

***GET READY:
A Community and Household Disaster
Preparation Seminar***

A Summary Report of Event Presentations and Key
Recommendations

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Executive Summary

On Wednesday, June 22, 2022, the Jackson State University's Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) hosted "GET READY: A Community and Household Disaster Preparation Seminar" in the Community Meeting Room at the Jackson Medical Mall, located at 350 West Woodrow Wilson Avenue, Jackson, MS. Held from 6:00 – 7:30 PM, the event featured presentations from emergency management officials, researchers, and mental health professionals.

The event's purpose was to help Jackson residents improve their responses and resiliency to disasters such as tornadoes, floods, pandemics, long-term power outages, and winter storms. Disaster preparation information presented during the event included: 1) insight into local emergency management operations from the Director of the Hinds County Department of Emergency Management, Mr. Joey Perkins; 2) instructions on how to plan and prepare for disasters at the household level from Ms. Jacqueline Moore, Emergency Manager for Jackson State University; 3) recommendations and information on managing mental health during disasters from Mr. Wayne McNeer, Coordinator of Adult Services at Hinds Behavioral Health Services; and 4) additional preparation tips and information from Dr. Dawn Bishop McLin and Dr. Jessica Murphy about Project FAST, a federally-funded program at Jackson State University designed to increase women's training and participation in emergency planning and disaster response. In addition to the presentations, attendees received handout packets with detailed information on local resources for disaster relief, and establishing local community response networks. Key recommendations from the event included getting prepared BEFORE emergencies occur; having multiple sources of getting information; and networking with others to establish support groups to assist each other before, during, and after emergencies.

With a future predicted to have more changing climate and extreme weather events, Jackson State University through its various programs and research units will continue investigating, educating, and informing the public on disaster planning and emergency management. The ultimate goal is to help increase the capacity of communities and various networks to effectively respond and survive future disasters whether natural or man-made. The "GET READY: A Community and Household Disaster Preparation" seminar is one example of JSU's commitment to improving the quality of life in Mississippi and beyond.

I. Overview

On Wednesday, June 22, 2022, the Jackson State University's (JSU) Mississippi Urban Research Center (MURC) hosted "GET READY: A Community and Household Disaster Preparation Seminar" in the Community Meeting Room at the Jackson Medical Mall, located at 350 West Woodrow Wilson Avenue, Jackson, MS. Held from 6:00 – 7:30 PM, the event featured presentations from emergency management officials, researchers, and mental health professionals. The purpose of the event was to provide a holistic approach to preparing for and recovering from catastrophic events (such as tornadoes, floods, pandemics, long-term power outages, and winter storms) and to help Jackson residents improve response and resiliency in the face of these types of disasters. In addition to the presentations, attendees received handout packets with detailed information on local resources for disaster relief, and establishing local community response networks.

Following opening remarks from MURC Director Dr. Sam Mozee, Jr., the Welcome address was delivered by Chief Cleotha Sanders, Jr., Deputy Fire Chief of the City of Jackson Fire Department. The first presenter was Mr. Joey Perkins, who serves as the Director of the Hinds County Department of Emergency Management. Mr. Perkins spoke on the topics of preparedness, how his agency disseminates information, and who to contact during emergencies. The second presentation was delivered by Ms. Jacqueline Moore, Emergency Manager for Jackson State University (JSU). Ms. Moore provided information on personal planning for a number of different disasters, from hurricanes to extreme heat, including very specific details on preparing emergency kits and food/water rations.

The third presentation was given by Mr. Wayne McNeer, the Coordinator of Adult Services at Hinds Behavioral Health Services, on the impact of disasters on mental health. Mr. McNeer's presentation discussed ways to deal with trauma and crisis, as well as available mental health services available to local residents following a disaster. The fourth presentation was from JSU professors Dr. Dawn Bishop McLin and Dr. Jessica Murphy, and featured their Project FAST program and its educational efforts around emergency management. Following a short 'Question & Answer' session between audience and presenters, and closing remarks from MURC associate and event chair Sheryl Bacon, the event ended with attendees being encouraged to network with each another, and to collect additional handouts from display tables featuring information from the Jackson Fire Department, Hinds County Department of Emergency

Management, and the Mississippi Department of Transportation. The following sections of this report provide summaries of each presentation delivered during the event, and provide key points made by each presenter that could help event attendees increase their responsiveness and resiliency to emergencies.

