



Keeping the Doors Open: Service in Times of Strife

HPL's Children's Zone for Emergency Employee Relief

Presenter: Mary Wagoner, Sr. Manager, Special Projects

Storm Preparation



- Tip 1: Communication Plan – City departments, library staff, public
- Tip 2: Emergency contact information on file so telephone tree is established in advance of event.
- Tip 3: Set pre-determined staff check-in times.
- Tip 4: Emergency Preparedness staff training required.
- Tip 5: Hurricane kits for staff and tarps for protecting the equipment and

Project Charter



- Tip 1: Director shares vision and sets the course.
- Tip 2: Director works with the Mayor, City Council and City Legal to get both approval and waivers.
- Tip 3: Director empowers key staff to lead the project.
- Tip 4: Team identifies staff expertise and assign roles accordingly.
- Tip 5: Set program parameters based on capacity. Does your public library have the capacity to offer this program for infants or dispense medications? Be realistic.
- Tip 6: The program should be a “library” experience rather than a daycare experience.

Project Planning



- Tip 1: Age appropriate programs, including library tours, apps, storytimes, gaming, crafts and more.
 - a. Design programs and schedules by age range.
 - b. Separate spaces for children, tweens and teens.
 - c. Different activities and spaces based on age range.
 - d. Keep a tight schedule with built in meal time, snack times, bathroom breaks, activities, and programs for younger children.
 - e. Be more flexible with teens.
- Tip 2: Supplies:
 - a. Program supplies: Craft supplies, puzzles, board games, gaming equipment
 - b. Basic supplies: baby wipes, Clorox wipes, plastic gloves, hand sanitizer, bottled water and napkins for all groups, First Aid kit
 - c. Snacks: goldfish crackers, animal crackers, bottled water and juice boxes.
 - d. Contact list of area restaurants that deliver
 - a. Ask for donations
 - b. Request tax waiver
 - c. Stock enough supplies for two weeks. Area schools took two weeks to re-open.
- Tip 3: Employee Time Tracking: System in place for tracking employee time spent on routine operations versus disaster related operations.

Project Implementation



- Tip 1: Initially all staff report to a central location
- Tip 2: Initially all staff is trained in FEMA assistance and some staff in blue tarp distribution
- Tip 3: Staffing
- Youth Services staff and some NL Managers assigned to the Children's Zone
 - NL Managers and other staff assigned to FEMA assistance, blue tarp, or customer service desk or routine library operations.
 - Safety department – First Aid
- Tip 4: Registration process
- Library card sign up.
 - Parent/guardian must show City of Houston employee ID for registration, drop off and pick up.
 - Have clear guidelines about drop off and pick up times and zones.
 - Hours of operation 8 AM – 5:30 PM or 7 PM so parent/guardian can work a complete shift.
 - Registration wrist bands color coded for age range.
 - Registration includes media release.
- Tip 5: Have a communication plan for closing the program.
- Tip 6: Communications Division updates media about the program and coordinates media coverage.

What We Do Now Makes a Difference



- Tip 1: Youth Services: Build on current programs for emergency programs
- Early Literacy – Very Ready Reader
 - Homework Help and STEAM
 - After School Zones
- Tip 2: Civic Engagement – Critical conversations establish the library as a convener and safe meeting place.
- Tip 3: Year round disaster preparedness – Rapid response by the library because policies and procedures, communication plans, print and web information, staff training, and supplies are in place.
- Tip 4: Networking -Reliable resources in times of need.
- Operation Photo Rescue
 - Greater Houston Storm Recovery Network
- Tip 5: Computer classes – Computer access and trained staff assist customers with FEMA, help customers use social media to contact family and friends, housing and more.
- Tip 6: Community engagement – Reach out to customers who cannot come to us. Provide computer and Wi-Fi access with the Mobile Express bus.