No One Left Behind: Planning Considerations for Vulnerable Populations

LENOWISCO Health District
VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
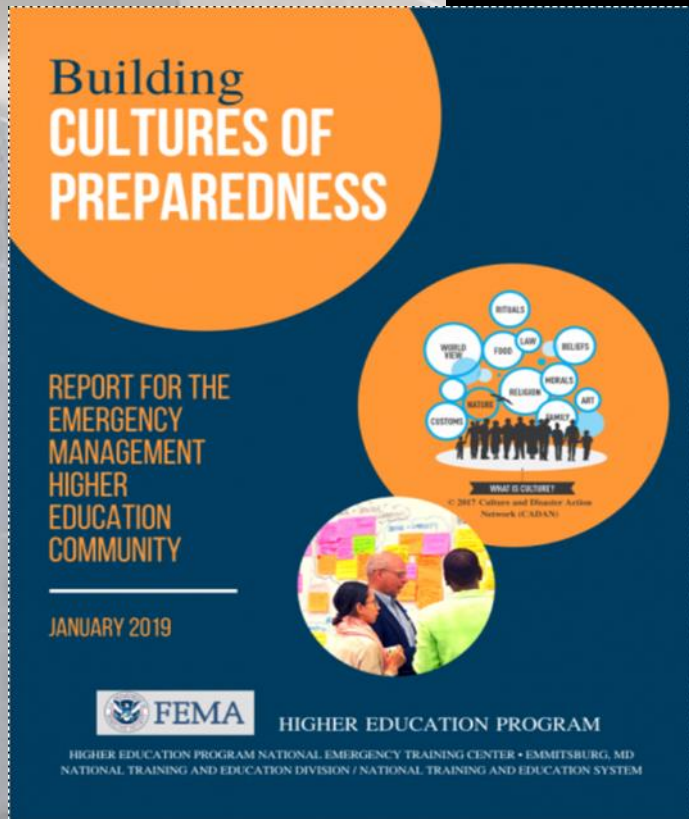
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Public Health Emergency Coordinator
Lenowisco Health District
Virginia Department of Health

How Did We Miss Her?

Woman walking through flood waters on President Street in Savannah, Georgia as Hurricane Matthew bears down on the region.

Overview

❖ **Disaster is an all too common theme – Flooding, Tornadoes, Active Shooters, Wildfires.**

❖ **FEMA – "Culture of Preparedness" – general population must understand the need to prepare for disasters.**

❖ **What about those who can't protect themselves?**

❖ **What about those we aren't reaching with our preparedness message?**

Purpose – Identify challenges and effective solutions for individuals suffering from homelessness during times of disaster.

Overview

❖ **Homelessness defined** – a person who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.

❖ **Chronically Homeless** – individual with a disability who has been continuously homeless for one year or more or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time homeless in those occasions is at least 12 months.

❖ **2018** – 553,000 people homeless in U.S. on any given night.

❖ **65% stayed in sheltered locations.**

❖ **35% unsheltered and on the streets.**

❖ **Is this a DISASTER IN ITSELF?**

The U.S. Department of
Housing and Urban Development
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The 2018 Annual Homeless
Assessment Report (AHAR)
to Congress

