

Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness: An enablement framework for service providers

What is the issue?

Being prepared for disasters can reduce the loss of life, property, and possessions. We all need to be ready and know what to do. Some people with disability need extra support, resources, and advocacy to enable their preparedness for more effective response and recovery from disasters. One way of providing that support is to leverage the roles of service providers who have routine interactions with people with disability and carers. To ensure effective disaster response and recovery, personal emergency preparedness with people with disability must go together with organisational preparedness and service continuity planning of the services that support them. [Our research shows that community and disability organisations are not adequately prepared for disaster themselves nor are they integrated into emergency planning.](#)

Research Aims:

The aims were to:

- understand the contributions of service providers to disaster risk reduction with the people they support;
- map the contours of an emerging practice; and
- present an enablement framework to guide service provider roles and contributions to enabling P-CEP.

What did we do?

We conducted a [scoping study of the research literature](#) and engaged in stakeholder consultations to learn what service providers from the disability, community, and health sectors had to say about their role, responsibilities, and contributions to emergency planning with the people they support.

Service provider was defined as any individual, business, or organization providing funded supports/services to people with disability or chronic health conditions (or their carers), including mental health services and supports in the community.

We interviewed 18 service providers, managers, and practice leaders (3 male; 15 female) from 17 organisations across Queensland.

Type of Service Provider	Number (%)
Disability Services	9 (50)
Community Services	5 (28)
Health and Mental Health Services	2 (11)
Other	2 (11)

Most participants held roles as managers, service coordinators or practice leaders. The years of experience in their current role ranged from 3 months – 10 years.

- Ten participants (56%) reported being in their position less than one year.
- Six (22%) held their role for two to five years, and
- Two participants (11%) had greater than five years of experience in their current role.

We also held a focus group interview with 11 mental health providers and consumers (3 male; 8 female).

We shared emerging findings from our analysis of the individual and focus group interviews with decision-makers. They included (n = 15) managers and leaders in the community, health, mental health, and disability services sectors (8 male; 7 female), including one person with disability and two disability representatives. Discussion centered on the practical implications of developing workforce capacity in community, health, and disability services to contribute to local community-level disaster risk reduction. We invited consideration of the challenges, opportunities, and potential strategies. This focused discussion supported interpretation of findings and the development of the P-CEP Enablement Framework for service providers.

What did we learn?

Enabling [Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness \(P-CEP\)](#) is an emerging practice in need of a workforce capacity development strategy.

We found that service providers undertook several actions to increase the safety and well-being of the people they support (e.g., risk assessment; planning for imminent risks; safe work environments). Actions were typically ad hoc and done for their clients, rather than in partnership with them. Findings also revealed promising practices that could be further developed to strengthen the role and contributions of service providers to

disaster risk reduction with the people they support.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a rich learning opportunity for service providers in developing both personal emergency preparedness and service continuity plans. The experience of the recent pandemic highlighted the importance and interrelatedness of people with disability and the services that support them to ensure safety and well-being in emergencies.

What do our findings mean?

There is a need to develop enablement strategies that will support service providers to shift their practices toward person-centred capability approaches to emergency preparedness while recognising the practice context and constraints impacting the development of this role.

A challenge for service providers is developing effective links between personal preparedness of people with disability and organisational preparedness and service continuity of the services that support them. Missing from the actions of providers in this study was advocacy needed to identify gaps that increase risks for people with disability in emergency situations. Service providers are optimally placed to advocate for the support needs of their clients in emergencies. However, they require tools to guide the identification of barriers that increase risk for people with disability. Also, they will need to expand partnerships to include working with emergency personnel and council staff to develop their advocacy role and contributions to practices that increase the safety and resilience of people with disability to disaster. New ways of working are needed to ensure duty of care for both the staff and the people they support. This will require clarity on the responsibilities and expectations of service providers and the people they support in emergencies.

Enablement Framework

P-CEP brings people with disability and the services that support them together with emergency personnel to enable more effective emergency planning that is tailored to an individual's support needs and situation. [The stepwise approach guides person-centred self-assessment of support needs.](#)

The figure below illustrates the **P-CEP Enablement Process** that occurs between people and their service providers. It maps enablement roles of service providers to each P-CEP step. This framework recognises the interconnectedness of people with disability and service providers working together with emergency personnel to enable people with disability (and carers) to self-assess their preparedness, capabilities and support

needs in emergencies, learn about disaster risks, strengthen support networks, and tailor emergency plans to their support needs and situation.

