



Emergency Patient Look-Up System

Hurricane Debby After Action Report (AAR)

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Introduction

Hurricane Debby, a slow-moving category 1 hurricane that caused widespread flooding throughout Florida and the eastern United States, made landfall in Taylor County of the Big Bend region of Florida, on August 5, 2024. E-PLUS was activated on Monday, August 2nd in response to the Governor's August 1st emergency declaration (24-156). The total number of counties under emergency was 54. Of the 54 counties listed in the state of emergency declaration, 42 or 78% of those counties had access to either Patient Search, Missing Persons, or both applications.¹ On August 2nd, the Governor issued Executive Order 24-157 expanding covered counties to 61 lowering E-PLUS access to 46 counties.

This document summarizes the utilization of E-PLUS during Hurricane Debby, by detailing the use of each application, any lessons learned, and concluding with after action activities.

E-PLUS Utilization During Hurricane Debby

Patient Search

The Patient Search application allows authorized users to query for medication fill histories and clinical records. The targeted end users for this application are county health department medical personnel which staff the county Special Needs Shelter(s). Out of the 16 counties that opened a SpNS that utilized the state registry for intake, 81% of those counties had access to the Patient Search application while 19% did not (see Appendix A for calculation of these figures). While close to 81% of the SpNSs could query clinical records and medication fill histories, Patient Search was only utilized at two SpNSs, The Legends Community Center in Duval County and the Suwannee County Fairgrounds in Suwannee County. At the conclusion of the activation, the E-PLUS team conducted an after-action review by conducting a survey follow up with users of Patient Search as well as hosting an after-action call with Patient Search users in Duval County. Details of this can be found in the after-action section of the report.

Patient Search queries were conducted for six individuals, five of which were housed in Legends Community Center. Of those six individuals, records were returned for one person only. In four of the six queries, only the minimum necessary demographics were included in the search. Zero medication fill histories were returned for all six individuals, regardless of level of demographic input.

Emergency Census

The Emergency Census application allows users to check individuals into and out of alternative care facilities, which in Florida are our Special Needs Shelters (SpNSs). The Agency executed a data use agreement (DUA) with the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and Division of Emergency Management (DEM) in September of 2022. The DUA allows DOH to transfer the Agency shelter intake data (check ins and check outs) that is collected through the Special Needs Registry (SNR) intake module. The Agency subsequently reformats this data and uploads the encounters into Emergency Census for check in/out via E-PLUS. Encounters at E-PLUS enabled SpNSs are then sent to the Agency's Encounter Notification

¹ We do not include access to Emergency Census in determining if a county has access to E-PLUS because we receive shelter intake data directly from the Florida Department of Health's special needs registry (SNR). We have no control over which counties adopt the SNR for intake, nor do we have firm numbers ahead of time of which counties will use the SNR for intake and therefore we cannot plan nor calculate ahead of an activation which counties will provide Emergency Census with intake data. This occurs in real-time during an activation.

Service (ENS). ENS is a care coordination network that notifies providers when their patients have encounters at connected health care facilities (currently over 800 facilities contribute encounter data). The contribution of SpNS encounters to the ENS network enables improved care coordination during times of disaster as ENS participants can be notified that their patients have been evacuated to a SpNS.

The E-PLUS team did not have access to learning how many total SpNSs were opened in response to Hurricane Debby. Consequently, the team cannot determine the percentage of SpNSs that were covered by Emergency Census. We received data from DOH beginning Sunday August 4 and the data included one checked in on August 3. All clients were checked out by August 8, with the majority checking out the day after landfall. The number of special needs shelter clients that were checked into SpNSs via E-PLUS totaled roughly 108 individuals.

The total number ENS subscribers that received alerts originating from a SpNS was 31.

Missing Persons

The Missing Persons application allows authorized users to search for missing persons by leveraging the Encounter Notification Service. Authorized users load files of missing persons into E-PLUS, which are then compared to recent encounters on the ENS network. E-PLUS then produces a report which details whether a missing person was found and if found provides information on that encounter, such as the name of the facility where the person was last located.

There was no use of Missing Persons during the Hurricane Debby activation.

After Action Activities

E-PLUS staff conducted two after action activities. First, the E-PLUS team sent a survey to all Patient Search users (total of 65 unique emails) who staffed an active Special Needs Shelter to learn better about why they did not use E-PLUS. There were three responses to the survey and all indicated that they did not use Patient Search because the client(s) brought their medication and dosage was known to DOH staff.