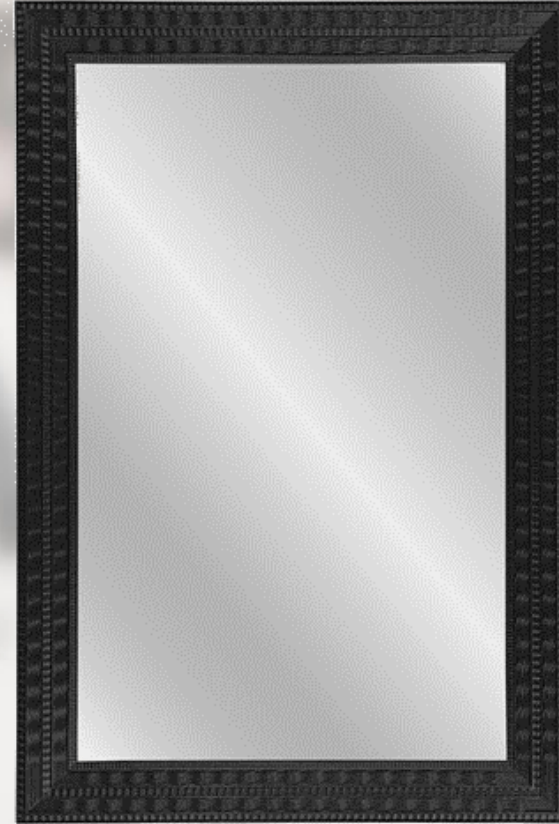PART 1: POINT-IN-TIME ESTIMATES OF HOMELESSNESS

DECEMBER 2018

Whose Community Does This Represent?

The Answer?

Yours

Mine

Four Main Principles

UNSHELTERED POPULATION
TRANSPORTATION AND TEMPORARY
SHELTERING
TABLE TOP EXERCISE
"GETTIN' OUTTA DODGE 3.0"
FEBRUARY 27, 2019

AFTER-ACTION REPORT
AND
IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Chatham Emergency Management Agency
124 Bull Street, Room 140
Savannah, GA 31401
912-201-4500
ChathamEmergency.org

February 2019 – Unsheltered Population TTX
Chatham County Georgia

❖ Utilize a "Whole Community" Approach to planning and emergency preparedness for individuals suffering from homelessness

❖ Outreach: How do we ensure that the message is being received?

❖ Evacuation and Sheltering (COVID Considerations)

❖ Home: Where do we go from here?

When not sure who to call or where the responsibility fell .... Unanimous answer..... Emergency Management.

Methodology

Three Primary Research Methods

❖ Internet search regarding emergency preparedness planning for individuals experiencing homelessness. Revealed statistics and documents to guide emergency managers.

❖ Unstructured Interviews :
1. Deborah Witmer: Seattle Office of Emergency Management
2. Jill Raycroft: San Francisco Office of Emergency Management
3. Shane Cox: New York City Department of Social Services Emergency Management

❖ Served as part of the planning team to develop a Tabletop Exercise for local homeless service providers in Chatham County, Georgia.

COMMON THEME

Communities recognize the need to better plan for and prepare individuals experiencing homelessness for disasters, however, there seams to be no clear cut "best practices" or identified solutions.

Results and Findings

Disaster Planning for People
Experiencing Homelessness

by Sabrina Edgington

National Health Care for
the Homeless Council
March 2009

Homelessness Occurring at an Alarming Rate

❖ No longer a "Big City" Issue – Communities in large urban settings and rural towns creating focus groups to dive into the root of the problem, seeking grant funding and networking with local service providers to identify solutions.

❖ Why have we as PUBLIC SERVANTS failed to address the needs of these individuals specifically?

The Needs of homeless people are usually categorized within the needs of all "Special Populations" in regard to emergency planning. This general categorization typically fails to consider the unique needs of people who are homeless.

"Failing to explicitly include homelessness in definitions has also resulted in unintended consequences in which people who are homeless have been denied services."

"It is the duty of the government to keep all Americans safe in times of emergency, especially those in our society who are not always able to help themselves. But in the days and weeks since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, it has become overwhelmingly clear that this was not the case. The government did not adequately prepare to evacuate those who could not afford a car, did not adequately prepare to evacuate the elderly, and did not adequately prepare to evacuate those who were too sick to leave their beds. We may not be able to control the wrath of Mother Nature, but we can control how we prepare for natural disasters"

Utilizing a "Whole Community" Approach

FEMA.GOV

❖ **"Whole Community" Engagement – Public/Private Sector integration, Faith-Based Community incorporation and Non-Governmental Organization utilization.**

