How E-PLUS Can Support Home Health Agencies During Disasters

Home health agencies and providers are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of patients and maintaining continuity of care for them. However, when disasters compromise routine infrastructure, health care providers may not have the tools they need to provide the quality of care possible in everyday settings. When patients, especially seniors, are forced to evacuate, home health providers may not be notified where they go and if they have the medical documents with them to receive appropriate care.

For home health providers, like all health services organizations, emergency preparedness is a critical part of the operation for ensuring patient care and safety. Recognizing the essential role home health providers play in disaster preparedness and response, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) included 42 CFR § 484.102 Emergency preparedness, a basic framework and guideline structure for emergency planning, as part of the condition of participation for home health agencies.

What is E-PLUS?
E-PLUS is a cloud-based system provided as a service of the Agency for Health Care Administration providing patient information at times of declared emergencies through the following applications:

- Patient Search: provides clinical and medication fill history through connections with national exchanges including Surescripts.

- Emergency Census: supports Department of Health Special Needs Shelter (SpNS) management through a check-in/checkout feature. Shelter registration information is utilized to support the E-PLUS Missing Persons application.

- Missing Persons: uses Florida's Ecounter Notification Service (ENS) to assist in provider and/or family reunification efforts. ENS is a care coordination tool that receives admit, discharge or transfer (ADT) data from over 750 facilities.   Data from SpNS is used as a data source during times of emergency.

Access to E-PLUS is granted based on roles and responsibilities related to the three applications. The following regulations and HIPAA allowances are applicable to the use of E-PLUS during declared emergencies:

Missing Persons: *45 CFR 164.510(b) and 45 CFR 164.512*
Patient Search: *45 CFR §§ 164.502(a)(1)(ii), 164.506(c), and the definition of "treatment" at 164.501*

How E-PLUS Can Support Your Efforts
The E-PLUS Missing Persons application can support home health agencies in providing data about patients who are seeking care in a connected healthcare facility and/or who may be sheltering in a SpNS for which they have not provided information to the Home Health Agency. E-PLUS is not intended to replace required Emergency Preparedness functions, but can complement patient care efforts by providing location information and clinical records as may be needed. w to Get Started

How to Get Connected
Contact program staff at E-Plus@ahca.myflorida.com to further discuss how one or more of the E-PLUS applications can support your emergency response efforts.

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