**Primary Prevention Initiative (PPI) The Readys! Emergency Preparedness Training for Tennesseans with Access and Functional Needs**

 **Northeast Region (Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Unicoi, and Washington)**

**Topic: Emergency Preparedness**

**Problem Overview**: The Readys! is an emergency preparedness program that was designed by the New Britain EMS Academy in 2014 to build resiliency for people with access and functional needs during a disaster or emergency. Through The Readys! program, participants discover the key actions that ensure the whole community is properly prepared during a disaster or crisis event. Written and designed for easy reading and comprehension, The Readys! is an effective and appropriate teaching aid for all ages from young grade-schoolers to senior citizens.

It is important for Northeast Regional Office to provide this training in our communities. Often our residents believe our mountainous terrain will prevent and protect against severe weather events, however, this is a common myth. In 2011 Greene and Washington counties suffered devastating tornado activity which left many residents without shelter and seeking services. In 2014 a tornado touched down in Washington and Sullivan counties and damaged property and landscapes. Carter County has suffered flood damage in past years. Johnson County has also received tornado activity before.

**PPI Objective**: The Readys! PPI team will provide education and identify resources for protection for residents with access and functional needs before emergencies occur.

**PPI Project/Activity Description**: Health Department staff host training sessions for individuals and families with developmental disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, medical conditions, life support devices, personal care assistants, transportation needs and those who are senior citizens. The training is free to all attendees and the goal of the training is to have each participant leave the training session with their own personalized emergency preparedness plan and emergency go-kit funded by community partners at $15.00 per kit. The Readys! training takes participants through the process of learning about disaster preparedness, emergency go-kits, and creation of a personal Emergency Plan. During the training, the participants see The Readys, a family consisting of three generations; grandparents, parents and children. Each family member has a specific access or functional need that requires special consideration when developing a personal emergency plan. Training participants with similar needs can help family members easily identify and understand what personal items must be taken into consideration, i.e. medical equipment, medications, service animals, etc., when developing their own personal preparedness plan.

**PPI Project/Activity Outcome**: Immediate outcomes of the training are that all participants leave the class with a written, personal Emergency Plan. If a community partner has funded the emergency go-kits, each participant leaves with a go-kit containing basic emergency supplies such as first aid items, a flashlight, and water bottles. Other outcomes include expanded partnerships with senior-based programs in Northeast. For example, non-medical in-home care providers are now requiring new clients to have a personalized Emergency Plan as part of their intake process.

Due to the success of the program, which has trained 124 citizens to date, other agencies and partners are hearing about The Readys! The PPI team has plans to include The Readys! training for future Children in Disasters symposiums. A representative from all day care providers in Northeast and Sullivan counties are required to attend this symposium and will receive this information. Grant funding is being sought to purchase The Readys! curriculum in Spanish and to buy more go-kits.

**Keys to Success**: Multiple trainers are essential in reaching out to multiple counties and organizations. Using Medical Reserve Corps volunteers keeps them interested in preparedness and allows them to feel like a part of helping their communities. Community partnerships are important for hosting classes and providing funding to pay for go-kits (these are $15.00 each). Without community sponsorship to purchase emergency go-kits, a handout is distributed at the training providing information on the contents of what an emergency go-kit should contain.

**Words of Wisdom**: Before beginning The Readys! the health department PPI team should understand the particular emergency preparedness needs of their area. It helps to get your message across if facts are on paper. Allot plenty of time for classes to assist participants with development of their personalized Emergency Preparedness plan. At least 1.5-2 hours is needed per class. Class sizes larger than 20 participants can take extra time.

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