

Culturally Competent Emergency Planning and the Utilization of Cultural Brokers: Enhancing the Resilience of Diverse Populations



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Background

Until recently, emergency preparedness planning has largely overlooked the needs of special populations, specifically minorities, non-English speaking communities and individuals with low socio-economic status. The literature shows that these groups tend to have worse outcomes following disasters than other communities. The purpose of this pilot study was to better understand the specific needs of these communities in Philadelphia with respect to emergency response messages and directives.

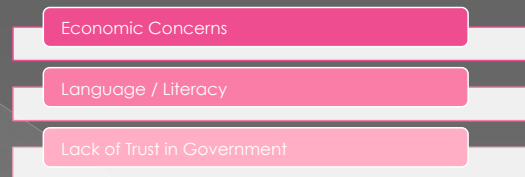
Methods

Discussions were held with two semi-structured focus groups of eight and nine individuals each. Primarily, the discussion was designed to explore how government emergency planning can take into account the unique needs of individuals within these typically overlooked communities.

Objectives

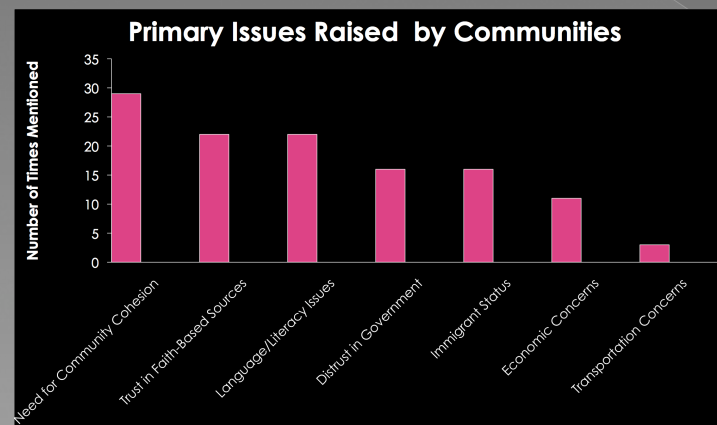
- Understand how messages are obtained and disseminated within overlooked communities
- Identify culturally-appropriate ways to disseminate new messages
- Investigate new ways to develop city emergency plans for these communities
- Identify the potential barriers to understanding and complying with specific emergency directives issued by government officials

Potential Barriers to Effective Communication During a Disaster

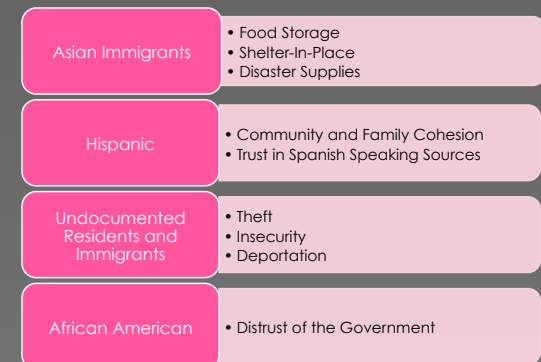


Best Practices in Culturally Competent Planning Efforts

- Include diverse community leaders in government planning
- Utilize cultural brokers to disseminate messaging
- Keep families and communities together during evacuation and recovery
- Focus on strengths of diverse communities during preparedness, response and recovery
- Design recovery benefits to be accessible to isolated, minority and low income communities



Concerns Vary Across Cultural Groups* and Communities



* Due to the small sample size, participants' views are not generalizable to the entire population.

Recommendations

- Formulate a diverse populations advisory board for government planning efforts.
- Create a network of cultural brokers and provide them with credentials, materials, training and support.
- Create visual messages that will be cross-cultural and bypass issues of literacy.
- Provide additional resources and guidance for navigating recovery benefits and bureaucracy.
- Plan for ways to keep diverse communities together during evacuation and recovery.
- Include faith-based resources from diverse communities to participate in preparation and recovery efforts.