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Service changes during an emergency for any transportation mode (not just ADA paratransit) affect persons with disabilities and older adults.

• Maintaining transportation access also helps prevent potential social isolation and worsening health outcomes for these populations.

• Organizations with paratransit service have to address eligibility qualifications and processes for service to persons with disabilities.

• Maintaining paratransit services and critical demand response transportation network for older adults at levels reflective of normal service profiles helps maintain access and mobility even when fixed-route service is reduced.

Technology used to adjust seating parameters in vehicles can be useful during some emergencies but should still be able to meet customer demand.

• Scheduling additional bus runs or services can be useful in maintaining service capacity during emergencies that necessitate social distancing or schedule variances.

• Coordination with other neighboring transportation organizations can help identify alternatives for customer rides if service capacity is nearly full.

Continuity of Services:

• Temporarily reducing service to core services (such as a core fixed-route network) can be facilitated by adjusted service parameters and through advanced planning.

• Riders will notice when there is less service available during an emergency, making it more difficult for them to complete their trip.

• When service demand is lower, being overstaffed can be a short-term issue; however, subsequent rebounds in demand need to be anticipated for staffing needs.

Customer Perspectives:

• Transportation service is a critical resource for persons with disabilities and older adults during emergencies for access to goods, services, and friends and family.

• Some customers may choose not to travel during an emergency out of health and well-being concerns if they feel it is not safe to travel with others.

• Providing PPE and recognizing safety needs during the emergency (e.g., vehicle cleaning) helps increase customers confidence in safety of the service.

• Persons with disabilities need normal communication procedures in place for accommodating their needs (e.g., requesting boarding assistance, wheelchair securement). Customers should still be able to communicate their accommodation needs during emergency service periods.

Implement appropriate safety procedures and policies for the emergency:

• Account and mitigate for any potential negative impacts on persons with disabilities and older adults that would result from safety-related measures implemented for the well-being of personnel and customers.

• Proactively address the needs of riders with the adoption of safety requirements (e.g., social distancing, alternative boarding), including assistance with boarding, wheelchair securement, or to/from the door.

• Recognize that practices effective in fixed-route services may not be possible in paratransit and other services for people with disabilities and older adults.

• Explore alternative methods to conduct eligibility assessments remotely or grant temporary eligibility status for new paratransit applicants over a certain period of months.

Maintain an organizational culture supportive of transportation employees:

• Ensure safety of employees to maintain the strength of the service. Staffing shortages will make it hard for providers to meet remaining travel demand during the emergency.

• Have clear and consistent communication about safety measures to employees to foster trust in the measures; this should also include feedback mechanisms for staff.

• Retain staff through the emergency as much as possible; this is preferable to losing staff before emergency conditions subside and service returns to more normal levels.

• Find work alternatives (e.g., delivery services, working from home) to both help meet residual demand and maintain service capacity.

• Prioritize distribution of safety equipment and needed health services for employees of the organization.

• Provide assistance for employees (hazard pay, childcare, etc.) to help morale and continued service delivery.

Emergency Management is:

• A continuous process by which agencies manage all hazards to avoid or reduce the impact of disasters resulting from the hazards.

• An all-phase effort. Mitigation and preparedness phases are vital for mitigating and/or removing hazards prior to an incident response and recovery.
Planning:
- Emergency response plans and continuity of operations (COP) plans help establish what different departments and staff members do during the different emergency phases.
- Internal policies are key in coordination planning and should include in different areas of the organization (e.g., accessibility coordinators, service planners, comm. staff).
- Remote systems for some staff positions are useful in some emergencies; planning can include needs for home office set-ups, data plans, network capacity, and key staff.
- Agency recovery plans help determine indicators and decision criteria for re-establishing normal service.
- Lessons learned should be documented in after action reports during the recovery phase.

New and Temporay Services:
- Transit scheduling systems are well-suited for direct transportation services but may not be as adaptable for some incidental use services (e.g., deliveries).
- For delivery services, policies and parameters need to be set on capacity and timing limits needed to ensure safe delivery of food and/or packages.
- Fleet uses for different incidental use types (e.g., medical trips).
- Some incidental use services (e.g., deliveries).
- Fleet uses for different incidental use types (e.g., medical trips).
- Important to note that word-of-mouth communication for effective response helps overcome coordination issues.

Relationships and Partnerships:
- External players key to coordination during emergencies may include community organizations, local governments, various state departments, and several others.
- Developing strong relationships with partners prior to an emergency helps overcome coordination issues during the event and identifies needs and resources of partners.
- Identify existing community-based programs and groups for people with disabilities and older adults can help planners know where populations are located, their main accessibility needs, and how to prioritize access to emergency-period services.

Use emergency management strategies for long-term planning and financial sustainability:
- Ensure that resources and protective measures that respond to the emergency are compatible with the needs of persons with disabilities and older adults.
- Develop strong relationships with partners prior to an emergency helps overcome coordination issues during the event and identifies needs and resources of partners.
- Establish agreements with local or state emergency management agencies for support; having MOUs established in advance can help activate available funding from partners.
- Ensure that resources and protective measures that respond to the emergency are compatible with the needs of persons with disabilities and older adults.
- Develop strong relationships with partners prior to an emergency helps overcome coordination issues during the event and identifies needs and resources of partners.

Agency Action Steps
- Fund and sustain mechanisms for internal and external communication:
  - Regularly coordinate with other organizations to be kept up to date about partnership opportunities. Coordination efforts take time and may be difficult to handle during emergencies; being in touch with partners during non-emergency times is important for communication.
  - Communicate through key channels plugged in to the needs of persons with disabilities and older adults.
  - Remember that word-of-mouth communication for indirect reaching individuals is often most effective.

Communication and Engagement:
- Communication using multiple channels and methods is critical to effectively let customers know how their service is affected and any new service options now available.
- Strong communication with local community leaders and organizations is key to understanding local issues while also getting feedback and input on service needs from these customers.
- Technology used in communication is not a substitute for communication directly with the customer (in person or over the phone) or through community representatives.

Enduring Changes can:
- Institutionalize lessons learned and maintain useful practices beyond the emergency event.
- Continue relationships, working groups, or coalitions to coordinate community needs and resources.
- Maintain accessible transportation practices as a result of new or temporary policy changes.

Foster and sustain mechanisms for internal and external communications:
- Regularly coordinate with other organizations to be kept up to date about partnership opportunities. Coordination efforts take time and may be difficult to handle during emergencies; being in touch with partners during non-emergency times is important for communication.
- Communicate through key channels plugged in to the needs of persons with disabilities and older adults.
- Remember that word-of-mouth communication for indirectly reaching individuals is often most effective.