II. Summary of Presentations

Presentation #1 – Mr. Joey Perkins

- We encourage everybody to have multiple ways to get your weather alerts, whether it be through your news stations, or whether it be through the city's Code Red program. The city and county both have free Code Red programs that you can sign up for via their websites. You can get phone calls, emails, text messages, and four different types of alerts, including Boil Water notices.
- We put out a lot of information through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), but we know more information needs to get out to the citizens in various different ways.
- There's a system in the state that we use if you have damage to your residence, called Crisis Track. That information goes to the state, and it goes to Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). And from there, they compile the data to go to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to try to get emergency declarations. If there's a tree on your house and we don't know it, report it to the state. There is a self-reporting tool using the links on our website, or on MEMA'S website. The state's website is <https://www.msema.org/>; ours is <http://www.hindscountymiss.com/departments/emergency-management>. You can use either of these two websites to report your damage.
- Something that the county's looking at currently is forming a long-term recovery committee. But the main thing is being prepared – having water, non-perishable foods, and different things to try to get through the disasters. It could take up to 72 hours before help arrives to your location.
- Address numbers are a big issue, maybe more so in the rural areas. Having address numbers clearly marked where the emergency responders can easily find it is crucial.

Presentation #2 – Ms. Jacqueline Moore

- There are many hazards which may affect our lives by causing emergency or disaster situations. To know how to respond to a possible threat, the community needs to organize and be prepared with the correct information and tools to be effective. Being prepared and knowing what to do can reduce fear and anxiety, thereby reducing losses that may result from a disaster event.
- **Ice and snow:** A lot of times extreme cold paired with brisk winds can result in dangerously cold wind chills that ultimately lead to frostbite and hypothermia. The weight of snow can also cause roofs to collapse and result in power outages and dangerous roads. In the case of snow and ice storms, be sure to have a battery-operated radio and flashlight.
- **Floods:** When you see that the water is kind of high in the roadways, don't drive through them. Turn around, don't drown. Your area is flood risk if you live in a flood plain or flood-prone area. A lot of times your home insurance does not cover flood insurance, so it's just a good practice to purchase flood insurance. Take photos of important possessions. Clean your drains and gutters regularly, and when cutting your grass, don't blow grass and leaves into the drains. Turn on your cell phones, wireless emergency alert notifications, and follow the evacuation orders from local officials. Don't touch electrical equipment if it's wet, and never drive through flood water or around barricades. Six inches of moving water will make you fall, so be mindful of it.
- **Tornadoes:** Seek shelter inside immediately in a basement storm shelter. If there's no basement, go to the center of the interior room at the lowest level. Choose a closet, or interior hallway away from the corners, windows, doors and outside. Exterior rooms with windows or doors to the outside are not safe. Rooms on the top or the second floor are not safe. Prepare for prolonged power outages. Take time to fully charge your cell phones, and have batteries and flashlights on hand. Have a plan for how you would use medical devices powered by electricity. Determine an alternate way to keep refrigerated medication cold, and stock up on non-perishable food and water. In addition to creating a disaster kit, you should have at least two first aid kits, one for your home and one for your car. Your disaster kit should also include well-fitted face masks.

- **Disaster planning for those with disabilities:** You may need at least a week-long supply of prescription medications. Keep a complete list of medication with dosage and allergies, and a description of required accommodations, medical conditions, and/or functional needs. Have copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards, and two wheelchair batteries and/or oxygen. Have contact information for doctors and family members who should be notified if you're hurt, and have headphones for your handheld electronic devices.
- **Food & water:** From the tap, you have to boil water, you just can't drink it. You have to boil water for drinking, brushing their teeth, washing fruits and vegetables, preparing food, mixing basic formulas, making ice, giving water to pets, coffee makers, dishwashing by hand, and so on. In case tap water becomes unavailable, stock at least one gallon of water per person, per day. Have 2-4 quarts for drinking, and 2 quarts for food preparation and sanitation. Water should be stored in plastic containers. Store at least three days' supply of non-perishable food and select foods that require no refrigeration, cooking and preparation. These would include military MREs (meals ready-to-eat), canned fruits and vegetables, canned milk powder, or smoked and dried meats like beef jerky, peanut butter, crackers, nuts, trail mix, canned powdered or crystalline juices, cookies, hard candy, soup bouillon, and dried soup are also some of the foods that you can get.
- **Extreme heat:** Extreme heat or heat waves are the leading cause of extreme weather-related deaths in the United States, and the number of heat-related deaths is rising. Extreme heat or heat waves occur when the temperature reaches extremely high levels, or with the combination of heat and humidity, causes the air to become oppressive. At risk are children, older adults, outside workers, ADA persons, residents of homes with little to no air conditioning, construction work sites, and pets. Also, always double check cars to make sure no children or pets are left inside. Avoid hot drinks or sugary beverages and opt for water instead, and wear lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- **Assistance:** Local resources for disaster relief assistance include the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist homeowners and renters with housing and other needs. There is disaster unemployment assistance, which is administered by the Mississippi Employment