❖ **Proper Blue Sky Planning – Including the right stakeholders (Ex. Homeless planning – local homeless service providers, EMAs, Law Enforcement, Faith-Based Organizations, City/County Elected Officials and individuals experiencing homelessness).**

❖ **Proper Education of Citizens relating to Emergency Preparedness – Must be creative, find new ways to reach those who are most vulnerable.**

❖ **Collaboration among Community Stakeholders to identify solutions to meet the needs of those affected by the event.**

Former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate

"Government can and will continue to serve disaster survivors. However, we fully recognize that a government-centric approach to disaster management will not be enough to meet the challenges posed by a catastrophic incident. This is why we must fully engage our entire societal capacity."

Heralding Unheard Voices

Published In December of 2006

Study conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Institute to learn from the experience of faith groups, recognize the roles played by these organizations, and to provide DHS with an understanding that will enable government to work more effectively with these organizations in future Disasters.

Year-Long Study specifically looking at work conducted during Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita

"The scale of their response was unprecedented. In many communities, they were the sole or lead provider of services for days or weeks. They made life-and-death differences in people's lives. They gave food to the hungry and vulnerable. They reduced suffering, facilitated restoration of infrastructure, and lessened the economic impact of the hurricanes by donating services and material resources."

Utilizing a "Whole Community" Approach

"Faith communities play an integral role during times of crisis. They help build resilience by knowing and supporting their neighbors before disaster strikes and walk alongside them once other groups have left the disaster zone. Faith communities have a network like no other organization I've ever come across bringing people from all walks of life together. By investing in our faith communities and their capacity, we can help strengthen resilience."

Chatham County Disaster Faith Network: Building A More Resilient Community

Chatham County's
Faith-Based Emergency Preparedness Summit
October 18, 2019

Chatham County Disaster Faith Network

Faith Based organizations within Chatham County are providing essential services to help members of our community find hope during their time of need.

Hope is described as not only the desire for something good to happen in the future, but rather the expectation that it will happen.

In times of crisis, Faith Based Organizations help communities find meaning and provide a foundation for recovery.

The Chatham County Disaster Faith Network serves as a platform for engaging our community Faith Based Organizations, fostering relationships and enhancing the emergency management program throughout the preparedness, response and recovery phases.
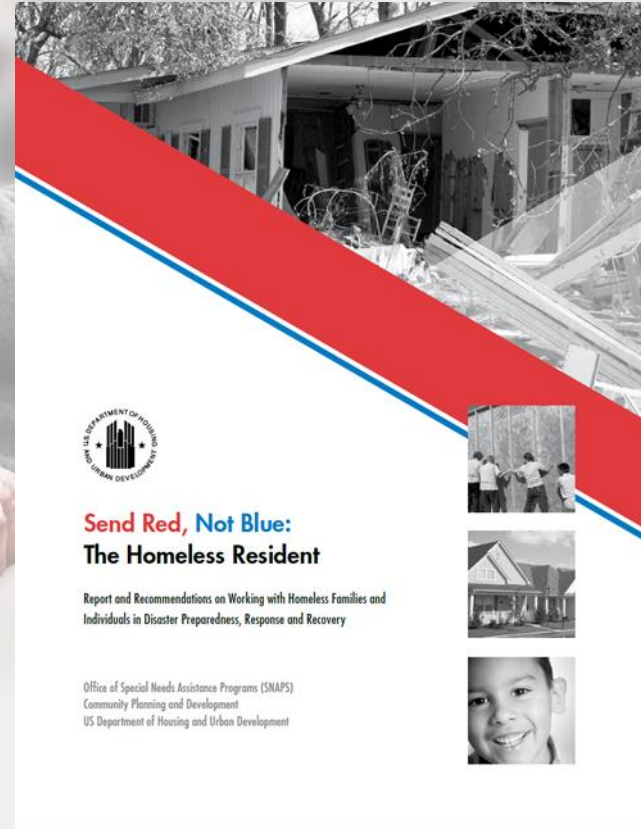
Outreach: How Do We Ensure The Message Is Received

Improvements in Technology:

- Social Media
- Text Messaging
- Email

How does Emergency Management ensure that these messages are being received by the intended audience: Citizens of our communities?

