



16300 Katy Freeway Suite 185

Houston, Tx 77094

832-803-0011

In accordance with TAC §97.256, Synergy HomeCare will develop, maintain and implement a written emergency preparedness and response plan, based on the agency's risk assessment and establish a plan of action for providing continuous client care and continuous business operations in the event of a disaster. DADS does not require an agency to physically evacuate or transport a client.

Synergy HomeCare will involve the administrator and other agency leaders designated by the administrator in the development, implementation and evaluation of the emergency preparedness and response plan.

Synergy HomeCare will designate a disaster coordinator, and alternate, by title.

Synergy HomeCare will conduct a risk assessment analysis to identify potential disasters from natural and man-made causes in our service area. (See Attachment A.)

Synergy HomeCare will develop a continuity of operations business plan, based on the risk assessment, to address emergency financial needs, essential functions for client services, critical personnel and how to return to normal operations as quickly as possible.

1. Preparedness

a. Administrative Staff responsibilities:

i. Communication

1. Maintain a current listing of staff and all applicable contact numbers (home phone, cell phone, pager, emergency numbers and special contact numbers of family/friends if employee is unreachable) for use as a communication tree.
2. Set up and frequently test a disaster calling tree for patient emergencies.
3. Provide administrative call.
4. Develop a backup communication plan for staff and patients, in case phone system is not working (cell phones, walkie-talkies, e-mail-enabled wireless PDAs, meeting at a specific location, etc).
5. Meet with local emergency planners to coordinate services and keep phone numbers readily available.

- ii. Client Triage – Disaster Coordinator and administrative staff will maintain a current list of clients prioritized by care needs and based on specific services provided. Criteria for prioritizing clients may include but are not limited to:



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1. I-Life Threatening (or Potential) – requires ongoing care. Does not have a caregiver capable of providing care. Requires assistance with transportation to hospital or specialized shelter.
  2. II-Not life threatening but client might suffer severe adverse effects from interruption of services. Capable caregiver present. Will require transportation assistance to hospital or specialized shelter if necessary.
  3. III-Visits could be postponed 24-48 hours without adverse effects. Client able to care for themselves or has a willing and able caregiver. Transportation available from family, friends or others.
  4. IV-Visits could be postponed 72-96 hours without adverse effects. Client is able to care for themselves or has a willing and able caregiver. Transportation available from family, friends or others.
- iii. Secure Office Building
1. Locate fire extinguishers and participate in building fire drills annually.
  2. Make certain entrances/exits are secure for staff working in the office.
  3. Identify equipment that is necessary for keeping the business open. Plan how to replace or repair if needed.
  4. Store extra supplies that may be needed.
- iv. Information Technology Systems – Make sure the following are in place:
1. Anti-virus software and firewall.
  2. Make sure staff knows not to open email from unknown sources or unexpected email with attachments.
  3. Use passwords and change frequently.
  4. Back up computer data in case of disaster.
- v. Emergency Financial Needs
1. Take inventory, including photos.
  2. Make plans for paying creditors and meeting payroll.
  3. Make copies of financial/insurance records to be stored in a safe, off-site location in case of disaster.
- vi. Preparation for Utility Disruptions
1. Plan ahead for potential disruptions in utilities, with possible extended disruptions.
- vii. Off-Site Location



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1. Make plans for meeting site/secondary location for office, to include communication systems, computer systems, client records.
- viii. Media and Information Management
  1. Inservice all staff for understanding that to ensure accuracy and continuity of information, all Synergy HomeCare specific information directed towards the media and any other public outlets, should be directed to the Administrator or designee.
- b. Supervisory Field Staff responsibilities:
  - i. Communication
    1. Arrange for personal issues to be taken care of.
    2. Keep vehicle full of fuel.
    3. Make sure Synergy HomeCare has emergency phone list of names and numbers.
    4. Demonstrate education and understanding of agency's Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.
  - ii. Client Triage
    1. Upon admission to Synergy HomeCare and on an ongoing basis, the client's condition and needs will be assessed for triage prioritization based on specific services provided.
    2. Upon admission to Synergy HomeCare and on an ongoing basis, the client's location will be assessed for potential natural and/or industrial disaster.
    3. Synergy HomeCare will provide the client/family with information on how to handle emergencies in the home related to a disaster. The client/family will also be educated on their responsibilities in Synergy HomeCare's emergency preparedness and response plan (Bill of Rights and Responsibilities).
    4. The client/family will be assisted with a client-specific Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan. The client/family will be educated about this plan. The plan will be documented in the client's file and communicated to Synergy staff.
    5. Staff will participate in emergency preparedness and response training.
    6. Staff will rotate call as appropriate and per job descriptions.
2. Mitigation
  - a. Administrative Staff responsibilities:



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- i. Communication
  1. The administrator or designee will ensure that the office is adequately staffed.
  2. Disaster calling trees are utilized for contacting staff. Drills are conducted at least annually.
  3. Training is provided for staff for emergency preparedness and response planning in orientation and annually.
- ii. Client Triage
  1. Administration will ensure adequate staffing is provided and back-up staffing plans are in place.
  2. Disaster Coordinator or designee will be responsible for the monitor of public information systems 24/7 for disaster related news and information, including after hours, weekends and holidays. As needed, this information will be communicated to the staff for client access/services.
- b. Supervisory Field Staff responsibilities:
  - i. Communication
    1. The staff members can communicate among themselves and with the office via telephone, cell phones and pagers, walkie-talkies, e-mail enabled PDAs or other designated method that has been provided.
    2. Staff will education client/families on emergency planning, and will assist them with information to develop their own emergency plans.
    3. All client/family education will be documented in the client's file.
    4. Staff will attend emergency preparedness and response training.
  - ii. Client Triage
    1. Coordination of client care and communication regarding the client's status will transpire through informal verbal and written communication. Coordination of the client care will include review and update of classification in the triage system when there are significant changes in the client's condition.
    2. 211 is a special assistance registry for those needing help in a general evacuation. Synergy will register clients with special needs in the 211 system.
    3. On-call books will be kept up-to-date with client information.