Security Commission, and the Disaster Food Stamp Program, which is administered by the Mississippi Department of Human Service. Help is also available through the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and also local churches.

Presentation #3 – Mr. Wayne McNeer

- Hinds Behavioral Health Services (HBHS) brings a unique perspective to emergency and disaster preparedness. When disaster strikes, we begin to think about two different types of trauma that are a part of disaster response, and that is collective trauma and individual trauma. We see the toll that is left on the community as it begins to process the aftermath of disasters. At the individual level, we try to provide crisis counseling services to individuals in a disaster.
- There is a number that you can call and reach one of our mental health professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Our specially trained therapists, case managers, and peer specialists would respond initially in case of a disaster. That number is **(601) 955-6381**.
- Our CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) officers are critical in a disaster situation. JSU Police Chief Horton is actually one of our partners in terms of crisis response. He is one of the pioneers in our area for providing specially trained law enforcement officers to help with disaster response. Everyone in the force is generally mobilized in the event of a disaster, but CIT officers are specially trained personnel on the scene who might be able to recognize individuals who are experiencing stress.
- What we define as a crisis situation is when a person's ability to cope is outweighed by their current circumstances. That is what a mental health crisis is. We have to be very careful in light of a disaster. Some things people experience are appropriate. If a tornado was to hit and people's homes are destroyed, that is a reason to be sad. That is normal. We do not want to assign illness or a pathological state to someone who has had an appropriate response to the situation.
- In talking about mental health response to disaster, that there are three phases that occur. The first phase is the initial phase happens immediately after the event within the first few hours with people arriving on the scene to assist individuals very soon thereafter. It's the Heroic phase where everyone comes together and they're working to rebuild the

community. The second phase is when there is national media attention, for example, the U.S. President might come and visit the area, and different relief organizations might come in response such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, with initial attention being focused on just the initial recovery. But at some point, everyone is going to go home, and we have learned that in dealing with behavioral health, in terms of disaster response, everything begins and ends at the local level. That's why our local resources need to be strong and we need to be able to meet the needs of people who, after everyone has left, have entered that third phase. The third phase ("disillusionment phase") occurs when everyone is gone, and the disaster survivors are left with nothing.

- Generally, people who are part of a disadvantaged populations (for example, due to socioeconomic status), are going to be ten times as likely to develop a mental health concern or mental health diagnosis. We have to talk about the social determinants of health, and we have to talk about socioeconomic status. The elderly are also a particular population group that sees worse mental health outcomes after disaster. Perhaps they don't have their families here, or have the support system in place. They then have to depend on things like churches, their community, and those people who are coming out to assist them.
- We have to really be careful of in terms of disaster behavioral health response when it comes to the stigma against receiving mental health services even in the middle of a disaster. There are particular populations that are a little bit more resistant to receiving behavioral health care because of cultural factors. People sometimes have had poor experiences, or they're not fully informed about what are mental health services, and we have to be able to acknowledge those things. We have to make sure that we're being culturally sensitive as we respond to different situations.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is very real. It is the most prevalent diagnosis that we will see after a disaster. But what is not always known about PTSD is that you do not necessarily have to witness the disaster yourself. If your loved ones are involved in a disaster in their area, you can be affected by what they have gone through, and listening to their stories can cause you to develop problems and issues that may necessitate reaching out to someone for help with being able to process those feelings. We also have to give people adequate time to process those issues.