Second, the E-PLUS team conducted an after-action call with the Duval County Health Department. Duval medical staff were the primary users of Patient Search during Hurricane Debby. Dr. Monslave and Dr. Saint-Pre each expressed an overall positive experience utilizing Patient Search. They retold a story of a client at the shelter who was on dialysis. The staff wanted to understand when this person's last dialysis had taken place. They were concerned that this individual needed to leave the shelter and get another treatment. Additionally, there were some family and mental health issues that were preventing the client from following the doctor's advice to receive treatment. Through Patient Search, the medical staff were able to retrieve the client's latest progress note from their dialysis provider. Duval County Health Department medical staff indicated that not only were they able to identify when the last treatment had taken place and the condition in which the client had left, but they were also able to read the client's health history, giving them a better understanding of why the client would not take their advice. This enabled them to take a different approach and get the client to dialysis. Dr. Monslave made the comment that having E-PLUS gave them "peace of mind."

The Duval organization administrator brought up a couple issues. First, she was unaware of an update to E-PLUS that enabled her to delete end user accounts. She said it would have been helpful if we had sent out a notification of the update, prior to the activation. Second, the inability to retrieve medications via

Surescripts for this activation and previous activations was a source of frustration. The organization administrator noted that for each activation that they have been a part of, they have yet to be able to retrieve medication fill histories.

Lessons Learned

As with each activation, the utilization of E-PLUS during Hurricane Debby led to lessons learned. First, there were some minor issues with the DOH raw Special Needs Shelter registration data. The E-PLUS team was not aware that an admit and discharge for a particular individual would be displayed as one encounter, rather than two distinct encounters. This led to a few instances where the E-PLUS team saw a discharge, but never saw an admit, leading to some confusion. Additionally, download of the registration data from the Special Needs Registry within DOH had been automated prior to the start of hurricane season, yet upon download the admit and discharges date columns reformatted to display only a time, not a date. This has been corrected by DOH.

A consistent issue that the E-PLUS team has faced since the first use of the certified system in 2022, is the inability to get notification of Special Needs Shelter openings and closings. The lack of awareness makes it difficult for the E-PLUS team to understand the size of the response, form an expectation of system use, and have advanced understanding of when SpNS registration data will be uploaded to the SFTP site. Discussions with DOH Special Needs Registry at the conclusion of the storm led to a mutual understanding of the need as well as a simple solution – to add the E-PLUS inbox email to the SpNS openings circulation list at the ESF-8 desk.

Our takeaway from the discussion with Duval County Health Department Patient Search users was three-fold. First, medication fill histories are highly valued by Patient Search users, yet no fill histories were able to be retrieved during this activation. We need a new plan to increase pharmacy connectivity with E-PLUS. Second, we need a prompt to tell Patient Search users to add more demographics to improve the probability of a patient match. Third, we are incorporating system enhancements into our regularly scheduled education session to ensure that all user types are familiar with any changes to the system ahead of an activation.

Appendix A: Counties in Executive Order or with Open SpNSs and their Corresponding Access to E-PLUS Applications

Counties in Executive Order/Opened a SpNS	Special Needs Shelter (If applicable)	Patient Search Access	Emergency Census Enabled
Alachua	Gainesville Senior Center	Yes	Yes
Citrus	Forest Ridge Elementary School	No	Yes
Bay	NA	Yes	NA
Clay	Lake Asbury Jr High	No	Yes
Columbia	Westside Elementary School	Yes	Yes
Columbia	Winfield Community Center	Yes	Yes
Duval	Landmark Middle School	Yes	Yes
Duval	The Legends Center of City of Jacksonville	Yes	Yes
Gilchrist	Bell High School Academy	Yes	Yes
Hernando	West Hernando Middle School	No	Yes
Hillsborough	D.G. Erwin Technical College	Yes	Yes
Jefferson	NA	Yes	NA
Lafayette	NA	No	No
Lake	Leesburg Elementary School	Yes	Yes
Leon	Florida State University School	Yes	Yes
Levy	Bronson Elementary School	Yes	Yes
Madison	Madison County Central School	Yes	Yes
Manatee	Nolan Middle School	Yes	Yes
Suwannee	Suwannee Intermediate School	Yes	Yes
Suwannee	Suwannee County Fairgrounds	Yes	Yes

Taylor	Taylor County Health Department	Yes	Yes
Wakulla	Wakulla County Community Center	Yes	Yes