



Utah Department of
Health & Human Services
Integrated Healthcare



Utah Disaster Crisis Counselor

January 2023
Newsletter

OLDER ADULTS

This disaster crisis counselor's newsletter is dedicated to older adults to recognize the countless contributions they make to our communities. Their time, experience and talents enrich the lives of those around them and their special challenges during an emergency should not be forgotten.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

More than half of older adults have some kind of functional limitation making them more vulnerable during a disaster. These limitations may include impaired physical mobility, diminished sensory awareness, chronic health conditions, or social and economic limitations that interfere with their ability to prepare for disasters and to respond and adapt during such events. In Utah, natural disasters such as wildfires, flooding, and heavy snowstorms may force home evaluations or shelter-in-place without much notice. Support services that are usually available, such as help from caregivers or in-home health care and meal service, may not be available for a period of time. In addition, older adults may experience challenges that come with advanced age, such as hearing or vision problems or cognitive impairment, which may make it difficult to access, understand and respond to emergency instructions.

The CDC has a website with numerous resources available to assist older adults in disaster preparedness such as creating a disaster emergency plan and emergency supply kit. Next time you are visiting your grandparents, parents, siblings or older community members be sure to "have the talk" about their emergency plan.

[Access CDC Emergency Response for Older Adults website here](#)



TRAINING

Addressing the Needs of Older Adults in Disasters

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has a web-based training designed to improve public health and emergency medical responders' capability to address the access and functional needs of community-dwelling older adults in disasters. This course provides information, resources, tools, and strategies to help you address the needs of older adults in common disaster situations, including natural disasters.

<https://www.train.org/main/course/1093802/>



CAREGIVER SUPPORT

If you are a caregiver, you may be like many caregivers and have a hard time asking for help. Unfortunately, this can lead to feeling isolated, frustrated and even depressed.

Rather than struggling on your own, take advantage of local resources for caregivers. To get started, contact your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to learn about services in your community. Click the link below to find your area's AAA.

<https://ucoa.utah.edu/area-agencies-on-aging.php>

Tips for Older Adults

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has compiled a guide which provides support for helping older adults after disasters. See below for a list of helpful tips:

- Reach out to family, friends, mentors, and leaders in your community. Talk with people you trust. Remember that it's okay to be angry or sad.
- Take part in activities that reduce your stress, such as deep breathing, listening to music, prayer, or reading.
- Participate in community recovery activities.
- Get plenty of rest, and eat healthy meals and snacks.
- Once you can do so safely, build movement and even exercise into your day. This can be as simple as walking. Moving your body can help get rid of extra stress hormones likely to build up after a disaster.
- Reestablish daily routines. This may help lower anxiety.
- Don't be afraid to accept help. It's a sign of strength to be able to accept and use the help other people and programs can provide.
- Reflect on other tough times you have gotten through. It may help to consider how you addressed past challenges; you may be able to solve current problems in similar ways.

https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep19-01-001_0.pdf

Save the Date: May 22, 2023

for the annual Disaster Crisis Counseling training. More information is coming soon!

