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APPENDIX 3

EARTHQUAKE CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

A GUIDEBOOK FOR ARKANSAS SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

One of the segments of the school population that has been left out of the written school guidelines for earthquake preparedness has been those students with special needs. Students with diabetes, hypertension or any of the maladies that require special diets, daily periodic medications or special equipment and supplies in order to sustain life, activities, dignity or reasonable comfort have not been given adequate considerations in planning for disasters that cause isolation. What could be a mere inconvenience for able bodied students could become a major threat to the students who have special needs.

It is the objective of this appendix to provide major considerations that students with special needs should have in earthquake preparedness, response and recovery planning. In some cases, such considerations could mean the difference between life and death, during and after, an earthquake.

Although some of the following considerations have been provided in Sections [1](#), [3](#), [5](#) and [6](#), it is felt that by providing all considerations in this appendix it will emphasize their importance and at the same time provide a document that concentrates them for the review of school emergency planners, rather than their having to review the total "Guidebook" in order to access them.

BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE

- Evacuation plans must provide for problems involved in students with mobility, visual and hearing impairments. Special evacuation transportation provisions may be necessary - both from the school building to the assembly area(s) and away from the school area. And plans must also address assistance that will be provided to mentally retarded students during and after the earthquake.
- Special needs students should have a back-up supply of vital medication, equipment or supplies with them, at school or enroute. Those students or their teachers should be prepared to bring the extra medication or supplies if evacuation from the school premises is ordered.
- Parents or guardians of these students should be consulted concerning care considerations if the student is isolated at school for both a short term or long term basis.
- These students should have in their possession an individual emergency card describing their special needs. The cards should list information such as; disability, medications and their application frequencies, mobility constraints, attendant needs, allergies, primary physician, etc.
- Any power requirements for special sustaining equipment, if normal power is off for a long period of time, should be considered.

- Assignments must be made to a staff member or a special team along with training for managing the special needs of these students.
- Allow for individual self sufficiency of these students as much as possible by getting them involved in preparedness and response activities. Include in response planning obvious ways in which special needs students can assist others in response to disastrous conditions - include them in your drill. As an example, in the dark (due to power loss and no outside light), sighted people could depend on the blind students to navigate through debris laden evacuation routes. Blind people are experienced at being placed in new, unfamiliar environments and finding their way. Many of the special needs students can learn and administer first aid.
- Also communicate preparedness and response information and instructions (according to need) to these students with braille, audio cassette, visual aids, large print, etc. Don't let them out of the process.
- Alarm systems for fire, etc. will benefit most people if they incorporate both audible and visual elements. The hearing impaired and deaf students would be best alerted by flashing light alarms.
- Emergency back-up lighting systems, especially in stairwells and other dark areas would benefit those students with limited visual acuity.
- Students with hypertension, dyslexia or learning disabilities will have difficulty reading complicated directions for evacuation or response plans. Simple diagrams or pictures will give non-reading or overstressed students sufficient information to get to safety.
- Hearing impaired students should practice some basic hand signals with the teachers and other students for emergency communication.
- Mobility impaired students should practice moving their wheel chairs or having them move into doorways (or other designated safe area), locking their wheels and covering their heads with a book or with their arms or hands.
- Partnerships should be established between the able bodied and special needs students. The able bodied partners should be prepared (and practice during drills) to assist the special need student.
- Rescue teams should be made aware of the best way to rescue special needs students. As an example, mobility impaired students should be allowed to instruct rescue team members on the best way to move them from the hazardous area. The fireman's carry may be dangerous to someone with respiratory problems.
- Special response provisions may have to be made for ensuring duck and cover protection for these students. Barriers to earthquake safety are highly individual for them and accommodation plans may have to fit the requirements. The guidance provided by this document should be modified to fit each special situation of each special needs student.

NOTE: ANY SPECIAL RESPONSE PROCEDURE MUST BE TESTED DURING EARTHQUAKE DRILLS.

- Visually impaired or blind students should have an extra cane at school even if they have a seeing eye dog. They should be informed of alternate evacuation routes.

DURING THE EARTHQUAKE

- Special needs students or able bodied partners should implement special duck and cover actions. An example; mobility impaired students should know how (through practice) to get in doorways, lock wheel chair wheels and cover head with book, arms or hands.

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

- Hearing impaired or deaf students need face to face contact in order to read lips. Writing on a note pad is only practical if there is enough light to see.
- During evacuation from classroom, sight impaired or blind students need to be informed about obstacles that may be in their paths and require verbal or physical guidance through hazardous areas.
- In total darkness, sight impaired or blind students may be more capable of guiding sighted students and staff.
- For mobility impaired students, evacuation by themselves may be extremely difficult or impossible because of obstacles in their paths or because electric dependant machines are not functioning (i.e., elevator). Special preplanned assistance must be provided.
- Any special medications, supplies and equipment for the special needs students must be transported with them during evacuation.
- If evacuation from school area is called for, utilize special transportation arrangements.
- If special needs students, for some reason, become separated from school authorities during evacuation, they should inform other authorities of their special needs as soon as possible so that proper considerations can be provided.
- Re-establish special power requirements for the equipment of special needs students as soon as possible.
- Rescue of special needs students should be accomplished utilizing special techniques as practiced.

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