

Including People with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness Efforts



Introduction

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Health and Disability program offers technical assistance to local health departments to improve their capacity to develop emergency preparedness plans that are inclusive of people with disabilities. The program provides health departments with practical strategies and recommendations for successfully including people with disabilities in emergency planning and response efforts.

Based on NACCHO's experience in providing this technical assistance to health departments, NACCHO developed five key recommendations that health departments should consider when planning to accommodate and address the needs of people with disabilities in emergencies or disasters.

Recommendation #1: Local health departments should define who makes up the population of people living with disabilities in their jurisdiction.

People with disabilities are a subpopulation of those with access and functional needs. People with physical, cognitive, or sensory impairments may require accommodations in order to successfully access programs and services.



Recommendation #2: Local health departments should include people with disabilities in all emergency planning efforts (e.g., drills, exercises trainings, site visits).

Including people with disabilities in emergency preparedness planning efforts allows the health department to receive candid feedback from people with disabilities. This feedback allows the health department to have a better understanding of what works well in the plan and identify areas for improvement.

Resources

- » *At-Risk Populations eTool: To Define, Locate, and Reach Special, Vulnerable, and At-Risk Populations in an Emergency*
<http://1.usa.gov/1StlyyN>
- » *Planning for an Emergency: Strategies for Identifying and Engaging At-Risk Groups*
<http://1.usa.gov/1XIPVDZ>
- » *Disability Inclusive Emergency Management: Understanding the Preparedness, Response and Recovery Needs of the Whole Community*
<http://1.usa.gov/26fekqs>

Resources

- » *A Guide for Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness Planning*
<http://1.usa.gov/23K1XUE>
- » *Checklist for Integrating People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs into Emergency Preparedness, Planning, Response, and Recovery*
<http://bit.ly/20XKpPE>
- » *Planning Accessible Meetings and Events*
<http://1.usa.gov/1WeeCsT>

Recommendation #3: Local health departments should ensure accessibility for all people with disabilities during an emergency or disaster.

One of the most important roles of local government is to protect its citizens from harm; making local emergency preparedness plans and response efforts inclusive of and accessible to people with disabilities is a critical part of this responsibility. Making these programs accessible is also required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Accessible Communication

Ensure accessible communications for people with disabilities during an emergency or disaster. NACCHO recommends clearly articulating in the plan the methods that will be used to reach/communicate with people who have disabilities.

Accessible Shelters

Assure that shelters have easily accessible parking, entrances, exterior routes, interior routes, and bathrooms serving the shelter area. Identify and publicize the locations of accessible shelters.

Accessible Transportation

Provide public transportation and special transportation arrangements accessible to all populations during an emergency. Make all public buses, vans, and other modes of transportation user-friendly. Always clearly communicate where people can use accessible transportation.

Accessible Equipment

Ensure emergency response units such as fire and police have and know how to use equipment to assist people with physical disabilities. This includes equipment such as wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, transfer boards, canes, and other devices.

Resources

Accessible Communication

- » *Effective Communications for People with Disabilities: Before, During, and After Emergencies*
<http://1.usa.gov/1YH9Rr3>
- » *FEMA Promising Practice: Effective Communications Toolkit*
<http://bit.ly/1phjVea>

Accessible Shelters

- » *FEMA Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters*
<http://1.usa.gov/1Mlv1nY>
- » *Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist for Emergency Shelters*
<http://1.usa.gov/1Vk4pwi>
- » *Emergency Shelter Communications Toolkit*
<http://bit.ly/1QntM8b>

Accessible Transportation

- » *Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles*
<http://1.usa.gov/1NltuUX>

Accessible Equipment

- » *FEMA Orientation Manual for First Responders on the Evacuation of People with Disabilities*
<http://bit.ly/20XNtvh>



Recommendation #4: Local health departments should provide adequate training to all staff members on the topic of working with and serving people with disabilities during an emergency or disaster.

Training should include increasing staff awareness about the importance of including people with disabilities in all emergency preparedness efforts.

Resources

- » *Disability Training for Emergency Planners: Serving People with Disabilities*
<http://bit.ly/23K3Kc9>
- » *Disability Trainings for First Responders*
<http://bit.ly/1phmHAa>
- » *Just in Time Disaster Training: Disability Awareness for Responders*
<http://bit.ly/20XOgfl>

Recommendation #5: Local health departments should work with members of the community (both people with disabilities and community organizations) in all emergency preparedness planning efforts and exercises.

Community-Based Organizations

Partner with local community-based organizations who serve people with disabilities in the jurisdiction. These community-based organizations know their members best, and they can be instrumental in locating and communicating with their clients during an emergency or disaster.

People with Disabilities

Provide personal preparedness education and outreach for people with disabilities. Consider developing and distributing personal planning materials or packets specifically tailored to the needs of people with disabilities in the jurisdiction.

Resources

Community-Based Organizations

- » *Directory of Community-Based Organizations*
<http://bit.ly/1MlxDSE>
- » *Serving and Protecting: The Role of Disability and Aging Organizations in Disaster Planning*
<http://bit.ly/1STWAqB>
- » *When Disaster Strikes: An Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Service Providers*
<http://bit.ly/1SvLyhg>
- » *National and Statewide Disability Organizations*
<http://bit.ly/22O8V5k>

People with Disabilities

- » *Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs*
<http://rdcrss.org/1Tjo241>
- » *Preparing Your Home and Family: People with Disabilities*
<http://rdcrss.org/1rkNuxg>
- » *Get Ready! Alaska's Emergency Preparedness Toolkit for People with Disabilities*
<http://1.usa.gov/1SvMjXu>

Additional Resources

- » *Guide for Local Governments: Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities*
<http://1.usa.gov/1U6JzPC>
- » *Guidance on Integrating People with Access and Functional Needs into Disaster Preparedness Planning for States and Local Governments*
<http://1.usa.gov/20XRYGe>
- » *Saving Lives: Including People with Disabilities in Emergency Planning*
<http://1.usa.gov/22OaRuD>
- » *Emergency Response for People Who Have Access and Functional Needs: A Guide for First Responders*
<http://bit.ly/1Vka852>

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NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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