



Southeastern Pennsylvania
Regional Task Force

Functional Needs Subcommittee

*ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS SYMPOSIUM:
A SEMINAR TO PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL INTERACTIONS
BETWEEN PEOPLE WITH FUNCTIONAL NEEDS
AND FIRST RESPONDERS*

SEPTEMBER 20, 2011

**AFTER-ACTION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND EXERCISE OVERVIEW
NOVEMBER 20, 2011**



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ADMINISTRATIVE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. The title of this document is *Access and Functional Needs Symposium: A Seminar to Promote Successful Interactions between People with Functional Needs and First Responders Executive Summary and Exercise Overview*.
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4. Points of Contact:

Primary Point of Contact:

Chad Thomas, MPH
2011 Chair, Functional Needs Subcommittee
Public Health Communications Outreach Coordinator
Bioterrorism & Public Health Preparedness Program
Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control
500 S. Broad Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19146
(215) 685-6459
chad.thomas@phila.gov

Secondary Point of Contact:

Robyn Slater, MPH
Regional Vulnerable Populations Coordinator
Chester County Department of Emergency Services
Chester County Government Services Center
601 Westtown Road
West Chester, PA 19380
rslater@chesco.org

Tertiary Point of Contact:

Sandra Burns
Regional Planner
Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force
260 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(267) 443-2709
sburns@separtf.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Individuals with **access and functional needs** may fare worse than the general population in times of large-scale emergencies involving mass evacuation or sheltering in place. These persons may require assistance in communication, maintaining independence, medical care, supervision, or transportation; they may include (but are not limited to) people with physical or cognitive disabilities, vision or hearing impairment, or low-English proficiency. Recent hurricanes and earthquakes have highlighted the importance of pre-disaster planning at the personal, organizational, and governmental level for these vulnerable populations. **A failure to involve these individuals in planning could result in higher morbidity, mortality, and community recovery time following a large-scale event.**

In an effort to incorporate the challenges of persons with functional needs into emergency planning, the **Functional Needs Subcommittee** of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force sponsored, planned, and facilitated *Access and Functional Needs Symposium: A Seminar to Promote Successful Interactions between Persons with Functional Needs and First Responders*. The purpose of this seminar was to provide a **forum** for these individuals **to share their experiences and challenges** in planning for emergencies. A notable feature of this seminar was that **many of the speakers were working professionals who have functional needs**. In addition, **a fire chief talked about his son with autism**. First responders on the discussion panel talked about their challenges in communicating with and transporting persons with functional needs, their wheelchairs, and their service animals.

The **Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force** (SEPA RTF) is a planning collaboration of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties. The SEPA RTF **Human Services Workgroup** focuses on issues relating to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) *Emergency Support Function 6*, which includes considerations for functional needs.

The **Functional Needs Subcommittee** is a part of the Human Services Workgroup, and is made up of governmental and community-based agency representatives and persons with a variety of functional needs. The Subcommittee has three main roles:

1. To *raise awareness* of preparedness issues affecting individuals with functional needs who might need additional assistance in the event of a large scale emergency or disaster
2. To *make recommendations* to the SEPA RTF and associated agencies on creating an atmosphere of inclusion in the emergency planning cycle and producing results based on those practices.
3. To *develop and promote trainings and other projects* that focus on inclusion of functional needs groups.

This seminar was developed to accomplish the following **goals**:

1. To **raise awareness among first responders** about emergency planning and response challenges experienced by persons with functional needs.
2. To **raise awareness among persons with functional needs** about emergency planning and response challenges experienced by first responders.
3. To **provide a springboard** for future seminars and exercises that help identify needs and promote solutions regarding emergency preparedness and response for functional needs groups.

The seminar was comprised of speaker presentations, a bus accessibility demonstration, and a discussion panel with a question-and-answer (Q&A) session.

The seminar incorporated a variety of credible, passionate speakers who gave insights from their work and personal experiences about ways to incorporate persons with functional needs into emergency preparedness planning.