Send Red, Not Blue:
The Homeless Resident

Report and Recommendations on Working with Homeless Families and Individuals in Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery

Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS)
Community Planning and Development
US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Results from Homeless focus groups in Hillsborough and Pinellas County Florida

Questions whether homeless individuals respond to Street Outreach Teams.

Should we utilize Firefighters and Outreach Workers?

"Past negative interactions with officers may bias individuals against seeing any officer as a positive resource."

This was revealed locally as a potential area for improvement during our TTX.

Evacuation and Sheltering

Evacuees outside the Super Dome in New Orleans, Louisiana following the impacts of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Photo credit CNN.COM)

Evacuation and Sheltering

One reason people do not evacuate is because they want to protect their investment, their livelihood and their homes.

Do You Believe These Reasons Hold True For Individuals Who Are Homeless?

Homeless Individuals May:
Have difficulty getting to evacuation points because of health issues, mobility impairments, or lack of transportation. People may distrust authorities, have concerns about separation from their belongings, companions, and pets or be worried about being allowed to return.

Unstructured Interviews regarding strategies utilized to evacuate and/or shelter individuals, specifically the homeless:
- No Best Practices
- Amount of Homeless Individuals vary by Community
- Amount of Available Resources to address needs vary

Cities dependent upon:
- Public Transportation / local school system assets to assist (Also revealed during the TTX).

Other Options to Consider? Faith-Based Organizations, Local Homeless Service Provider Resources?

COVID – 19 Case Study
Service Providers

EMMAUS HOUSE
Feeding the hungry since 1982

SHUT DOWN OR REDUCED CAPACITIES

INNER CITY NIGHT SHELTER

Food, Shower, Laundry

Food, Shower, Rest

Chatham County Homeless Camp Locations

CAMP #	Homeless Camp Location	Number of Individuals
1	Under 5-165 at Louisville Road	5 – 3 (M) / 2 (F)
2	South of Louisville Road & East of Stiles Avenue	34 – 26 (M) / 8 (F)
3	South of SCAD building at Cohen Street, under I-16 at W. Boundary Street	18 – 13 (M) / 5 (F)
6	Under Bay Street Viaduct (east)	5 - 4 (M) / 1 (F)
7A	Randolph between President St and Randolph	11 – 7 (M) / (4) F
7S	750 Wheaton Street East of old Hitch Village next top radio towers off of Normandy Street	8 – 5 (M) / 3 (F)
9	Off Wheaton St, West of Aberdeen along RR tracks	17 – 13 (M) / 4 (F)
10	West of Wheaton St, north of Hubert MS, south of RR tracks	8 – 4 (M) / 4 (F)
4	Kayton Canal	6 – 4 (M) / 2 (F)
8N	Under Truman Pkwy off-ramp to President, north of President Street	35 – 27 (M) / 8 (F)
8S	Under Truman Pkwy, south of President Street behind the wall	2 – 1 (M) / 1 (F)
14	7705 Waters Ave across from KFC	2 – 2 (M)
13	Thomas Square Park next to Bull Street Library	4 – 4 (M)
15	2701 Montgomery Street next to McDonald's	4
5	Off Wallin Drive and East 36th across from McDonalds	8 – 5 (M) / 3 (F)

