



***Disaster Ready* Program Effectiveness**

EPIC Grant Deliverable: Summary of Focus Group Findings

April 5, 2021

The Mission

As part of the Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (EPIC) grant administered through the ***Disaster Ready (DR)*** program managed by the Arizona Health Care Association (AHCA) in partnership with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), a “focus group” process was developed and executed to gauge the effectiveness of the ***Disaster Ready*** program. Since its inception, the ***Disaster Ready*** program has provided consultative support, training, and other resources to help licensed skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) in Arizona enhance and improve emergency preparedness and emergency management capabilities.

The Objectives

Specific goals itemized in the *DR EPIC* grant management plan for the current grant cycle (2020 – 2021) include the following:

- Develop a “focus group” process to obtain information and feedback from participants to assess and evaluate the ***Disaster Ready*** emergency preparedness program effectiveness.
- Prepare a summary report on the ***Disaster Ready*** emergency preparedness program effectiveness based on the information obtained from all focus group meetings.

This report represents the grant deliverable (summary report) as noted above.

The Plan

The strategy to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the ***Disaster Ready*** program was comprised of two major components:

- 1) a survey/questionnaire (summarized separately).
- 2) focus groups. The focus groups were considered a key element in gaining valuable anecdotal insight from diverse stakeholder sectors.

To reduce the administrative burden of hosting separate focus group meetings, existing committees and coalitions were used as a platform for focus group feedback. Here is a listing of the meetings that were used as “focus groups” to help analyze the ***Disaster Ready*** program effectiveness:

- AHCA Healthcare Leaders – January 14, 2021
- Facilities Management / Maintenance Directors – January 28, 2021
- AHCA Careforce Academy- February 10, 2021

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- Clinical Quality Group- February 12, 2021
- AHCA Board Members- February 19, 2021

The Process

The **Disaster Ready** team used a group interview approach to obtain information from focus group participants identified in the summary report as “respondents.” A short overview of the **DR** program was presented to all participants and an informal question and answer session was initiated with each of the groups.

Topics that were reviewed with each of the focus groups include the following:

- **DR** general education and training opportunities including the annual DR Summit
- **DR** Nursing Home Incident Command System (NHICS) training
- **DR** facilitated tabletop exercises (TTX)
- **DR** training programs including NHICS as they pertain to COVID-19 emergency planning
- **DR** training programs including NHICS as they pertain to COVID-19 emergency response
- Assessment of future training needs and priorities
- Assessment of the need for virtual training opportunities in the future
- Assessment of additional staff at the facility level that should participate in **DR** training
- Assessment of the **DR** team’s responsiveness to facilities in the midst of a real-world emergency or disaster
- Assessment of **DR** app utilization
- Assessment of additional training resources that could specifically be implemented with the EPIC program.

The Findings and Action Steps

The verbal responses from focus group participants who were familiar with the **DR** program were very favorable. **However, it was clear that not all categories of the SNF workforce (new administrators, nursing / frontline care staff and executive staff) were familiar with the program. This is a key finding that will guide our future efforts to promote the Disaster Ready program.**

The following represents information that was obtained from all of the focus groups along with action steps to improve the program:

- The majority of **respondents familiar with the DR program appeared to be very supportive of the program but acknowledged that was not the case at all levels of management in their facilities.**

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- **Familiar with the program.** Those who appeared to be *most knowledgeable* about the program were administrators and facility management personnel, primarily maintenance directors and environmental services directors. Those that were *least familiar* with the program were front line staff (nurses and CNAs), new administrators and some members of corporate leadership.
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will focus on developing messaging and marketing of program initiatives to help promote participation from all levels of operations in SNFs consistent with the scope of the resources.*
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will consider the feasibility of providing services on the individual facility level (training, tabletop exercises, etc.) if future funding resources are available.*

- **The majority of respondents familiar with the DR program stated that they had participated in NHICS training sessions and tabletop exercises.** Respondents not familiar with the program stated that they were not acquainted with the concept of NHICS nor did they participate in any tabletop exercises facilitated by the DR program.
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will continue to promote the utilization of NHICS and participation in tabletop exercises as a core element of the program.*
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will focus on developing messaging and marketing of NHICS and tabletop exercises to help promote participation from all levels of employment in SNFs consistent with the scope of the resources.*
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will continue to develop new strategies to help ensure that the important component of “All Hazards” emergency management is accessible to all levels of operations on the individual facility level, if future funding resources are available.*

- The majority of respondents **were in support of the concept of virtual training** programs.
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will continue with the development of training programs that can be implemented in either a virtual, on-line, or recorded format to help ensure accessibility to grant deliverables designed to enhance emergency management capabilities of SNFs throughout the state.*

- The majority of respondents, both familiar and not familiar with the DR program **appeared to be in support and appreciative of the consultative services provided to facilities during real-world adverse events** such as power outages and wildfires.
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will continue to monitor emergency incidents and adverse situations that arise throughout the state and provide support to affected facilities within the capabilities of the grant- including consultative assistance and logistical coordination, as needed.*

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- The majority of respondents familiar with the DR program stated that they knew about the DR app but most stated that **they did not utilize this resource in any type of consistent manner**. A small percentage of respondents (primarily maintenance directors and environmental service directors) stated they used the DR app on a regular basis. Those unfamiliar with the DR program did not have any awareness of the app.
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will develop a new app that is designed with more functionality so it can be universally used to help prepare, respond and recover from emergencies and disasters*
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will focus on developing messaging and marketing of the DR app to help promote utilization.*
- During each of the focus group meetings, the DR team made notes of select comments that were communicated during each session.
 - **Action Step:** *The DR team will continue to review this feedback and new information as it is obtained from stakeholders to help ensure quality improvement as the program moves forward.*

The Summary

The majority of the feedback from focus group participants was very positive and favorable. Their responses offered clear evidence of the historical success of the Disaster Ready program. There is no question that the program has been helpful and well received. **The Disaster Ready program has achieved the original goal to enhance emergency preparedness and management in long term care.** It has strengthened the readiness capacity of skilled nursing facilities statewide and the leadership of long term care enthusiastically supports this program.

Our greatest challenge was made clear. **We must communicate the availability of this program to all levels of SNF operations, beyond just the administrative level.** The diversity of the focus groups was an important factor in helping us understand the existing “reach” of the DR program. We became aware that clinical leadership and direct care staff - among other groups - are often out of the information loop in emergency preparedness. This insight will guide us in future communication and marketing efforts.

The focus groups provided us with **essential reassurance that the Disaster Ready program is a valued and successful model of service delivery.** We have created a viable foundation for next steps in program development.

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