

CSAC 2019 Executive Summary

Overview: Innovative best practices were established by California Children's Services Medical Therapy Program to satisfy the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Emergency Preparedness Requirements.

Challenge: The California Children's Services (CCS) Medical Therapy Program (MTP) in San Diego County provides occupational and physical therapy services to physically handicapped children at seven clinic locations across the county. The MTP's new initiative to be compliant with the CMS Emergency Preparedness Requirements for Clinics, Rehabilitation and Therapy (which was not a prior program expectation) was a critical factor that led to this project in May 2018. The time frame of one year to adhere to the requirements presented a challenge, yet was critical in ensuring preparedness for both the MTP staff and clients. The geographic locations of the seven clinics also presented a challenge in addressing the unique needs of each site as well as the fact that the clients served have disabling conditions, generally due to neurological or musculoskeletal disorders, resulting in lack of normal mobility and special equipment needs which are all considerations in an emergency.

Solution: In partnership with the County's Public Health Preparedness Response Branch, the MTP hired an expert to conduct hazard vulnerability assessments and develop emergency plans and trainings. The assessments were developed for each of the seven clinics and the MTP administrative office, which addressed the challenge of individualizing the regional needs. Innovative and engaging strategies included: role-playing and mock drills to address each clinic's response to floods, fires, intruders, and other potential emergencies. Two of these activities involved the Statewide and County Medical and Health Full Scale Exercises held in November 2018 and May 2019, but included "injects" that were unexpected scenarios specific to the therapy clinic environments.

Innovation: Not only did this project propel the CCS MTP into compliance with the CMS requirements in one year's time, it also supported *Live Well San Diego*, specifically in its vision

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to promote “living safely” for all residents by ensuring the County’s communities are resilient to disasters and emergencies. The creativity of the “injects” in the Statewide and County Medical and Health Full Scale Exercises allowed the MTP staff and clients to determine how they would respond in an actual emergency while on-site during a therapy appointment. This included: custom-made cutouts of pretend clients set up strategically within the therapy unit for visual representations of a client presenting with a communicable disease; staged phone calls from staff posing as media personnel; and mock earthquake simulations for light and power outages.

Results: As a result of this project, an emergency operations plan and continuity of operations plan were developed for each clinic and the CCS MTP central administrative office. A five-year training plan was also developed, which includes a training matrix and a detailed breakdown of training requirements and associated educational materials. Specific to the positive impact on the community, the MTP serves approximately 1,600 qualifying clients due to their medical conditions. Not only were clients present (and therefore active participants) during the exercises at each of the therapy sites, but information and resources on emergency preparedness continue to be shared and distributed at the therapy locations.

Replicability: Other local agencies serving vulnerable populations have already requested copies of the emergency operations plan and continuity of operations plan that were developed for the MTP to replicate for their programs. This also proves the MTP’s development of best practices that can be readily utilized by others. The MTP is proud to be a leader in preparing its staff, the physically handicapped children and their families that they serve, and the San Diego community at-large for potential emergencies.

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