

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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### Public Affairs Office

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## MEDICARE NEWS

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### **MEDICARE ANNOUNCES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH KIDNEY FAILURE**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today announced that CMS and other Federal Agencies have joined with organizations and healthcare providers in the kidney community to form the Kidney Community Emergency Response Coalition and to develop a nationwide disaster response plan.

“The Kidney Community Emergency Response Coalition is an excellent example of effective collaboration,” said CMS Deputy Administrator Leslie Norwalk. “This is a model of how we can work together to ensure that health care needs of individuals with kidney disease are met, even in a time of a disaster.”

The Coalition will ensure that national resources are in place to assist state and local response efforts in meeting the life saving medical needs of individuals with kidney failure in the event of a disaster.

Kidney failure (End Stage Renal Disease, or ESRD) is a life threatening condition. As of March 2006, there were nearly half a million individuals with ESRD in the United States. Individuals with ESRD require medications to prevent rejection of a kidney transplant if they have received one, or regular repeated dialysis treatments to clean the blood supply, as frequent as three to four times a week, if they have not. Going without dialysis for even a short time can result in severe illness or even death for an individual with ESRD.

Dialysis is dependent on the availability of electricity, gas, supplies, and water--commodities that, without proper planning, are difficult to access in the event of a disaster. One dialysis treatment alone requires a minimum of 100 gallons of pressurized, clean water.

“Other healthcare provider groups, in preparing for disasters, can learn a great deal from the kidney community,” Barry Straube, M.D., CMS Chief

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Medical Officer and a nephrologist. “This effort will help save lives by making sure critical needs such as supplies, medications and services are available.”

The kidney community understands the continued need for improved processes. Toward this end, representatives from over 50 healthcare organizations across 25 states and the District of Columbia participated in a national summit hosted by CMS in January to review lessons learned in recent disasters, and use these lessons to plan for the future. The Kidney Community Emergency Response Coalition was formed, at the summit, with the National Kidney Foundation serving as the administrative coordination lead for Coalition activities.

The Coalition is comprised of partners representing kidney patient and professional organizations; practitioners such as nurses, technicians, dieticians, social workers, surgeons and physicians; independent dialysis and transplant facilities; large dialysis organizations; hospitals; medical equipment suppliers; ESRD Networks; state representatives; the Renal Leadership Council (RLC); as well as the CMS and other federal agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Phase I of the Coalition work has been completed with the development and initial dissemination of tools and resources and a national kidney community response plan to help patients, facilities, emergency responders, and coalition members plan for, and respond to, emergencies and disasters.

CMS will assume the administrative coordination lead as the Coalition moves into Phase II. Coalition activities will focus on making individuals with ESRD and the state and local response workers aware of the tools and materials available, as well as testing and refining the national kidney community response plan. ESRD Networks, healthcare practitioners, dialysis facilities, industry, and patient representatives will play a critical role as the Coalition moves into Phase II, and in the event of a disaster, will be at the forefront of implementation of the response plan.

CMS has a number of additional activities including education campaigns, and contractual (e.g., ESRD Networks) and regulatory (e.g., proposed ESRD Conditions for Coverage) changes underway to supplement the work of the Coalition, as well as activities to ensure all Medicare beneficiaries have access to health care services in the event of a disaster, including the possibility of a flu pandemic.

For more information and links to CMS disaster planning activities and resources, please visit <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Emergency/>. The National Kidney Foundation is host of a clearing house of Coalition activities that can be accessed at [www.kidney.org/help](http://www.kidney.org/help).

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