

A Community Partnership Model for Increasing Emergency Preparedness of Patients Living at Home

Ann Horton, M.S. (MNCHA), Joseph Anelli, Sara Luell, Artensie Flowers,* Sherry Adams
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Preparedness and Response, Baltimore, MD

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Inform and educate home care providers about emergency preparedness best practices.
- 2 Engage home care providers in the emergency preparedness education of homebound seniors, patients recovering at home, and disabled individuals.
- 3 Provide real-time information about known threats to the safety of at-risk patients and disabled individuals living at home.
- 4 Provide specific preparedness information to patients and caregivers dealing with higher risk conditions.

BACKGROUND

Establishing health security among vulnerable populations is a unique challenge for public health. Recent disasters have shown that individuals with special medical or physical needs who live at home can be isolated and profoundly affected by an emergency. Since these individuals are not living in health care institutions, they do not have readily available medical support in a disaster. In particular, high-risk individuals with medical needs, such as power-dependent equipment or those with insulin-dependent diabetes, need to be prepared to survive during an emergency.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Office of Preparedness and Response partnered with the state home care association (Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association-MNCHA) to develop special messaging for home care providers and their patients. Other states can employ DHMH's partnership development and audience engagement processes to partner with their local home care association or other advocacy group or professional association to provide an additional outlet for outreach to vulnerable populations.

BENEFITS

- Reducing hospital surge during disasters requires ensuring the health security of at-risk individuals living in the community.
- Maryland home care providers (including Medicare-certified home health agencies, private duty companies, durable medical equipment suppliers and hospice providers) are regularly in the homes of **more than 60,000** disabled and elderly individuals.
- Home care providers are an untapped resource in the challenge of reducing hospital surge and ensuring health security of Maryland's vulnerable populations.