CAMP #	Homeless Camp Location	Number of Individuals
17	1901 E. Victory Dr. behind Dollar Tree	1 – 1 (M)
19	Hwy 204 near Gateway Blvd. wooded area next to the Sunoco service station	6 – 5 (M) / 1 (F)
20	Daffin Park 1301 E. Victory Drive near Bee Rd.	4 – 4 (M)
21	Derenne Ave. behind Subway, near the vicinity of the Globe	7 – 5 (M) / 2 (F)
11	Dean Forest and I-16	1 – 1 (M)
12	Hwy 17 at 516 Under the Bridge	1 – 1 (M)
16	10415 White Bluff Road	1 – 1 (M)
18	Bowles C. Ford Park, across from Cloverdale Subdivision	3 – 3 (M)
22	48th St and MLK	1 – 1 (M)
23	46th St and MLK	5 – 3 (M) / 2 (F)
24	418 W. 38th St	1 – 1
25	Arnold Street	10 – 6 (M) / 4 (F)
26	54 Montgomery Street near Sushi Time Towa restaurant	2 – 2 (M)
27	On River Street between River Street Sweets and the Waving Girl	3 – 3 (M)
28	18 Abercorn Street in lane behind Emmaus House	2 – 2 (M)
29	Forsyth Park	5 – 4 (M) / 1 (F)
30	Sparkman Drive off of Augusta Road in Garden City	1 – 1 (M)
31	Off Main Street near RR track	5 – 4 (M) / 1 (F)
32	Garden City near 109 Minus Ave.	3 – 3 (M)
33	2 Quacco Road behind Circle K	2 – 2 (M)

(M) – Represents Males

(F) – Represents Females

It's All About Partnerships

CHATHAM COUNTY GEORGIA
CONSTITUTION
1777

City of Savannah

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
CHATHAM COUNTY
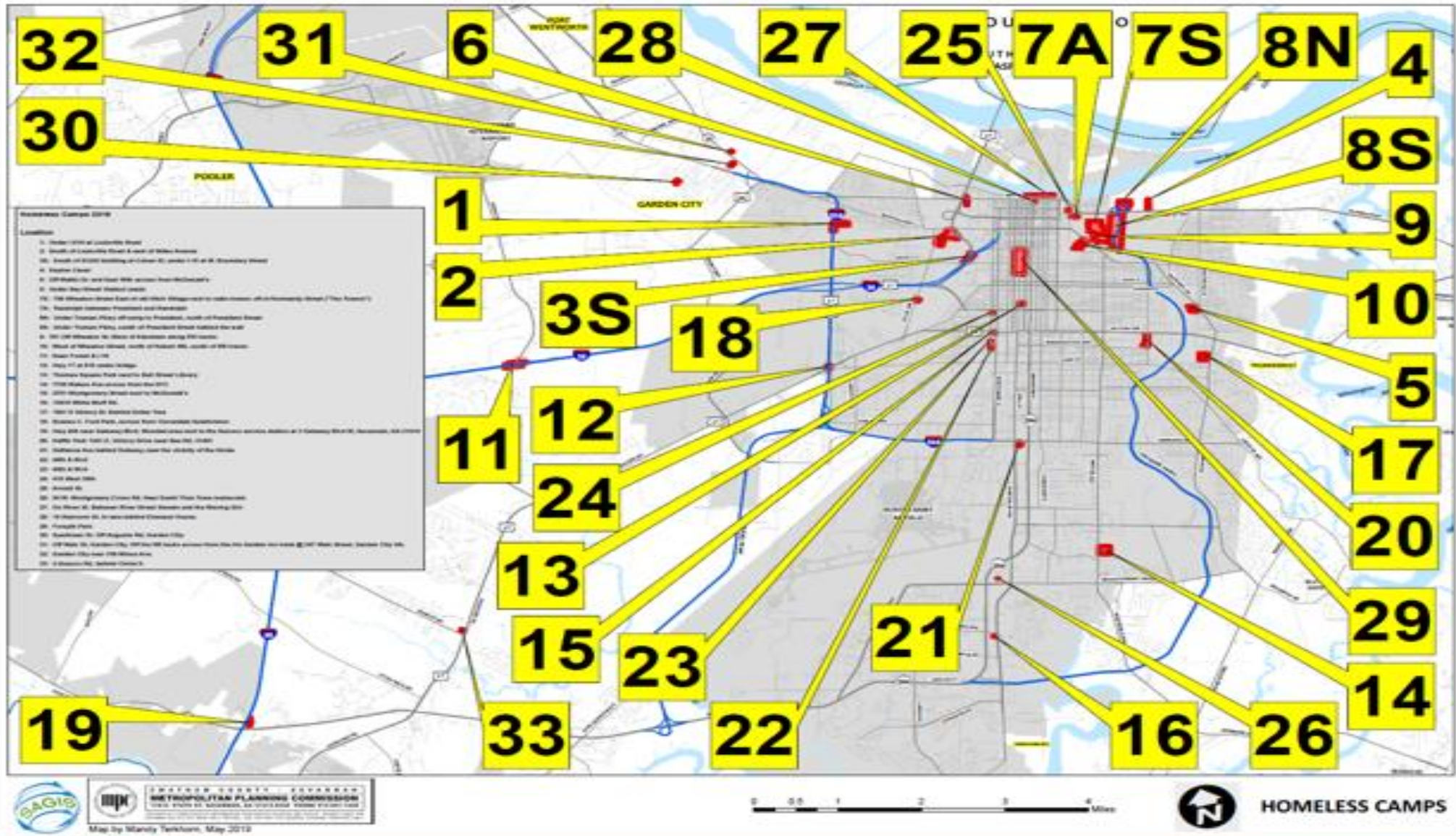
CSAH
Chatham Savannah
Authority for the Homeless

