

B. An Area Agency on Aging in Action

Initial Flood Response: Emergency Care for the Elderly

The West Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging began its involvement with the Flood Relief Effort on July 13, 1993. Four of the six counties in our PSA were Federally declared disaster areas. The following is a description of each service that was initially provided.

A. SPECIAL OUTREACH

Area Agency on Aging, and West Central Illinois

Case Coordination Unit/Meals Plus for Seniors staff provided special outreach in order to encourage older flood victims and to assist with the arrangement of services and programs to meet flood related needs. This service was provided by fourteen staff persons, at seven sites, on July 21, 22 and 23, 1993. Special Outreach Centers were provided by the Area Agency on Aging at specific senior citizen focal points. Interaction with the Disaster Relief Network showed that other participating agencies were only providing assistance at FEMA Disaster Assistance Centers or in their main offices. We felt that it was important for the aging population to provide information and assistance at more common locations.

B. DISASTER ADVOCACY

The Area Agency on Aging provided Disaster Advocacy in three fashions:

1. Twenty-five Area Agency on Aging and provider staff manned a booth at all FEMA Disaster Application Centers throughout the PSA from July 14, 1993 through August 8, 1993, ten hours per day, seven days a week. This was done in order to assist older victims with the application process and to assess and provide for their immediate and complex needs.

2. Area Agency on Aging and provider staff provided individual client case work, follow-up with each older victim to assure receipt of approved grants and/or services and to determine any newly developed needs, and provided linkages and advocacy to services and programs to meet those needs (i.e. housing location, employment, food, clothing, medical needs, etc.).
3. Area Agency on Aging staff provided administrative services that included: attendance at Flood Assistance Interagency meetings; coordination of available senior services and programs with other service providers; development of a database client tracking system (first on paper and then on computer); visits to flood ravaged areas to view the extent of devastation; consultations with local officials; established a community liaison for the AAA Flood Relief Program in affected areas; ensured delivery of clean up supplies and materials to senior centers and meal sites; planned, scheduled and coordinated Area Agency and provider staff involved with the flood effort; and, other necessary administrative tasks related to the flood.

C. MOVING ASSISTANCE

Area Agency on Aging staff assisted older victims with moving from their residences to temporary housing and from the temporary housing back to their residences. This was necessary as at time, when no other resources were available to assist in this emergency evacuation.

D. EXPANSION OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

In order to provide information, direction, guidance and assistance during the flood crisis on a 24 hour basis, Area Agency on Aging staff were issued pager devices to be used by the Aging Network. The AAA notified the Aging Network of the availability of this service as soon as the pagers were issued, so that the numbers could be placed in service. Both pagers have been used extensively by the Network since their issuance. Traditional information and Assistance Programs were not available to provide this service as they did not possess the level of expertise required to deal with this emergency condition.

E. STAFF LODGING/HOUSING

Due to the levee break in West Quincy, Missouri on July 16th, the bridge which connects Missouri to Illinois, was flooded and totally impassable causing provide staff, who reside in Missouri, to commute 3 1/2 hours each way to work. Due to the severe need for staff, the Area Agency on Aging arranged for lodging and house rental for the displaced staff.

F. NUTRITION SERVICES

The Area Agency on Aging and Nutrition Project quickly responded to the immediate nutritional needs of displaced senior flood victims. A temporary meal site was located in Kinderhook, where a vast majority of the residents of the flooded town of Hull, Illinois, relocated in temporary shelters and RV trailers. In addition, home delivered meals were provided through special delivery to senior flood victims who were lodged in hotels or other housing that had no cooking facilities. In Calhoun County, where flooding had caused entire communities to relocate, gas was being rationed due to the inability of delivery trucks to provide necessary supplies. The Kampsville meal site was being used as a Red Cross distribution/Disaster Center. In Hardin, where the water supply was inoperable, frozen meals were delivered by boat and with hip boots to those in need.

Area Agency on Aging and provider staff referred as many senior citizens as possible to Red Cross feeding sites and for food vouchers from the Salvation Army. However, many were not able to access these resources on a daily/weekly basis and did not possess the financial means to eat at local restaurants.

