



AT-RISK POPULATIONS PROJECT REGIONAL MEETING

DEFINITION OF AT-RISK POPULATIONS

The project advisory panel determined that at-risk populations are those people most **at risk of severe consequences** from the pandemic, including due to societal, economic, and health-related factors. The advisory panel adopted a factors-based approach to defining at-risk individuals, which may further assist planners in identifying those in most need of assistance. Factors were chosen because panel members felt that they provide a more specific understanding of the populations who truly need *extra* assistance in a pandemic, as well as the specific assistance they need and the barriers that render them more at risk. The advisory panel developed the following definition:

Certain factors will increase a person's risk of negative outcomes on health, safety, and well-being; they may experience significant barriers, and therefore need help maintaining medical care, food, and shelter. Factors that increase the risk of harm during an influenza pandemic include:

- A. *Economic disadvantage (e.g., having too little money to stockpile supplies, or to stay home from work for even a short time)*
- B. *Absence of a support network (e.g., some children; homeless; travelers; and the socially, culturally, or geographically isolated)*
- C. *Needing support to be independent in daily activities because of:*
 - a. *Physical disability*
 - b. *Developmental disability*
 - c. *Mental illness or substance abuse/dependence*
 - d. *Difficulty seeing or hearing*
 - e. *Medical conditions*
- D. *Trouble reading, speaking, or understanding English*

Planners should be prepared to interpret the factors as appropriate for the locality.

This definition is scalable – people may fall into more than one group, which may increase the negative outcomes that they may experience. Additionally, the proportion of the factors that place people at risk will differ in each jurisdiction. Planners should be prepared to interpret the factors as appropriate for the locality.

The term “at-risk” was chosen for this project’s definition for two reasons: 1. it more effectively encompasses the concept outlined above regarding consequences; and 2. it is in line with the *Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act*. While the focus of this guidance is on the term “at-risk”, it can be assumed that generic references to vulnerable or special needs populations are included in the definition of at-risk populations.