

Providing WIC Services During an Emergency

Max Mayfield, former
Director of the
National Hurricane
Center

Preparation
through education
is less costly than
learning through
tragedy.

Meet Your Presenters

Montie Schutz, RN, BSN

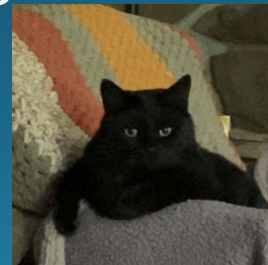
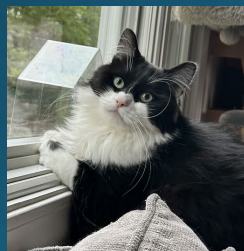
- Associate Degree in Nursing, MidMichigan College
- Bachelor Degree in Nursing, Chamberlain University
- Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Central Michigan District Health Department
 - 4 years at Central Michigan District Health Department
- When not working: Married with children, enjoy spending time outside with fur babies



Meet Your Presenters

Melissa Opheim, MA

- Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Health Promotion & Education with a Minor in Biology from Central Michigan University
- Master of Arts Degree in Leadership & Public Administration from Saginaw Valley State University
- Emergency Preparedness & Health Education Division Manager/EPC at the Bay County Health Department
 - Will be celebrating 22 years with BCHD in January
- When not working: Spending time with family, reading, watching movies/shows, listening to music, being active outdoors & traveling



Overview

- Purpose: To protect our communities against public health threats, be it natural disaster, infectious/communicable disease, or bioterrorism events.
- Develop the plans and protocols that will be followed during an emergency.
- Assist with storage and dispensing of resources.
- Collaborate with state, county, and local departments to provide organized, structured emergency response when needed.

Program Structure

- Preparedness activities funded by PHEP (Public Health Emergency Preparedness) cooperative agreement specifically target the development of emergency-ready public health departments.
- The PHEP serves as a workplan, listing 15 core capabilities designed to advance the response capacity of state and local health systems.

