 - other listings

2000 Census Data

- ❖ Most typical population-
 - People with disabilities including mental illness
 - Non-English speaking
 - Children <15 years old
 - People > 65 years old
- ❖ Accounts for 141 million people
- ❖ 49.99% of the population
- ❖ Does not include institutionalized populations

Disabilities

- ❖ *a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual (ADA)*
- ❖ Long term vs short term

Functional Limitations

- Mobility issues
- Weight issues
- Pregnancy
- Short term vs long term
- Transportation issues
- Medical equipment issues
- Medication issues

Communication issues

- Non-English speaking
- Don't speak English well
- Can't hear or see well or at all
- Cognition issues

Children

- First stage–
 - Fright
 - Disbelief
 - Denial
 - Grief
 - Feelings of relief
- Second stage–
 - Developmental regression
 - Emotional distress
 - Aggressive behavior

Age 1–5

- Regress to earlier stage
 - Thumb sucking
 - Bedwetting
 - Being afraid of strangers
 - Being afraid of the dark
 - Cling to the “safe”

Age 5–11

- Same reactions as younger children
 - Withdraw from friends
 - Compete for more attention
 - Fear going to school
 - Become aggressive
 - Hard to concentrate

Adolescence

- 12–14
 - Vague physical complaints
 - Avoid chores, schoolwork
 - Compete for attention
 - Resist authority
 - Become disruptive
- Later ages
 - Feelings of helplessness
 - Feelings of guilt
 - Denial

Elderly

- Medications
- Evacuation
- Community/experiences

References

- “Tips for Talking to Children After a Disaster” Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration- 2008
- “Psychosocial Implications of Disaster or Terrorism on Children: A Guide for the Pediatrician” Pediatrics Vol 116 No 3 September 2005
- “Moving Beyond “Special Needs”” Journal of Disability Policy Studies Vol 17 No 4 2007
- “Tips for First Responders” 4th Ed.
<http://cdd.unm.edu/dhpd/images/Fourth%20Edition.pdf>
retrieved September 20, 2012