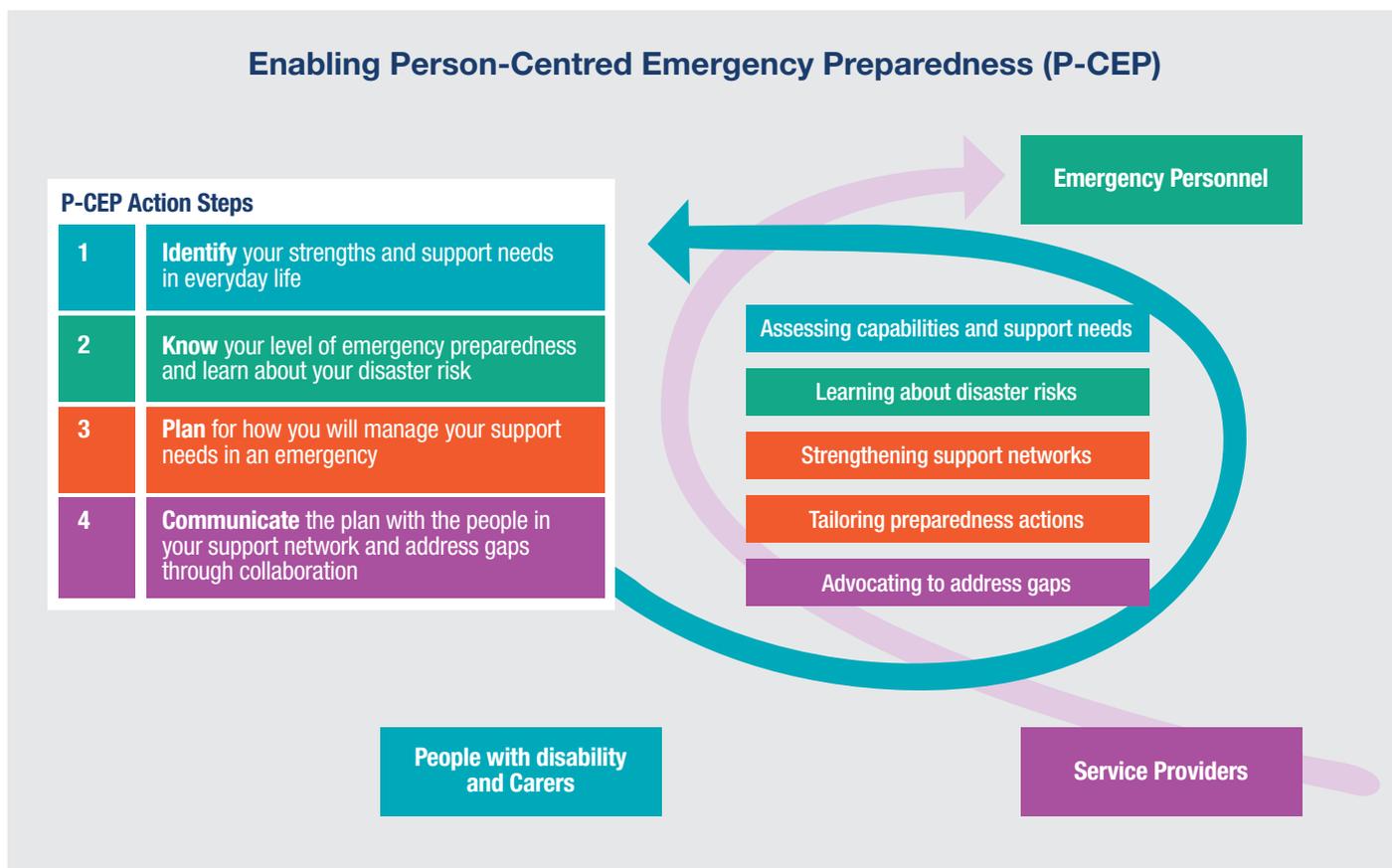
Advocacy to address gaps in plans is an important contribution that service providers can make toward disability inclusive emergency planning.

Next Steps

Follow our [program of research](#) to learn how we are applying this framework to the development of enablement strategies and tools for service providers through partnership research.

Contact

Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve
michelle.villeneuve@sydney.edu.au



The P-CEP Enablement Process (Villeneuve, 2021) maps roles of service providers to each P-CEP Step.

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