Emergency Information and Relief Obstacles for Immigrants

Office of Immigrant Relations
Santa Clara County
Main Concerns

Immigrants and Disaster: issues of Access

• Issues with communication: after signing up for AlertSCC in different languages, do alerts come in the appropriate language?
• Culturally appropriate outreach before, during, and after emergencies
• Evacuation and sheltering, contact with first responders and government
• Intersectional approach: immigrants also have gender identity, sexual orientation, class status, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability...
• Coordination of all city/county/community outreach efforts
Structural/Systemic Issues Affect Access

- City-County relations and protocols; little coordination and info sharing among all County outreach specialists working in different departments (e.g. OEM and OIR)

- County requires to translate voting materials into 12 languages; no such requirement in emergency situations; During the pandemic–information distributed in 5 languages, but 54% of the county population speaks other languages at home, over 100 languages spoken; alertSCC

- Vulnerable populations seen separately, not as complex groups & individuals; whole person care/service?

- Class divisions, neighborhood infrastructure and resources; reliance on family resources and community-based organizations

- Limited collective/government investment in preventive infrastructure in-between emergencies
Important Questions
Can we guarantee that immigrants won’t be approached and questioned about immigration status in and around emergency shelters?

How much can we rely on the availability and skills of unpaid local community members to interpret important emergency messages and disaster recovery information?

Is all emergency aid safe to use?

What is available for immigrants regardless of immigration status?
Whose responsibility is it to provide language appropriate information and immigrant-friendly outreach?

How can the CADRE handout for immigrants and OIR Disaster Guide be best distributed?

Who can/should invest funds to obtain more translated materials?

Have all first responders and local government staff received training and information about immigrant population and concerns during disaster?
• How to trust government when stigmatized and terrorized?
• How to remain confident in government aid when it takes years to receive help to rebuild homes of low-income population after flooding (recent experience from 2017)?

Additional Important Concerns
Reminders

Immigrants and Disaster: issues of Access

What does this mean for emergency situations?

- Immigrants constitute 40% of the County and City of San Jose’s total population; majority (54%) doesn’t speak English at home; over 100 major languages spoken in the county
- The population in the City of Sunnyvale is 48% immigrant; majority are recent immigrants—10 years or less in the US
- Over 60% of all children in SCC have at least 1 immigrant parent
- Close to 137,000 undocumented residents in SCC (2019), ~158,000 of US citizens and LPRs live with undocumented family members
In Santa Clara county, there is:
- the largest population of Hindi speakers in the U. S.
- 2nd largest population of Vietnamese Speakers
- 3rd largest population of Farsi Speakers
- 5th largest population of Chinese speakers

Linguistically Isolated Communities

Linguistic Isolation in Santa Clara County
Percent of immigrant households that are linguistically isolated by ancestry; Santa Clara County; Year: 2019

Data source: IPUMS USA | California Immigrant Data Portal

Source: California Immigrant Data Portal
Resources and Distribution Questions

• CADRE Handout for immigrants
• OIR Disaster Guides: updates? More languages?
• Strategy for distribution?
• Role of the Office of Emergency Management?
• Contracting with CBOs?
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