G. DIRECT ASSISTANCE

Throughout the course of the disaster assistance effort, the Area Agency on Aging and providers have authorized payments for goods and services that were found to be essential. At all times, the payments were made only when no other payment or reimbursement could be obtained by the client, the Area Agency on Aging or any other agency or organization. Individual's financial needs were created by several factors, including but not limited to, the following: Timing - when the flood damaged property after the first of the month when all Social Security benefits had been used for purposes such as rent, utilities, food, etc.; Loss/Damage of items during evacuation; and Temporary housing environments that lacked adequate facilities to meet the needs of the clients. Many times, clients were referred by staff to Community Action Program agencies, Red Cross, Salvation Army or other agencies for direct assistance. Items included in direct assistance are medical goods/services, specialized clothing, housing, air conditioners for medical reasons, microwave ovens for preparation of frozen meals, utilities, small refrigerators, etc.

RECOVERY - SUSTAINED EFFORT

The Area Agency on Aging developed a sustained effort following its initial emergency response to the flood. The following represents the service components developed and coordinated to meet the needs of senior citizen flood victims:

1. FLOOD RELIEF PROGRAM COORDINATION

The Area Agency on Aging has established a flood relief center from which all the available services and programs for seniors are directed. A full time flood coordinator is employed to train outreach staff, provide for appropriate intake and screening of flood victim intakes and referrals, maintain a computerized data base, act as liaison for the area flood coalitions and unmet needs committees, and procure goods and services.

2. DISASTER OUTREACH ADVOCATES

The Area Agency on Aging currently employs one outreach advocate for each of the four counties in the Planning and Service Area which were declared disaster areas. These Outreach Advocates canvass flooded communities to locate senior citizen flood victims, determine any immediate needs, complete a preliminary needs assessment, and conduct follow-up of services received or assistance given.

3. FLOOD VICTIM CASE MANAGEMENT

The Area Agency on Aging has contracted with the area-wide case management agency to provide a comprehensive assessment and intensive case management of senior citizens in order to determine individual needs, provide or arrange for linkages/direct assistance, and provide direct advocacy on behalf of the client. Case Managers report their findings to an Area Agency on Aging flood committee for final determination.

4. AAA FLOOD COMMITTEE

This committee evaluates the findings of the Case Manager to: determine if other assistance agencies can meet the client's needs; determine and approve/deny an appropriate case plan; and, to authorize AAA purchase of goods and/or services.

5. FLOOD FIELD WORKERS

These individuals provide for the delivery and/or installation of needed materials and products to the senior citizen flood victims homes/temporary housing. Their efforts are coordinated by the Flood Coordinator based on authorized case plans.

6. NUTRITIONAL SERVICES

The Area Agency on Aging has contracted with the area-wide Nutrition Project for the provision and distribution of home delivered meals to flood victims and their caregiver. The Nutrition Project has utilized both hot and frozen meals to meet the needs of the flood population in extremely rural areas.

7. GAP FILLING SERVICES

The Area Agency on Aging assists flood victims with repairs/renovation or appliance replacement only when other client resources (i.e. insurance, FEMA, SBA, etc.) fall short of covering full replacement costs. Special emphasis has been placed on assisting flood victims with accessibility modification of their homes.

As was the case during the emergency (Response) phase of this disaster, the Area Agency on Aging staff continues to be involved with assistance that is above and beyond the services illustrated above. This includes moving assistance, painting, insulating homes, clean up for both old and new homes/apartments, application assistance, providing information to individual seniors and community groups, and providing overall guidance and direction to the West Central Illinois Aging Network.

Through a variety of resources (grants from Title IV Disaster Relief Funds of the Older Americans Act and FEMA/Illinois Emergency Management Agency, donations of money and goods from private individuals and organizations, human resources from the Illinois Department on Aging and Title III National Reserve -- Emergency Dislocated Workers Project, and Flood Victim adoption from state and national organizations and allotment of Older Americans Act Titles IIB, C1, C2, D and F by the Illinois Department on Aging) the Area Agency on Aging has been able to maintain its efforts.

Area Agency on Aging Appendix