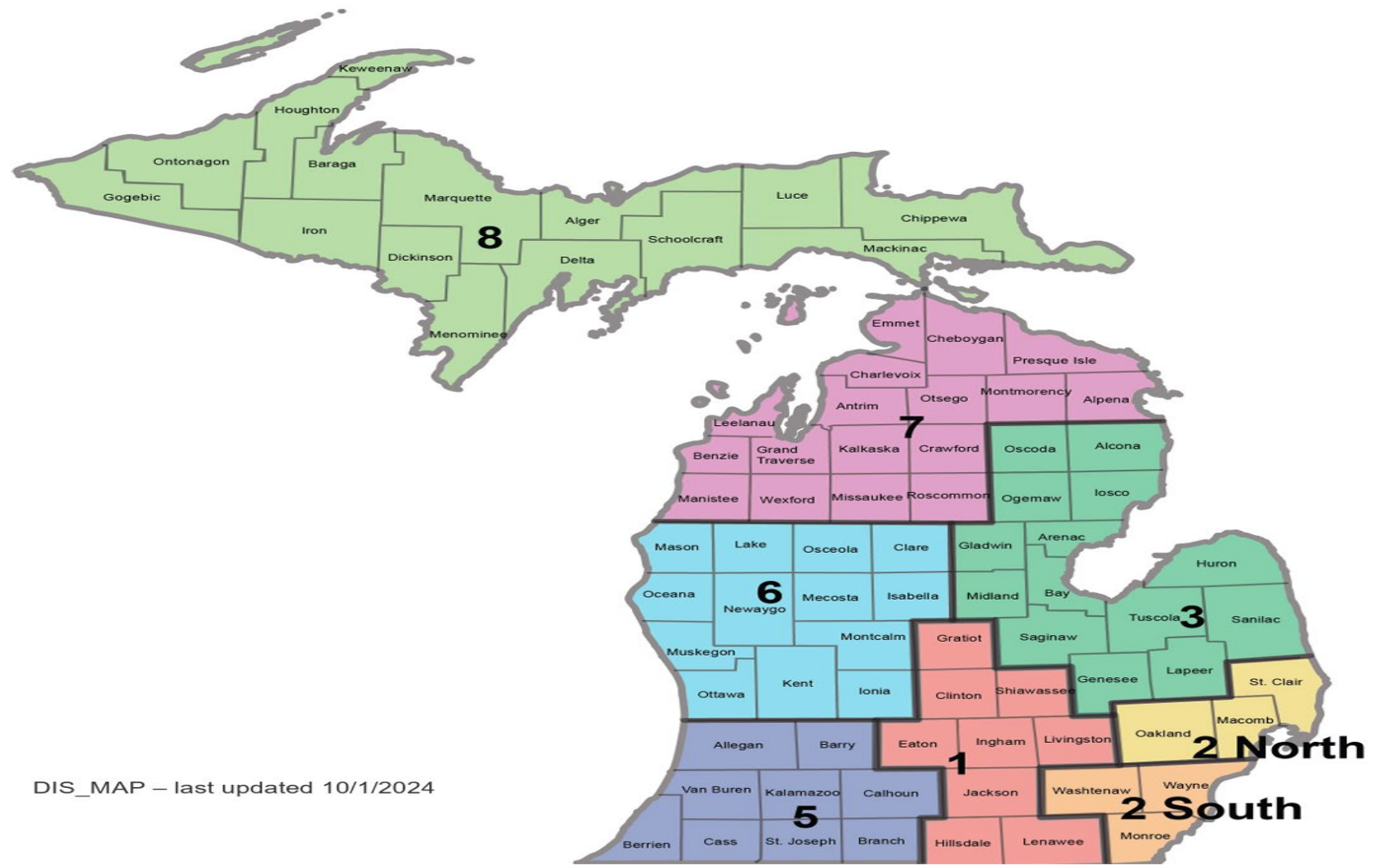
15 Core Capabilities

1. Community Preparedness
2. Community Recovery
3. Emergency Operations Coordination
4. Emergency Public Information & Warning
5. Fatality Management
6. Information Sharing
7. Mass Care
8. Medical Counter measure Dispensing & Administration
9. Medical Material management & Distribution
10. Medical Surge
11. Nonpharmaceutical Interventions
12. Public Health Laboratory Testing
13. Public Health Surveillance & Epidemiological Investigation
14. Responder Safety & Health
15. Volunteer Management

Partners Include:

- Division of Emergency Preparedness & Response
- Bureau of Emergency Preparedness EMS & Systems of Care
- Regional Health Care Coalitions
- Emergency Managers
- Regional & Local Health Care
- Health Care Collaboratives
- State, County & City Police
- Tribal Partners
- Utilities
- Red Cross