NEED

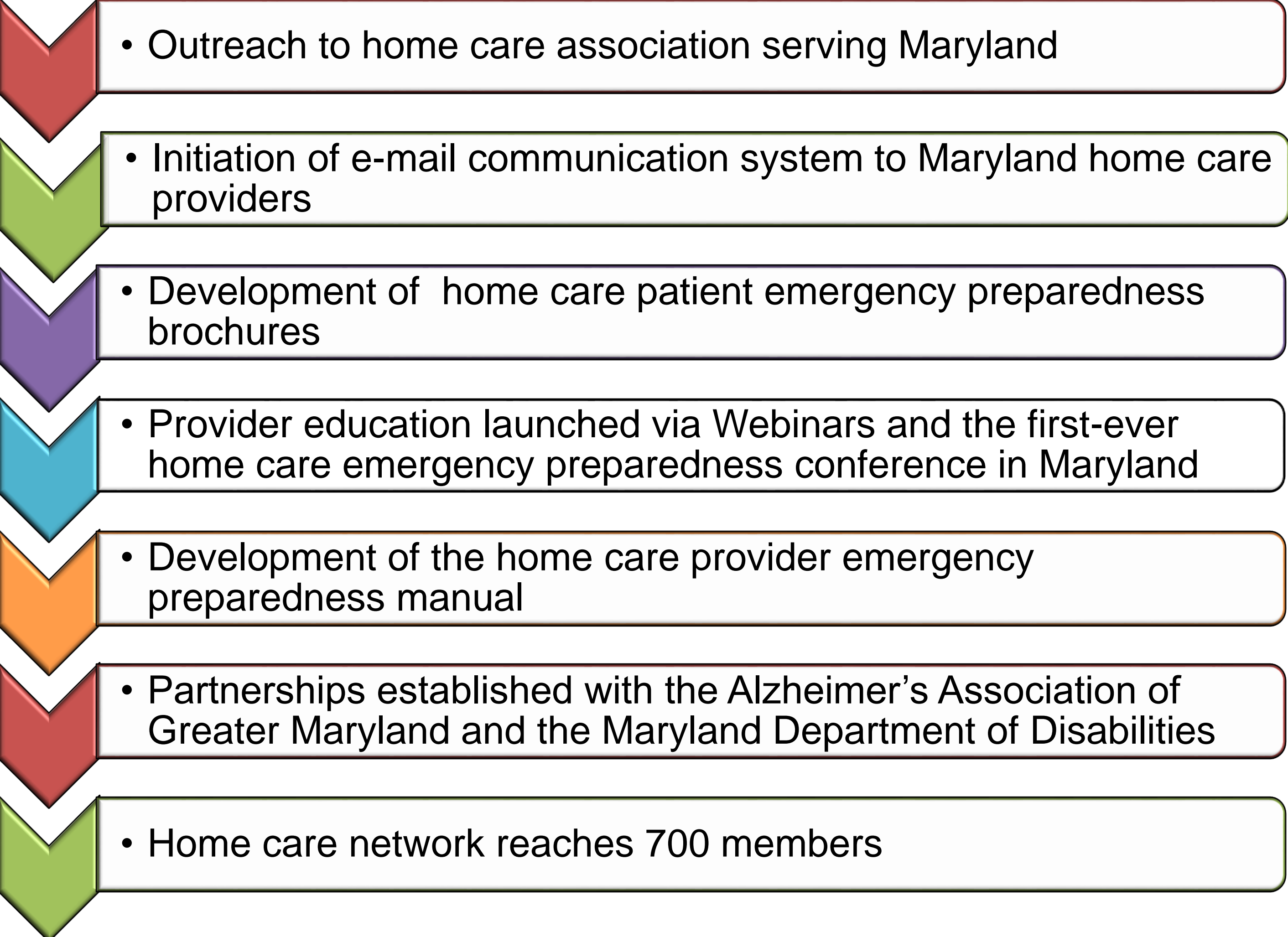
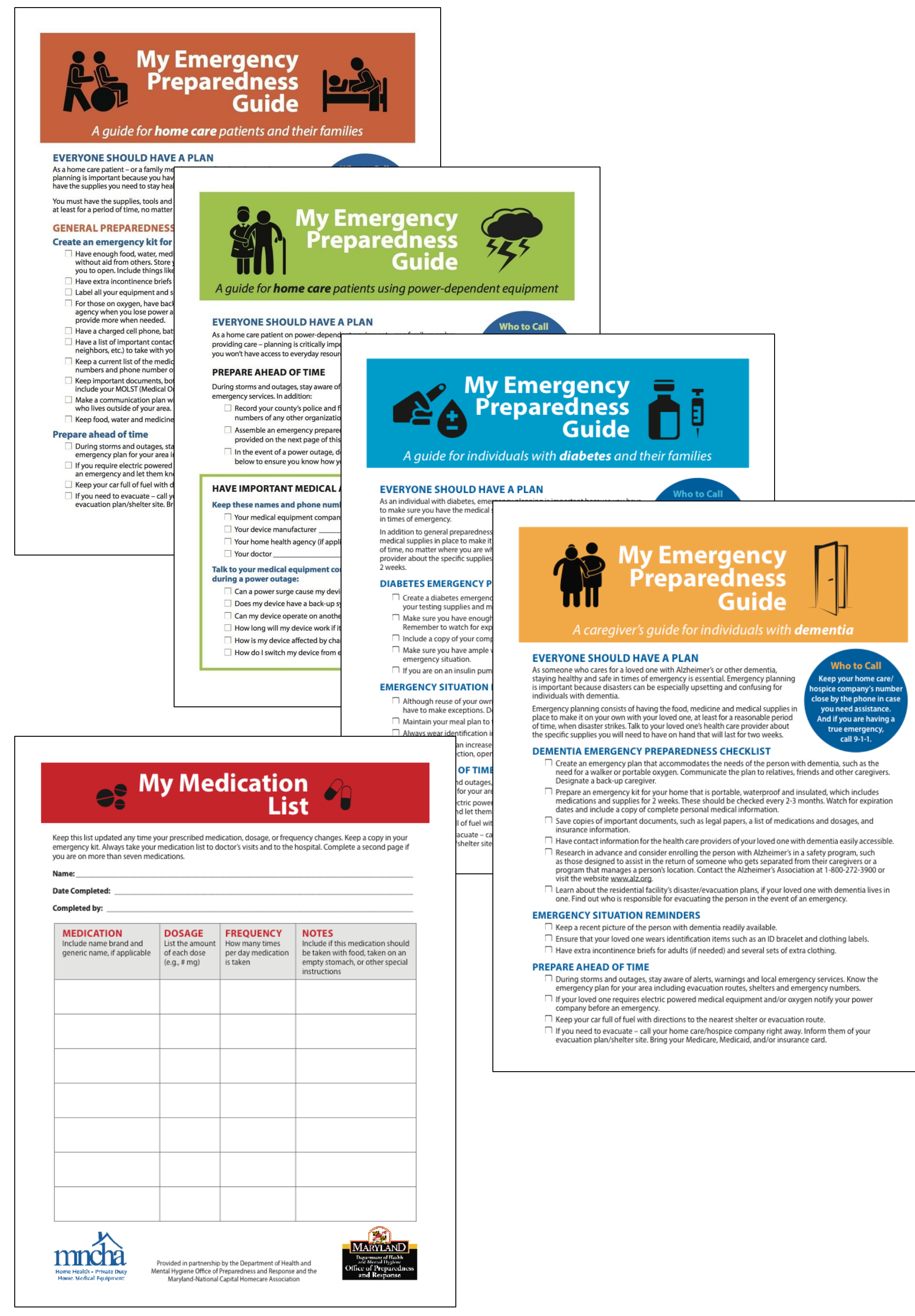
Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast of the United States in 2012. While much of Maryland was spared the wide-spread power outages of other states, Western Maryland was hard hit by the storm. Large volumes of heavy snow fell in a short period of time, crippling towns like Accident, McHenry, Deep Creek, and Oakland. Thousands of residents were without power for up to a week.

