

University of PA Study, Impact of the flood
on the Wyoming Valley Elderly and the response of
governmental and non-governmental agencies 1972-
1975

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA STUDY - 1972-75

IMPACT OF THE FLOOD ON THE WYOMING VALLEY ELDERLY
AND THE RESPONSE OF GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

The University of Pennsylvania, Department of Community Medicine is undertaking a study of the impact of Tropical Storm Agnes and the resultant flood on the elderly of Wyoming Valley. The study team will examine how the community and Federal, State and local governments, have responded to the needs of older persons. The study is being funded by the HEW Social and Rehabilitation Service, Administration on Aging (Title IV - Older Americans Act).

The study will provide a description of the effects of the disaster and its aftermath on elderly persons, determine sources of aid, and whether additional services are required. In addition, the study will determine the nature of the response of social institutions and service systems to the disaster, and the effectiveness, over time, of that response.

By analyzing on a longitudinal basis the response in a major disaster, indicators of social, institutional, and service capacity and responsiveness can be ascertained for situations that are less severe (i.e. more normal). Moreover, findings will provide clues, otherwise not available, to criteria for support and development of programs, auspices, and systems serving the elderly. In addition, findings will be useful in planning to meet the problems of the elderly suffering other types of disasters.

Specific aims of this study include the following:

1. To provide an organized description of the impact of a disaster and its aftermath on the elderly.
2. To provide a description of organizational behavior with respect to the elderly at the time of and following a major natural disaster.
3. To determine the resources to which the elderly turn when confronted by widespread disaster.
4. To provide a description of services mobilized to meet the immediate crisis conditions of the elderly, and an analysis of the service response, i.e. program content, over time in terms of the numbers of elderly served, the nature of services provided, and the proportion of resources allocated for assisting aged flood victims well after the flood itself.
5. To describe and analyze the long-run impact of the flood on an aggregate of elderly flood victims in the Wyoming Valley.

Elias S. Cohen, Principal Investigator
S. Walter Poulshock, Research Director

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