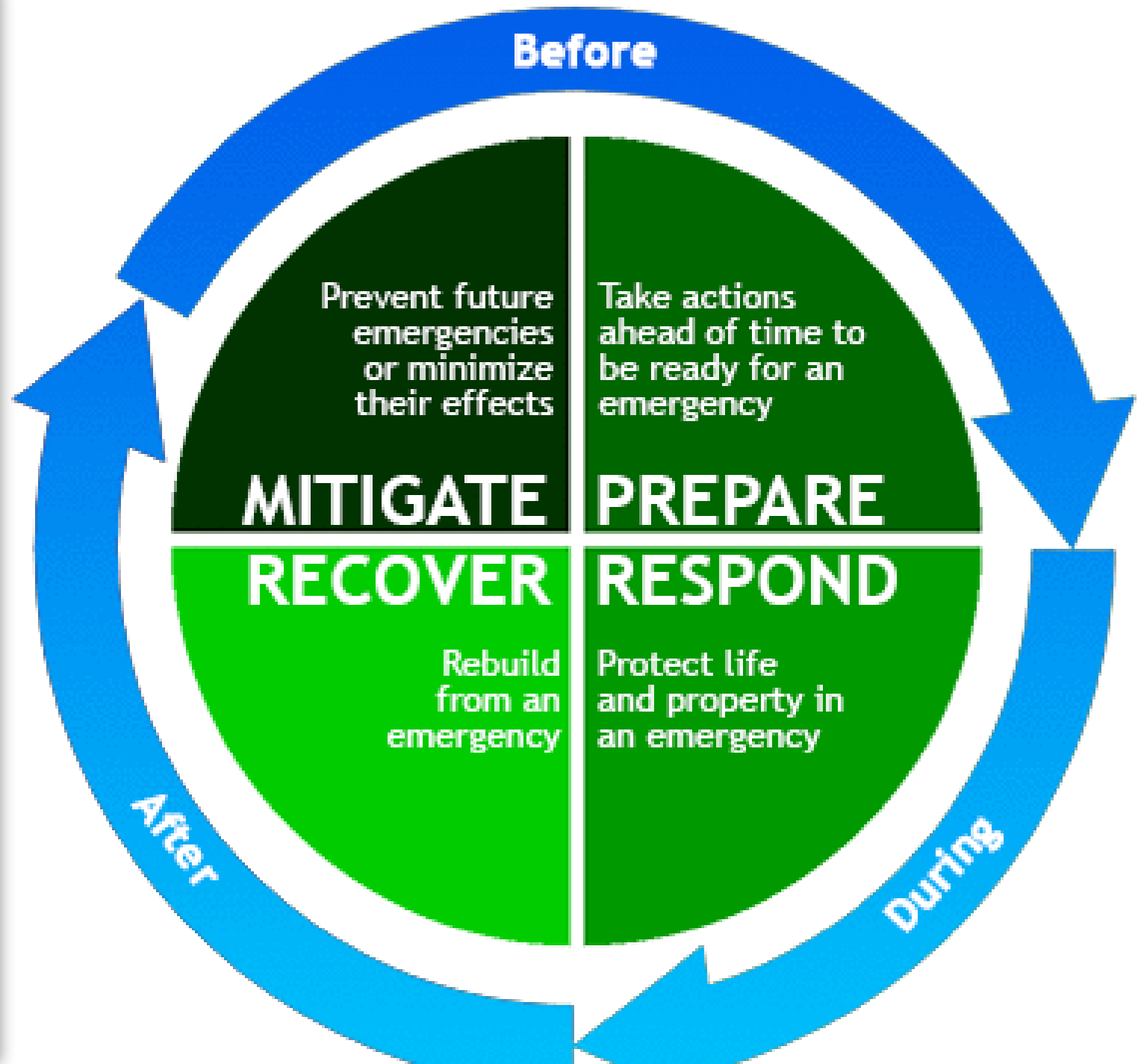
REGIONAL MAP



DIS_MAP – last updated 10/1/2024

The Role of Emergency Preparedness in WIC Services

Preparedness Planning



Before an Emergency

- **Planning:** Creating and updating administrative plans. This includes setting up communication chains, identifying critical staff, and having a plan for your own family.
- **Education:** We play a key role in educating clients on how to prepare. We can share simple tips like having a go-bag and a family communication plan.
- **Resource Mapping:** Knowing which community resources are available and how to access them quickly. This includes knowing where shelters, food banks, and other support services are located.





During an Emergency

- **Continued Services:** This is about delivering essential WIC benefits and nutrition counseling, even if normal operations are disrupted. This may mean using a temporary location or remote services.
- **Communication:** Actively communicating with clients to let them know where they can get help. This could be through a phone tree, social media, or local announcements.
- **Support:** Providing emotional support and referrals to other emergency services, as WIC clients may be facing housing, medical, or financial crises.

