Assessing the Roles and Responsibilities of Public Housing Authorities in State-Level Disaster Plans

Amber S Khan, MPH1; Andrew Aurand, PhD2; Sara Hamideh, PhD3; Jamie Vickery, PhD1; Rebecca J Walter, PhD4; Nicole A Errett, PhD1

1Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, University of Washington; 2National Low Income Housing Coalition; 3School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Stony Brook University; 4Runstad Department of Real Estate, University of Washington

Background
> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsidized housing units are often older housing located in high hazard risk areas, increasing disaster risk for low-income renters.1-3
> Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) are responsible for maintaining these housing units, yet their roles and responsibilities in state-level disaster plans have not been assessed.

Objective
This study aims to identify if and how state-level disaster plans integrate PHA roles and responsibilities into disaster preparedness, response, and recovery planning.

Methods

Data Collection
> Collected 85 disaster plans from state websites, including:
  > Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) #6
  > Emergency Support Functions (ESF) #6 (Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services)
  > ESF #14 (Long-term Recovery) and Recovery Plans
  > Disaster Housing plans

Data Analysis
> Plans were coded (Table 1) using qualitative content analysis techniques.
> The proportion of plans with content aligned with each code was summarized.

Results

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of collected disaster plans by U.S. states

Table 1: Proportion of plans aligning with each code, by plan type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All types of plans</th>
<th>Emergency Operations Plan</th>
<th>Recovery Plan and ESF #14</th>
<th>ESF #6</th>
<th>Disaster Housing Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>119*</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHA pre-disaster activities and strategies</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHA pre-disaster partnerships and coordination</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHA post-disaster activities and strategies</td>
<td>4.2% (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>8.6% (3)</td>
<td>2.8% (1)</td>
<td>20% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHA post-disaster partnerships and coordination</td>
<td>2.5% (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>60% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other agency roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>29.4% (35)</td>
<td>11.6% (5)</td>
<td>48.6% (17)</td>
<td>27.8% (10)</td>
<td>60% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other agency roles and responsibilities: PHA collaboration</td>
<td>15.1% (18)</td>
<td>2.3% (1)</td>
<td>28.6% (10)</td>
<td>11.4% (4)</td>
<td>60% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and functional needs populations</td>
<td>79.8% (95)</td>
<td>90.7% (39)</td>
<td>57.1% (20)</td>
<td>86.1% (31)</td>
<td>100% (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While 85 plans were collected in total, some EOPs included ESF #6 or #14 and thus the total count in Table 1 is higher than the original number of collected plans

Discussion
> PHAs are not sufficiently engaged in state-level disaster plans.
> There are few roles and responsibilities assigned to PHAs. Assigned roles solely focus on post-disaster activities, partnerships, and coordination.
> Roles mainly revolve around providing housing recovery resources to residents and amending housing waitlists to prioritize residents affected by disasters.

Recommendations:
> Future state disaster plans should incorporate standardized PHA roles and responsibilities based on HUD guidelines.4
> Future research is necessary to identify what resources PHAs can use to implement disaster planning strategies, including through qualitative interviews with PHA leaders and other housing experts.
> Disaster Housing Plans or other types of plans specific to housing recovery should be considered by state agencies to prepare for disaster-specific housing needs with housing providers, including PHAs.

References


Acknowledgements: This project was funded by University of Washington’s Population Health Initiative.