

Identifying Essential Functions

Essential functions are those organizational functions and activities that must be continued under any and all circumstances.

In considering your most essential and time sensitive functions take into account what is required to care for your residents and to run your facility. The essential functions you list should encompass the key activities which your organization fulfills on a day-to-day basis. These essential functions may include the following resident care functions, for example:

- medical care
- psychosocial care
- feeding
- bathing and hygienic care
- purchasing essential supplies
- assuring adequate staffing
- maintaining the physical facility (power, water, etc.)
- various functions necessary to fulfill legal, regulatory and financial obligations.

In addition to these day-to-day essential functions, you should also identify the additional activities you may need to fulfill during an emergency (emergency essential functions). These might include such functions as:

- safety assessment of residents, staff and structure
- communication with emergency responders, families and media
- stepped-up infection control and surveillance

Listing your facility's essential functions highlights clearly and specifically just what operations and activities your facility must try to maintain under emergency/disaster conditions. This in turn helps you to identify the critical resources you need to carry out these functions. Together these lists, which you can record on the next two worksheets, form the basis and framework for your emergency preparedness plan.

REFLECTIVE PAUSE #1

List your facility's essential functions in the *Essential Functions Worksheet*. This is good step to get your facility's Emergency Preparedness Planning Team started on their work, and lays the groundwork for the next step, identifying critical resources.

REFLECTIVE PAUSE #2

Using the *Critical Resources Worksheet*, first fill in the essential functions you listed in the previous worksheet. Then briefly note the critical resources necessary to assure that your facility can continue to perform each essential function in the event of an emergency.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS	
CLIENT CARE	Example: Preparing all meals for residents
FACILITY OPERATIONS	Example: Resident Room Cleaning and Disinfection
PHYSICAL FACILITY	Example: Power, Water, HVAC
EMERGENCY RESPONSE	Example: Internal communications—communications with staff

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS		CRITICAL RESOURCES				
		STAFF SUPPORT		VITAL RECORDS	EQUIPMENT	SUPPLIES
		Number of staff who could perform function	Cross training of staff needed (✓)	Vital records necessary for this function Circle those that would not be accessible in an emergency	Equipment necessary for this function Circle equipment that may not be useable in an emergency and equipment that you need and do not have	Supplies necessary for this function Circle those most difficult to obtain in an emergency
CLIENT CARE	<i>Example: Preparing resident meals</i>	2	✓	<i>Dietary orders for each resident</i>	<i>Kitchen facilities: Fridge, stove, oven, sink</i>	<i>Fresh foods, canned and dried foods, water</i>
FACILITY OPERATIONS						