

Disaster Preparedness at Eden I&R

Eden I&R (EIR)'s largest program, 2-1-1 Alameda County, is a vital resource for the whole county before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. EIR/2-1-1 has a designated seat in the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and in the event of a disaster, 2-1-1 is used to provide vetted, updated information to the public including safe travel routes, open hospitals, safe drinking water, and how to locate a missing loved one. Eden I&R has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Alameda County Sheriff's Office's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to "serve as support to the EOC by providing Public Information and Rumor Control" once the EOC is activated.

Despite the formal MOU and the countless hours EIR staff spend in meetings of AlCo VOAD, NorCal VOAD, AlCo EMA, and on county-wide drills, EIR has never received county funding for its Disaster Preparedness role. In 2016 through funding from a private foundation, EIR hired a Disaster Preparedness Officer, Lars Eric Holm, who offers a variety of free trainings to the community.

The Disaster Preparedness officer position was created to help fill some of the gap left by the closure of Alameda County Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters (CARD) by delivering public education and training to vulnerable populations (e.g., frail elders, very low-income families, people living with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency). The vast majority of the curriculum and materials used for these trainings was developed by CARD and used with permission. In addition to supporting the preparedness needs of the community, the Disaster Preparedness Officer also oversees the coordination of Eden I&R's more than 100 outreach/teaching events each year. EIR is very proud of the improvements this position has provided to EIR's disaster preparedness role, however with only one full time equivalent, EIR's staffing is less than CARD had.

Funding

The Disaster Preparedness Officer position and some outreach materials have been funded for the past two years with grants from the Walter & Elise Haas Fund (\$65,000 FY 17, \$70,000 FY18). As of October 16, 2018, this position does not have funding. EIR has a proposal pending with the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, but anticipates that they will not fund the program in its entirety going forward. EIR is aware that a single funding source for a full-time staff member is not sustainable. In the future, EIR will have to dedicate more staff resources to raise funds for this position.

When the Haas Fund funding was originally submitted, EIR put together a larger budget to more accurately reflect what a true disaster preparedness program should look like. This initial budget totaled \$164,661 from multiple funders in FY17; unfortunately EIR received funding only from the Haas Fund. Proposed funding included hiring a Disaster Training Specialist in addition to the Disaster Preparedness Officer, preferably a bilingual person who represents one (or more) of the vulnerable communities that will benefit from the disaster trainings. The experienced Disaster Preparedness Officer would train the Specialist to lead community trainings, increasing the number of community members prepared for a disaster. The Specialist would also assist with community outreach efforts for the agency, freeing the Disaster Preparedness Officer to spend time developing new training curriculum and materials, updating the agency's Emergency Response Plan, and implementing a culture of preparedness for staff.

As part of this larger budget, EIR sought to support other key staff members who play a role in EIR's disaster preparedness efforts including the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Director of IT, Information Management Supervisor, and 2-1-1 Manager. These staff are pulled from other duties to step forward in various capacities to attend disaster-related drills, trainings, and to create a culture of preparedness at EIR.

Also part of this larger budget was EIR being able to assist community partners with identified needs. In the past, Alameda County VOAD leadership approached EIR about a gap in disaster resource information sharing amongst service providers in Alameda County before and after disaster. With proper funding, EIR could fill this gap using the skill set and expertise of current staff in its Information Management Department, 2-1-1 Call Center, and administration by organizing a comprehensive listing of services offered by these member organizations. Alameda County Community Food Bank also reached out to EIR to request that the agency create a Disaster Food Distribution Site Directory and assist by calling and identifying which of a defined subset of the approximately 275 food distribution sites throughout Alameda County are open and operational after a disaster. With proper funding EIR could also fill this need.

EIR is aware that the closure of CARD left a gap in Alameda County, and has done its best to mitigate it by continuing CARD's trainings, but EIR does not have the funding to meet the true community need for disaster preparedness.

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