

Medical Surge and the Role of Home Health and Hospice Agencies

About Home Health and Hospice

- Medicare-certified home health agencies and hospices make millions of care visits to medically-fragile patients each year.
- Unlike other healthcare services, caregivers go to the patient's home rather than the patient going to the care.
- Emergency planning for home health and hospice must account for a continually changing patient population and care setting, safe and efficient travel routes for staff, and business continuity of their administrative offices.
- Home health agencies and hospice are among 17 provider and supplier types subject to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Emergency Preparedness Requirements Final Rule.

Key Findings

- Home health and hospice have **capabilities** that could be valuable in responding to a medical surge, but the overall emergency management role of home health and hospice has not been clearly defined in most communities.
- Wide variation exists in the **capacity** and infrastructure of home health and hospice with particularly limited resources among those in rural areas or with less established community partnerships.
- Most home health and hospice agencies reported **engagement** in coordinated emergency preparedness activities with various partners, but also noted that collaboration is challenging.
- **Awareness** of CMS Final Rule requirements is high, but home health and hospice would benefit from training and technical assistance to support their implementation efforts.

Methodology

- Convenience sample of individuals serving in leadership positions at home health care and hospice agencies was identified through recruitment via the National Association for Home Care & Hospice.
- ASPR TRACIE analyzed data from 245 online survey responses and 25 follow-up telephone interviews with home health and hospice leaders; participants represented 43 states in all 10 regions.
- Topics included: the role of home health and hospice in different emergency response scenarios; the level of capability and infrastructure for response; characteristics of preparedness activities; and factors that facilitate engagement in emergency management activities.

Opportunities to Improve Preparedness

- Better define the role of Medicare-certified home health agencies and hospices in overall community emergency management efforts.
- Increase the quality of engagement of home health and hospice with healthcare coalitions and other community partners.
- Enhance mechanisms for communication and collaboration among home health and hospice and the other healthcare providers and facilities who provide services to their patients.
- Promote opportunities for knowledge exchange and learning, particularly highlighting the lessons learned of home health agencies and hospices with emergency response experience.
- Support home health and hospice in implementing CMS Final Rule requirements, particularly through targeted training, technical assistance, funding, and other resources.

Related Resources

- [Medical Surge and the Role of Home Health and Hospice Agencies](#) (full report)
- [Engagement of Home Health and Hospice Agencies in Medical Surge Activities](#)
- ASPR TRACIE Topic Collection: [Homecare and Hospice](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness Requirements for Medicare and Medicaid Participating Providers and Suppliers](#) Resource Page