

Disaster Preparedness

While many nurse-midwives came to the aid of women and families following Hurricane Katrina, we count ourselves among those who were disappointed by the lack of a rapid and organized response to this natural disaster. While there are many lessons to be learned from this event, the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) will be working to call attention to the special needs of pregnant women. We will work to raise awareness about the immediate, intermediate and long term interventions that must be implemented in order to assure that mothers and babies do not suffer needlessly during these difficult times. We will also work to assure that more midwives are prepared to help before the next disaster strikes.

The following are links to information that can help you as you work with your community to plan for natural and other types of disasters that may impact women and families.

White Ribbon Alliance National Working Group on Women and Infant Needs in Emergencies

The mission of the National Working Group for Women and Infant Needs in Emergencies

(<http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org/GetInvolved/default.cfm?a0=nwg>) is to ensure that the health care needs of pregnant women, new mothers, fragile newborns and infants are adequately met during and after a disaster situation. Members use their expertise to create resources for government and NGOs to raise awareness of the specific needs of pregnant women, mothers, fragile newborns and infants in an emergency, and advocate for policies that will improve outcomes for mothers and infants affected by disaster.

Read the final version of the *Women and Infants Service Package* (WISP),

(<http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org/Resources/Documents/WISP.Final.07.27.07.pdf>) guidelines that provide the framework for the minimum and initial actions needed to respond to the essential health care needs of pregnant women, mothers, newborns and infants in an emergency.

Giving Birth in Place

In response to the September 11th terrorist attacks which brought with it concern that pregnant women might find themselves isolated from health care facilities and that businesses might need to be prepared for a woman to give birth in the office, ACNM published a how-to guide titled Giving Birth in Place. This document is available at http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/education/giving_birth_in_place.pdf, and can be modified to address a variety of situations.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

www.Ready.gov is a web site set up by the Department of Homeland Security primarily to address potential terrorist threats. Some of the things families can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling a supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both natural and man-made emergencies. The web site provides instructions on assembling emergency supplies, making a plan for an emergency, and being informed.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>

The National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) is a section within FEMA that is responsible for supporting Federal agencies in the management and coordination of the Federal medical response to major emergencies and federally declared disasters. One of the roles of NDMS is to foster the development of Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs).

Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs)

A DMAT is a group of professional and para-professional medical personnel (supported by a cadre of logistical and administrative staff) designed to provide medical care during a disaster or other event. Each team has a sponsoring organization, such as a major medical center, public health or safety agency, non-profit, public or private

organization, that organizes the team and recruits members, arranges training, and coordinates the dispatch of the team.

DMAT members are required to maintain appropriate certifications and licensure within their discipline. DMAT members are activated as Federal employees, are paid while serving as part-time federal employees, and their licensure and certification are recognized by all states. They also have the protection of the Federal Tort Claims Act in which the Federal Government becomes the defendant in the event of a malpractice claim. All the information needed to join a team is located at <http://www.dmat.org/>.

Robbie Prepas, CNM, has been a member of DMAT for six years and has been deployed to Guam and ground zero in New York, as well as New Orleans. She wrote about her experiences in *Quickening* (Nov/Dec 2005). http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/education/November_December_Quickening.pdf.

American Red Cross

Midwives can learn about becoming American Red Cross volunteers by reviewing the orientation at www.redcross.org. (Individual chapters may have their own customized volunteer and employee orientation.) The Introduction to Disaster Services course is available online.

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

The MRC was established in 2002 to serve citizens and communities throughout the United States by establishing local teams of volunteers to strengthen the public health infrastructure and improve emergency preparedness. Each MRC unit is different, organized in response to its area's specific needs. A region's hazard threats, health concerns, and the organization in which the unit is established (health department, faith-based organization, etc.), will dictate what an MRC looks like. To find an MRC in your area, go to www.medicalreservecorps.gov.

Barefoot Doctors Academy

After Hurricane Katrina, Mary Callahan, CNM, noticed a plea for midwives from Barefoot Doctors www.barefootdoctorsacademy.com. Dee Anne Domnick, CPM, director of Barefoot Doctors, had seen a need for prenatal care at the shelter and stepped in to provide services to pregnant and postpartum women. Within a few days, Mary had traveled to Baton Rouge. She wrote about her 10-day trip in *Quickening* (Nov/Dec 2005). http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/education/November_December_Quickening.pdf.

Journal of Perinatal Education

DeWald L, Fountain L. Introducing Emergency Preparedness in Childbirth Education Classes. *J Perinatal Education* 2006; in press. <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/lamaze/jpe>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Emergency preparedness and response: Keep food and water safe after a natural disaster or power outage (2005)
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater.asp>

La Leche League

La Leche League was founded to give information and encouragement, mainly through personal help, to all mothers who want to breastfeed their babies. Visit their site for information on emergency breastfeeding resources. <http://www.lalecheleague.org/emergency.html>

March of Dimes

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality, through research, community services, education and advocacy. Visit their site for information on hurricane recovery. http://www.marchofdimes.com/pnhec/159_16943.asp

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action

Fact sheet on feeding babies in emergencies. <http://www.waba.org.my/pdf/Factsheet.pdf>

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The ACNM “*QuickInfo*” series was developed by the Department of Professional Services to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Services at 240-485-1800 or info@acnm.org.