



# House Select Committee on Hurricane Ike Storm Devastation to the Texas Gulf Coast

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Department of Aging and Disability Services

December 16, 2008

# DADS' Role in Disaster Response

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- What is DADS' official role in disaster situations like Hurricane Ike?
  - Supporting and coordinating necessary evacuations and relocations for licensed and/or certified long-term services and supports providers
  - Communicating with and supporting licensed and/or certified long-term services and supports providers in return to normal operations post-disaster
  - Planning, coordinating, and executing all necessary emergency response procedures for state schools/centers
- How is DADS able to assist providers of long-term services and supports?
  - Working closely with the local and regional disaster district coordination networks to assure specific needs for providers of long-term services and supports are identified and addressed
  - Communicating with providers, provider support organizations, advocacy organizations, ombudsman networks, etc. to assist in identifying and communicating specific needs for providers of long-term services and supports
  - Providing direct support services in departure and arrival sites for persons with special needs that require relocation during the disaster

# Hurricane Ike: What Worked Well

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- State Schools
  - Residents and staff at Richmond State School (RSS) and Corpus Christi State School (CCSS) were successfully evacuated.
  - Brenham State School and San Antonio State School responded quickly to ensure a safe transfer of residents and staff from RSS and CCSS.
  - Lufkin State School received and managed evacuees from several Intermediate Care Facilities for Persons with Mental Retardation and a number of providers of Home and Community-based waiver services.

# What Worked Well

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- DADS employees in impacted areas quickly returned to their duties to ensure key DADS services were supported.
- Coordination of evacuation and relocation efforts for services for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities appeared to go smoothly in all areas.
- DADS communicated and coordinated efforts with provider trade associations and other support networks to identify and assure appropriate follow-up on immediate needs.
- DADS staff:
  - Volunteered to work in the regions impacted by the storm, the State Operations Center (SOC), and the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC)
  - Worked at Medical Special Needs Shelters (MSN) to evaluate the need of evacuees for services provided through DADS
  - Successfully assisted many nursing facilities in locating available space when needed

# Challenges

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- Direct communication with providers of services directly affected by the storm was challenging due to limited communication capabilities.
- Transportation assets were in short supply. Continued work is needed to better coordinate and prioritize available transportation assets.
- Relocation of nursing facility residents is always challenging. When nursing facility beds in a relocation area are available, the beds should be prioritized first for individuals evacuated from other nursing facilities, individuals who meet the need for medical necessity, and then medical special needs consumers.
- DADS faced several challenges related to Medical Special Needs (MSN) Shelters:
  - Communication challenges regarding staff needs at MSN Shelters in some locations
  - Challenges assuring appropriate tracking of some individuals who were relocated to or through MSN shelters
- Maintaining state agency operations presented challenges:
  - Communication about state office closures and openings for employees and the public was difficult.
  - More alternate locations where DADS offices can relocate and continue operation for brief and/or extended periods should be considered.

# Opportunities for Improvement

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- State Schools need objective standards as to when to evacuate based on:
  - Consideration of consumer level of need
  - Engineering standards of what the facility can withstand
  - Staffing availability
  - Degree of anticipated impact to the facility
- To minimize the risks to health and safety of populations that are medically fragile, the state should consider developing objective criteria to identify public infrastructure that can endure storm winds and is not in flood prone areas. Identifying such structures closer to the coastal areas has the potential to:
  - Reduce the amount of travel time for evacuees
  - Reduce the number of ambulances and buses required to move the medically fragile
  - Allow more time to determine the need to evacuate