- In terms of mental health, “preparation” ability is limited, because all individuals respond to crisis differently. All the services provided at Hinds Behavioral Health Services are individualized services to the members of the community because what your neighbor experiences might not be what you experience, and we acknowledge that everyone is going to be different, and that we have to be prepared to do the work long after a disaster. In some cases, recovery can take quite some time – sometimes it is three or four years down the road before people are able to really come to terms and be able to cope with disasters.
- Having medication on hand is so important because without medication, people can quickly become ill, and that is also true for people who live with mental illness. If a person who has suffered from schizophrenia goes without their medication for just a few days, we can start to see that illness begin to express itself in some very negative ways that impact their functioning. Under threats of disaster, being prepared with medications for both physical health and mental health is critical.
- Many of the services offered at HBHS are available to the community in the event of a disaster. There is a team called PACT (Program of Assertive Community Treatment) who service clients in their home, along with an I-CORT (Intensive Community Outreach and Recovery) team that visits rural areas and brings services into the homes of people who cannot physically come into the center.
- Beginning July 16th, there will be a 911-like number for mental health emergencies. Dialing 988 from anywhere in the country will connect to a crisis center, which can then dispatch a mobile crisis team locally.
- In a disaster, please know that mental health resources are available, and we do have a disaster response plan and a connection to our community. Our planning is continuously being developed because disasters contain many complex elements of loss – loss of physical property, loss of loved ones, and other large emotional tolls. Hinds Behavioral Health Services stands ready to respond in any disaster, just as it is ready to serve and respond any other time.

Presentation #4 – Dr. Dawn Bishop McLin and Dr. Jessica Murphy

- The Project FAST (Females Advancing Science and Technology) program is a collaboration led by research partners Dr. Dawn McLin (JSU Department of Psychology) and Dr. Jessica Murphy (JSU Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Industrial Systems and Technology), and is funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The goal of the project is to positively impact the JSU and larger Mississippi community through education, research, and community outreach, while serving as a model for improvement throughout the southeastern region and across the nation. The program uses a multidisciplinary approach and numerous partnerships to train a new generation of young women leaders in healthcare, disaster- and weather-preparedness, and emergency management.
- The program also utilizes the acronym CREATE, which stands for **C**ommunity **R**esilience **i**n **E**nhancing **A**dvanced **T**raining and **E**ducation. Since research collected in the preparation of this project indicated that there are women working within the field of emergency preparedness, there is a gap in the younger generation as those women age and retire. To aid in bridging that gap, Project FAST offers scholarships to students who are pursuing degrees in Emergency Management, Technology, Psychology, and well as Computer Science to encourage more young women to enter into the profession. Project FAST is also partnered with the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide students with experience and employment opportunities.
- The Mississippi Board of Trustees at the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) recently granted Project FAST permission to implement a certificate program, which will offer certification from the State of Mississippi in Emergency Management after 18 credit hours of training.
- Sometimes the messenger can make the difference. Audiences often evaluate who, and where, they receive information as a means of validating the message. Opportunities for credible messengers to share safety and disaster preparedness information include PTA meetings, sporting events, social media channels, orientation sessions (for college students), and worship services.

- The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather updates 24/7 (via internet or by phone) for the entire nation. Prior to or during travel, it is advisable to contact NWS and check weather conditions and possible alerts, or to ask questions about weather events.
- Research conducted by Project FAST indicates that in the South in general, and Mississippi in particular, socioeconomically vulnerable populations are the most impacted by disasters. One of the program's main goals is to understand and address the exact reasons for this disparate impact, thereby reducing harm and improving the response to these populations.