Incredibly, and despite their own personal challenges during this time, the home care nurses in Western Maryland did not miss a home care visit. In this example, and hundreds of others across the country, home care providers are the trusted intermediaries of information and resources to their patients – and sometimes the only source of information and health care available to the patient.

BARRIERS

While very few barriers existed to start the project, it became clear early on that here was great disparity in the knowledge about emergency preparedness among home care providers. This may be due to the vast differences in regulatory requirements for emergency preparedness among the different types of licenses. The team realized quickly that education and tools were needed for home care companies to ensure that their organizations and employees were prepared for emergencies.

Engagement Process

My Emergency Preparedness Guide
A guide for home care patients and their families

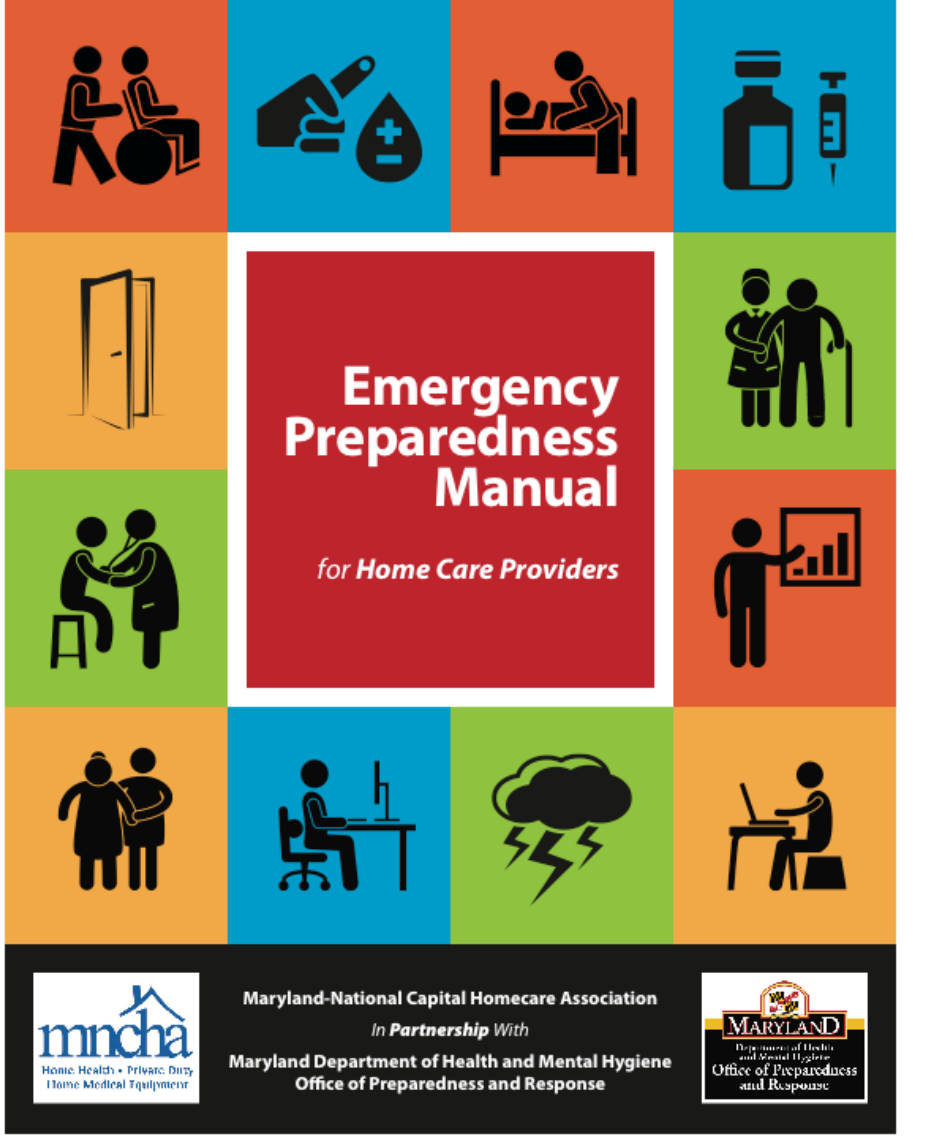
My Emergency Preparedness Guide
A guide for home care patients using power-dependent equipment

My Emergency Preparedness Guide
A guide for individuals with diabetes and their families

My Emergency Preparedness Guide
A caregiver's guide for individuals with dementia

My Medication List

Emergency Preparedness Manual
For Home Care Providers



Languages Available:

- English
- Spanish
- French
- Chinese
- Haitian Creole
- Vietnamese
- Russian
- Korean
- Tagalog

CONCLUSION

Home care providers are ideal intermediaries for emergency preparedness messaging and education among vulnerable and medically homebound populations. Home care associations exist in most states in the country and they have the communications infrastructure already available to get key messages out to providers and their patients. Outreach to vulnerable populations is a critical weakness in preparedness, and partnerships with home care associations is a easy and relatively inexpensive means to improve preparedness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Maryland and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

*CDC Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response