Presenters included representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Willow Grove Fire Company and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority. Panelists included individuals and agency representatives serving persons with a variety of functional needs.

Seminar **participants** were made up of first responders, governmental and non-profit agency representatives, and individuals with functional needs. Participants expressed appreciation for the diversity of speakers and topics, the quality of the presentations and interactive dialogue, and the interactive component of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) bus accessibility demonstration.

Major Seminar Strengths

The following major seminar strengths were identified:

- **Participation of the appropriate speakers**, panelists, and audience to promote emergency planning for persons with functional needs.
- **Diverse and interesting topics** that provided new and relevant information for organizations serving persons with functional needs.
- **Promotion of dialogue** between first responders and functional needs groups.
- **Opportunity to showcase** the subject matter expertise of the Functional Needs Subcommittee.
- **Provision of functional needs-specific training and resources for first responders.**

Major Areas for Improvement

The following major areas for improvement were identified:

- Need to **increase representation** of persons with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges in the selection of speakers, panelists, and audience members.
- Need to **attract** a greater number and diversity of **first responder participants**.
- Need to **schedule additional interpreters** as needed for speakers and panelists.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Details

Exercise Name

Functional Needs Symposium: A Seminar to Promote Successful Interactions between People with Functional Needs and First Responders

Type of Exercise

Discussion-Based Seminar

Exercise Start Date

September 20, 2011

Exercise End Date

September 20, 2011

Duration

6.5 hours

Location

Montgomery County Fire Academy
1175 Conshohocken Road, Conshohocken, PA 19428-1028

Sponsors

Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force Human Services Workgroup,
Functional Needs Subcommittee
Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH)

Mission

Communication, Resource Coordination, Universal Access Planning

DHS Target Capabilities

Community Preparedness and Participation
Intelligence and Information Sharing and Dissemination
Citizen Evacuation and Shelter-In-Place
Search and Rescue (Land-Based)
Emergency Public Information and Warning
Mass Care (Sheltering, Feeding, and Related Services)
Economic and Community Recovery

Exercise Planning Team Leadership

Chad Thomas MPH, *Public Health Communications Outreach Coordinator*
Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH)

Robyn Slater MPH, *Regional Vulnerable Populations Coordinator*
Chester County Department of Emergency Services

Kristin Beck, *Regional Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator*
Delaware Valley Healthcare Council of the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Philadelphia

Sandra Burns, *Regional Planner*
Southeastern PA Regional Task Force

Number of Participants: 92

Participating Organizations: 44

Participants represented the following organizations:

Community-Based Organizations: 18

Advance Lane Training and Employment Corporation (ALTEC)
American Red Cross
Delta Community Supports
Federation Housing
Germantown Deaf Ministries
HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy
JEVS Human Services
Lynch Homes
NHS Human Services
NORTH - Managers of the Philadelphia WIC Program
Philadelphia Developmental Disabilities Corporation (PDDC)
Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care (PCHC)
Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC)
Royer-Greaves School for the Blind
Salisbury Behavioral Health
Scope Outreach
Vision for Equality
Women's Center of Montgomery County

Governmental Organizations: 19

Bucks County Emergency Management Agency
Bucks County Department of Mental Health / Developmental Programs
Chester County Department of Emergency Services
Chester County Department of Parks and Recreation
Delaware County Office of Intellectual Disabilities
Fort Washington Fire Company
Lebanon VA (Veterans Affairs) Medical Center
Montgomery County Office of Behavioral Health
Montgomery Township
Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS)
Pennsylvania Department of Health Office of Public Health Preparedness
Pennsylvania Department of Health Southeastern District Office
Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Philadelphia Fire Department
Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
Southeastern Pennsylvania Search and Rescue (SEPA SAR)
Souderton Fire Department
Wallace Township
Whitemarsh Police Department

Other Organizations: 7

Delta Development Group

Grandview Hospital

Philadelphia Biblical University

Southeastern Pennsylvania Public Transportation Authority (SEPTA)

SEPTA Advisory Committee (SAC)

Southeastern Pennsylvania Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

University of Delaware