III. Key Points and Recommendations from 'Question & Answer' Session

- Keep water available, along with non-perishable items and flashlights, batteries, and needed healthcare items, including prescription medications. Stock at least 72 hours' worth of these provisions.
- Include children and young people in household disaster planning, and use language and terminology that will help them better understand and experience less stress. Children are very resilient, but the stress of disasters and evacuations affects them differently, and they require (age-appropriate) communication and reassurance throughout the process. For households with infants and small children, emergency kits should include extra formula, diapers, bottles of water, clothes, and some favorite toys.
- Download FEMA apps and precise, up-to-date weather apps (e.g. the Weather Channel app) to your mobile device in order to have multiple ways to receive weather alerts and emergency notifications. Also have a battery-operated weather radio and familiarize yourself with how to operate it.
- Check with neighbors, especially the elderly, to help ensure their preparedness and safety during disasters and weather events. Identify people who may need help with evacuation or who can possibly evacuate together as a group.
- If possible, invest in solar-powered devices and charging stations that will enable charging of phones and other small appliances in the event of power outage.
- Have important documents laminated and/or stored in a plastic bag to prevent them from being destroyed in flood conditions. These should include items like insurance policies and cards, copies of wills and other advance directives, passports, birth certificates or

other IDs, and contact information for yourself and others. Have at least 3 to 5 contact numbers to reach people in case of emergency.

- Twice a year, use your cell phone to video or photograph the contents of your house, especially large appliances and other expensive items. Email the videos/pictures to yourself as a record for insurance purposes. If renting, be sure to invest in renter's insurance.
- Identify the place in your home that will serve as the storm shelter (the lowest floor, furthest away from windows). Have items like blankets and bicycle helmets to use in that shelter location.
- Network amongst your neighborhood associations, families, friends, religious communities, and other social groups to form your own crisis and emergency response teams. Work with them to develop disaster plans and discover ways to support each other in times of need.
- Do not forget to also prepare pets. Have a plan and an emergency kit with supplies for them as well.

IV. Conclusion

This informative disaster preparation seminar was created and made possible by a shared interest in protecting our communities. While disasters are unpredictable and inevitable, the key to improving resiliency and recovery in the face of these emergencies is for residents to be informed and well-prepared. This seminar was designed to help strengthen communities and improve their ability to effectively respond to emergencies and disasters both seen and unforeseen.

As we move into a future predicted to have more changing climate and extreme weather events, Jackson State University through its various programs and research units like MURC and Project FAST will continue investigating, educating, and informing the public on disaster planning and emergency management. The ultimate goal is to help increase the capacity of communities and various networks to effectively respond and survive future disasters whether natural or man-made. The "GET READY: A Community and Household Disaster Preparation" seminar is one example of JSU's commitment to improving the quality of life in Mississippi and beyond.

Seminar Evaluation Survey Results

An evaluation survey was distributed to attendees and collected at the conclusion of the event. The following is a summary of responses to the survey:

How would you rate the seminar overall?

Most participants (92.9%) rated the seminar as “excellent.”

How would you rate the overall quality of the instruction provided in the seminar?

Most participants (78.6%) rated the quality of the instruction as “excellent.”

How would you rate the sequence and flow of the instruction provided in the seminar?

Most of the participants (85.7%) rated the sequence and flow as “excellent.”

How engaging would you say the overall content and subject matter was?

Most of the participants (85.7%) rated the level of engagement as “excellent.”

How would you rate the quality of the content shared (e.g., PowerPoints, handouts, etc.) presented in the seminar?

Most of the participants (85.7%) rated the quality of content shared as “excellent.”

Did this seminar give you a better understanding of disaster preparation?

All participants (100%) thought the presentation gave them a better understanding of disaster preparation.

As a result of the seminar, do you know what to do in case of a disaster?

All participants (100%) reported that as a result of the seminar, they knew what to do in case of a disaster.



**GET READY!: A Community and Household Disaster
Preparation Seminar**

Wednesday, June 22, 2022
6:00 PM

Jackson Medical Mall, Community Meeting Room

PROGRAM

Welcome/Opening Remarks	Chief Cleotha Sanders, Jr. Deputy Fire Chief, City of Jackson Fire Department
Presentation #1	Joey Perkins Director, Hinds Co. Dept. of Emergency Management
Presentation #2	Jacqueline Moore Emergency Manager, Jackson State University
Presentation #3	Wayne McNeer Coordinator of Adult Services, Hinds Behavioral Health
Discussion	Dr. Dawn Bishop McLin Jackson State University, Project FAST
	Dr. Jessica Murphy Jackson State University, Project FAST
Q&A for Panelists and Presenters	
Closing Remarks/Next Steps	Sheryl Bacon Event Chair, Mississippi Urban Research Center
Wrap-Up	<i>Please network with other attendees & visit display tables</i>

MURC Contact Information

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