SAVANNAH
POLICE
EST. 1854

It's All About Partnerships

- Implemented Daily AM and PM Conference Calls with Stakeholders to maintain Situational Awareness:
  - Ability to Continue Services
  - Available Capacities in Shelters
  - Reports of Sickness in Camps
  - Availability of PPE Supplies
  - Immediate Needs

- CSAH Homeless Outreach Workers designated "Camp Presidents" who they communicated with daily

- Activated the CCDFN:
  - Maintain Essential Daily Living Functions –
  - Food Ministries
  - Basic Hygiene Provisions
  - Sheltering

- Incorporated Volunteer Management Strategy using an online platform that allowed ability to advertise needs and volunteers to register / schedule
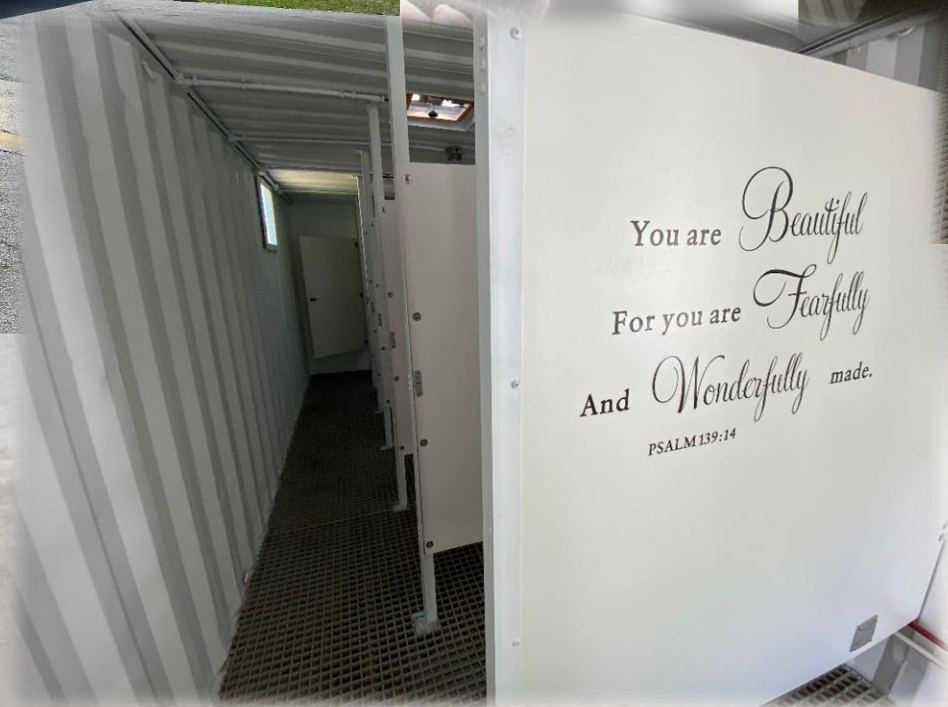
It's All About Partnerships
Feeding Support

