

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response

National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters (NACSD):

Public Meeting Summary

May 25, 2023



NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SENIORS AND DISASTERS

Public Meeting Summary

May 25, 2023

1:00-3:00 PM (virtual)

Attendees

Voting Members

Dr. Gregory Santa Maria (Chair)
Dr. Sue Anne Bell
Dr. Lisa M. Brown
Ms. Deborah Dalpoas-Ward
Ms. Maria Greene
Dr. Mary Russell

Ex Officio Members

Dr. Lara Lamprecht, Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR)
Mr. Derek Lee, Administration for Community Living (ACL)
Dr. Benjamin Olivari, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Dr. Emerald Nguyen, National Institutes for Health (NIH)
Mr. Eric Weakly, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Ms. Leslie Saucedo, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Mr. Kevin Thompson, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Subject Matter Experts

Dr. Anna Fisher
Dr. Jennifer Olsen
Mr. James Robinson
Dr. Michael Wasserman

ASPR Staff

Dr. Maxine Kellman
LCDR Clifton Smith
Mr. Darrin Donato
Ms. Tabinda Burney
Ms. Mariam Haris
Ms. Laura Gardiner
Mr. Jacob Pluznik

Invited Speaker

Dr. Julia Limage, Director, Office of Strategy, Policy, and Requirements, ASPR

Overview

The National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters (NACSD) met for a Public Meeting on May 25, 2023, to deliberate on recommendations for the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response and for the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The committee's Public Meeting had over 360 registered participants. The NACSD is a federal advisory committee that provides advice and guidance to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and to the HHS Secretary. The Committee provides expert advice and guidance to enhance all-hazards public health and medical preparedness, response, and recovery aimed at meeting the unique needs of older adults and their families across the entire spectrum of their wellbeing.

Remarks

Opening Remarks

The Designated Federal Official, Dr. Maxine Kellman and Chairperson Dr. Gregory Santa Maria made introductory remarks thanking the committee members and the participating public for their input. Dr. Santa Maria went on to discuss the importance of the committee and its working groups. The Committee was chartered to provide expert advice and consultation for the Secretary of Health and Human Services and for the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. As the Committee is advisory in nature, its role is to inform federal government action. Members, voting and nonvoting ex officios, have provided tremendous input as they are experts of their field.

Recommendations

The National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters broke into three working groups to deliberate on important issues and topics related to older adults and disasters. The working groups are Behavioral Health, Infrastructure, and Community Readiness. The Committee offered four recommendations to assist the Secretary of Health and Human Services in best serving older adults before, during, and after disasters. All four recommendations were voted on and approved by quorum of the Committee.

Recommendation 1: Advance the dissemination of accessible, available, and usable emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation information and communication support services:

- Update national emergency management websites
- Enhance relationships with aging related organizations
- Develop and provide communication tools and resources for state, local, tribal, or territorial (SLTT) governments based on best practices
- Identify disasters and public health risk communication best practices for reaching older adults
- Develop guidance for use by state and local governments about the inclusion of a "Get Involved" section on SLTT emergency management home pages.

Recommendation 2: Expand trained community disaster partners:

- Work with FEMA and require Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grant recipients to create comprehensive listings of community-based preparedness information, disaster training, and exercises relating to older adults
- Promote the use of a community disaster partner assessment tool to assess the presence and status of community level traditional and force-multiplier disaster partners focused on older adults
- Work with FEMA and health care coalitions to create comprehensive listings of community-based disaster training and exercises
- Provide guidance and expertise towards the creation of a Presidential Disaster Readiness Program.

Recommendation 3: Establish and sustain Disaster Care Centers of Excellence for older adults as a model of care for regional collaboration, virtual support, and specialized guidance:

- Improve resilience of older adults by developing technical guidance to promote disaster readiness
- Offer disaster training across the disaster management cycle
- Promote and coordinate the development of standardized curricula for disaster responders and health professionals
- Explore resources for reviewing, updating, and broadly disseminating trauma-informed care approaches and disaster behavioral health training
- Convene an interagency disaster behavioral health working group to support urgent and emergent disaster behavioral health needs of older adults, their families, and friends
- Harmonize and expand existing data systems and resources, like emPOWER.

Recommendation 4: Capitalize upon the opportunity to expand the existing Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) Program with dedicated resources and additional employees to advocate for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery planning across the long-term care continuum:

- Provide the Administration for Community Living resources to expand the Ombudsman Program
 - Paid State Ombudsman Program position
 - Three-year funding to each local Ombudsman program
 - Dedicated emergency preparedness and response position
- Create an Ombudsman Emergency Response memorandum of understanding (MOU) for mutual aid.

Public Comments

The public was offered opportunities to partake in the deliberative process of the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters. They sent comments to the Committee and three members of the public commented during the meeting. Written comments made to the committee were shared and discussed among committee members.

Dr. Dawn Heiman, President of the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA), thanked the committee members for their work; and recommended the committee include strategies to provide effective services for older adults with hearing and balance disorders. Dr. Heiman focused on the impact hearing loss has on communication efficacy and health disaster literacy.

Ms. Teresa Teeple, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, stated her support for the Committee's recommendations and requested the Committee invite speakers who are Long-Term Care Ombudsman to discuss specifics.

Mr. Dan Samson, Director of Government Relations at Argentum, iterated that seniors are far more vulnerable to diseases such as COVID-19 and policy makers overlook frontline assisted living caregivers. Assisted living communities, unlike other long-term care providers, were not included in any initial federal

relief efforts. He requested that policymakers do more to protect vulnerable seniors in a pandemic by proactively including assisted living caregivers in planning, preparations, and relief for future pandemics.

Final Remarks

Conclusionary Leadership Remarks from Dr. Julia Limage

Dr. Julia Limage thanked all participants and attendees for joining the NACSD Public Meeting. She especially thanked the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters voting members, ex officio federal members, subject matter experts, and the Designated Federal Official for their hard work in the creation of these recommendations. Dr. Limage stated the importance of working with partners across sectors public and private and with the state, local, tribal, and territorial governments within the United States to better address issues relating to older adults and disasters. The recommendations made were a culmination of substantial work that timely for Mental Health Awareness Month and highlighting older adults.

Chairperson Dr. Gregory Santa Maria Final Remarks

The Chairperson, Dr. Gregory Santa Maria, shared final remarks, expressing his thanks for the hard work of the Committee and its contributors from ASPR, ACL, CDC, SAMHSA, NIH, OASH, and the Pediatric Centers of Excellence, DHS including FEMA, the VA, U.S. Census Bureau, Rush University Medical Center, Fire and Life Safety, Inc., and the RAND corporation for providing presentations to the Committee to help inform these recommendations'. He reiterated that the Committee's efforts in the creation of the recommendations involved research, careful analysis, and critical thinking to ensure the highest quality of recommendations.

Designated Federal Official, Dr. Maxine Kellman Meeting Closure

Dr. Maxine Kellman, Designated Federal Official for the NACSD, thanked the Committee members, chair, Ex Officio, and all participants and attendees that joined this meeting and aided in the creation of these recommendations. The Committee will post the Recommendations online on the NACSD website and will also provide more information for the NACSD's September Public Meeting. If there are any comments or concerns, the public can reach out to the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters at NACSD@hhs.gov.