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3. Response – The administrator or designee will initiate and discontinue the implementation of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.
  - a. Administrative Staff responsibilities:
    - i. Communication
      1. If communication methods at the office are disrupted, mobile communication system, email-wireless PDAs, short-wave radios and email relays may be source utilized by the administrative staff.
      2. The disaster calling tree will be activated to begin client triage.
      3. Back-up staff will be utilized as necessary to make client contact.
      4. Disaster Coordinator or designee will contact the local emergency medical services and DADS to notify of disaster in progress.
      5. Disaster Coordinator or designee will be responsible for documenting all aspects of the disaster, to include names, decisions made and times of actionable items.
    - ii. Client Triage
      1. Disaster Coordinator will ensure that all clients are appropriately triaged.
      2. Synergy HomeCare will make appropriate referrals to assure continuation of care. This will include, but not limited to:
        - a. Life-supporting equipment
        - b. Life-sustaining medication and/or nutrition
      3. On-call/administrative staff will contact appropriate emergency community support systems, as appropriate to the client.
      4. Local radio and/or television stations may be contacted by Synergy as a method of communicating with the client population, if necessary.
    - iii. Secure Office Building
      1. If Synergy is directly affected, the administrator will determine if the removal of client, personnel and financial records is necessary.
      2. Agency staff members will not jeopardize their own safety for the purpose of removing office contents (ex.: client or personnel files) when a disaster has occurred at the office location.
  - b. Supervisory Field Staff responsibilities:
    - i. Communication
      1. If no means of communication is available, then all staff members who can safely travel will report to the office.



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2. Clients may contact the staff by calling the office number.
3. If the after-hours phone service is not operational, the agency will forward to cellular "on-call" phone.
4. Staff will maintain contact with the office for updates as possible.
- ii. Client Triage
  1. Staff will contact clients according to their client triage prioritization.
  2. Staff will visit all clients when possible, based on time, disaster and care plan.
  3. Community emergency support services will be contacted and utilized as necessary, and as authorized by administration.
  4. Transportation for clients requiring assistance will be coordinated from the office.
- c. Administrative and Supervisory Field Staff responsibilities: The Disaster Coordinator or designee will coordinate with all available administrative and supervisory field staff to implement the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan in the event that warning of an emergency is not provided.
4. Recovery – The administrator or designee will be responsible for the recovery phase of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.
  - a. Administrative Staff responsibilities:
    - i. Communication
      1. The administrator will receive full briefing of all activities of disaster response, and Disaster Coordinator will develop a Disaster Recovery Plan:
        - a. Response actions taken
        - b. Necessary modifications to plans and procedures
        - c. Training needs
        - d. Recovery activities to date
      2. Any incidents that occurred will be documented, with action plans developed.
      3. Depending on disaster, support groups for staff may be offered and staff encouraged to participate.
      4. Review for ongoing care for patients and staff, preventative care and professional counseling.
      5. Meet with local emergency response providers to review disaster response and formulate ongoing plans.



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- ii. Client Triage
  - 1. Review backup staffing plans for effectiveness.
  - 2. Ensure that clients that were moved are placed back on schedule and receiving care.
  - 3. Follow up on any transfers or discharges of clients for continuity.
  - 4. Review on-call logs.
- iii. Secure Office Building
  - 1. Replenish office supplies and client supplies.
  - 2. Review contacts for effectiveness.
  - 3. If Synergy's office is temporarily re-located during a disaster, agency will notify Department of Aging and Disability per regulation 97.256(5), no later than five (5) working days after move if temporarily:
    - a. Relocating a place of business,
    - b. Expanding the service area to provide services during a disaster.
  - 4. All notifications to DADS should be made in writing by facsimile, email, or if unavailable, by telephone to Mary Jo Grassmuck, Manager for HSCCA Program Licensing, at (512) 438-2213 (fax), [mary.grassmuck@dads.state.tx.us](mailto:mary.grassmuck@dads.state.tx.us) or (512) 438-2630 (telephone).
  - 5. If records are damaged during the disaster, the records must not be reproduced or recreated except from existing electronic records. Records reproduced from existing electronic records will contain:
    - a. The date the record was reproduced;
    - b. The agency staff member who reproduced the record
    - c. How the original record was damaged.
- iv. Emergency Financial Needs
  - 1. Take inventory
  - 2. Review costs expended/payors of clients
  - 3. Contact insurance carrier
- b. Supervisory Field Staff responsibilities:
  - i. Communication
    - 1. Document any incidents that occurred during disaster.
    - 2. Meet with administration to review activities of disaster response and provide feedback for improvement.
  - ii. Client Triage



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1. Contact all clients and reclassify clients for triage.
  2. Resume visit schedule.
  3. Assist client/family with updating their emergency preparedness and response plan.
- c. Administrative and Supervisory Field Staff responsibilities: The Disaster Coordinator or designee will coordinate with all available administrative and supervisory field staff to implement the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan in the event that warning of an emergency is not provided.