It's All About Partnerships
Sheltering Support
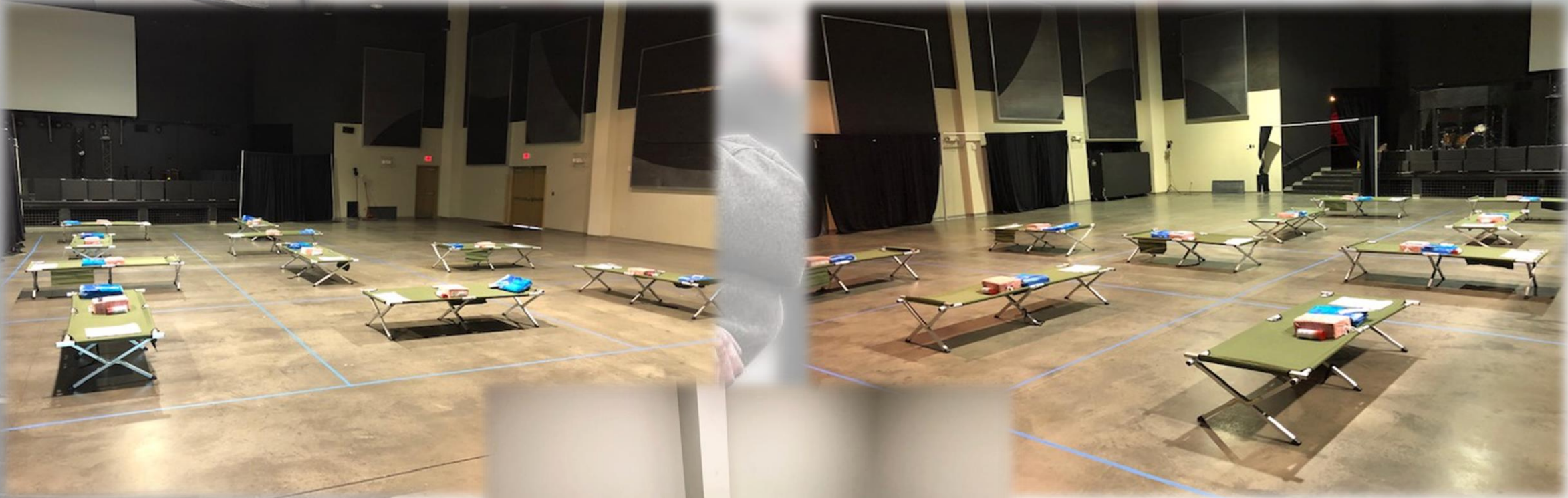
It's All About Partnerships
Hygiene Support

Home: Where Do We Go From Here?

Local Community Initiatives to offer homeless individuals support for housing.

Moving Forward

- Why have we as Emergency Managers failed to better plan for and address the needs associated with this population?

- Are we bringing the correct stakeholders to the table to address the needs of homeless individuals in terms of "Whole Community" Engagement?

- Is the viewpoint that local Emergency Management is responsible when organizations are unsure who should handle a particular role/responsibility associated with emergency preparedness for homeless individuals correct?

- Are street outreach teams the most effective method for notifying homeless individuals? Who should be included on these teams?

- Are there alternative methods for evacuation and sheltering of individuals suffering from homelessness? (Depends on type of incident – local homeless service provider or countywide evacuation)

- What support can be offered to homeless individuals in terms of post disaster housing?