After an Emergency

- **Recovery:** Helping clients get back on their feet. This could involve re-issuing EBT cards, replacing lost food benefits, and providing targeted support for those most affected.
- **Assessment:** Reviewing what worked and what didn't in our response, so we can improve for the next time.





Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Administrative Preparedness



Critical Functions: What are the most important things we do every day? Issuing benefits? Answering phones? Data entry? We need to have a backup plan for each of these.



Data and Records: Where are our essential records and client files? Are they backed up electronically? Do we have a way to access them if our office is inaccessible?



Communication Plans: Who needs to be notified? Who calls who? Do we have a back-up list of contact information if our usual system is down?



Mutual Aid Agreements: Do we have partnerships with other agencies or health departments that can help us if we're overwhelmed?

Helping Clients Make a Family Emergency Plan

Stay Informed-Sign up for Alerts

Encourage clients to sign up for local emergency alerts (e.g., Nixle, local weather alerts).



Explain that official alerts provide the most accurate and up-to-date information, which is critical for making safe decisions.



Where else can you find updates?

- 211
- Weather apps
- County Emergency Management Web Pages
- News websites

Considerations:

How can we get the information out when normal lines of communication are not functioning?

Clients need to have a way to charge their phones

Learn the terminology

Shelter in place

A light blue downward-pointing arrow indicating a flow from the first box to the second.

Relocation

A light green downward-pointing arrow indicating a flow from the second box to the third.

Evacuation

Make a Plan

Discuss a family communication plan. How will family members find each other if separated?

Choose an out-of-area contact person to be a central point of communication.

Establish a primary and secondary meeting spot.

Prepare to shelter in place

Flashlights or candles

Cooler to keep food

Water

Non-perishable food

Formula or RTF

Diapers/Hygiene/First Aid Kit

Alternate charging power sources

Means to receive weather or situational updates

Medications



Build a Kit

- Encourage clients to prepare a small bag with essential items (a "Go-Bag").
- **Special considerations for WIC families:**
 - **Food & Water:** Non-perishable snacks and water.
 - **Formula & Baby Items:** Discuss the importance of having extra formula on hand, especially for those who rely on a specific type. Include diapers, wipes, and baby food.
 - **Medication:** A supply of any necessary prescription or over-the-counter medication.
 - **Documents:** Copies of important documents (ID, birth certificates, WIC Bridge Card).

Share Your Plan

Emphasize the importance of making sure everyone in the household knows the plan.

Encourage clients to have a conversation with family members, caregivers, and childcare providers.

Operation Tornado Response

Scenario:

A powerful tornado has touched down and moved across a path that includes both a portion of the city and surrounding rural areas. Emergency services are stretched thin responding to collapsed buildings, downed trees and impassable roads. Your WIC clinic has sustained roof damage and is temporarily inaccessible. Power is out in many neighborhoods, and cell phone service is spotty. You know that clients in both urban and rural settings have been impacted, with some losing their homes entirely, while others are cut off from essential services due to blocked roads.



Objectives

1. How would you identify which clients are most in need of immediate support? What specific needs might a client in a rural area have versus one in the urban core, and how would you adapt your response?





2. Your main clinic is damaged, what is your plan for issuing WIC benefits and providing nutritional counseling? Where would you set up a temporary operations center, and how would you handle the logistics of moving equipment and staff?

- How quickly can you stand up an alternate site and how would you communicate that?

3. How would you communicate with clients who may have lost their phones or are in an area without cell service? What are some non-traditional ways to get critical information about food benefits and support them?



Resources

- Ready.gov
- Do One Thing
- FEMA Individuals & Communities
- FEMA- National Preparedness
- American Red Cross
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
- FEMA-Free Publications & “Are you Ready?” Guide
- Homeland Security/DHS- Prepare My Family for a Disaster
- FEMA Training: IS-909 Community Preparedness

Making a Difference Together

Think about one thing you can do to strengthen your clinic's plan or one conversation you can have with a client to help them prepare.



Contact Information

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