Addressing the Needs of People with Disabilities in Public Health Emergencies

Cindy Hinton, PhD, MS, MPH
Health Scientist, Disabilities and Health Branch
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

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What is a disability?

What legislation addresses disability in preparedness and emergency response?
What is a Disability?

- Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions.
  - An impairment is a problem in body function or structure.
  - An activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action.
  - A participation restriction pertains to normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities, and obtaining health-care and preventive services.

- For public health surveillance, disability is categorized by level of difficulty with mobility, vision, hearing, cognition, self-care, and independent living.
## Disability Status Among U.S. Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Age-adjusted Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Disability</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Disability</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U.S. Distribution of Disability, 2016

Data Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
Types of Disabilities and Impact in Emergency

- Mobility impairments
  - Ability to leave home, evacuate, get to shelter, function in shelter
- Deaf or hard of hearing
  - Hearing emergency communications or instructions
- Blind or low vision
  - Seeing communications, transportation
- Intellectual/cognitive disabilities
  - Comprehension of situation
- Mental health/Post-traumatic stress disorder
  - Comprehension, ability to follow instructions
Hurricane Katrina Exposed Disparities

- 155,000 people with disabilities over the age of 5 lived in the three cities hardest hit by the hurricane: Biloxi, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama; and New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 73% of Hurricane Katrina-related deaths in New Orleans area were among persons age 60 and over, although they comprised only 15% of the population in New Orleans.
- At least 50% of people with disabilities in New Orleans who are of working age are not employed, making disaster recovery more difficult.
- Many rely on a variety of government programs such as Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid to help them meet their daily service and support needs.

References, National Council on Disability:
https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2006/Aug072006#population
https://ncd.gov/publications/2005/09022005
Disability and Legal Requirements

- Americans with Disability Act (ADA) of 1990 (P.L. 101-336)
- HHS, Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (P.L. 109-417, 2006) (PAHRA)
- NEW! Disaster Recovery and Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA)
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990

- Title II prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and mandates that accommodations be provided.
- The ADA does not specifically address emergency preparedness.
- Emergency planning has developed through litigation against governments and schools.

Sandy Impacted Disabled NYC Residents

- **Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled v. Bloomberg (NYC), 11/7/13**
  - “New York City has violated the rights of about 900,000 of its residents with disabilities by failing to accommodate for their needs during emergencies, a federal judge ruled.”

- **Cited as a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act**
  - No evacuation plans from high-rises.
  - Lack of water, heat, and power.
  - Inadequate shelters.
  - Lack of information about availability and location of emergency services.

How should people with disabilities or their caregivers prepare for and handle emergencies?
Prepared Individuals Make for a Stronger Community Response

- What types of disasters might occur locally?
- What are my abilities at this time and where do I need help?
- What medications, equipment, other supplies will I need to stockpile?
- Whom do I need to inform of my plans?
Preparedness Tools
“Get a Kit. Make a Plan. Be Informed.”

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/emergencypreparedness.html
For Example, Pages from READY NOW!

Source: https://www.ohsu.edu/xd/outreach/occyschn/upload/ReadyNowToolkit.pdf
CDC Disability Emergency Preparedness
for Emergency Managers, Individuals, Caregivers

Disability & Health Home

Disability Overview

Disability Inclusion

Healthy Living

Emergency Preparedness

Monitoring

Tools and Resources

Assessment

Data & Statistics

Articles & Key Findings

Resources & Materials

Grantee Information

Information for Specific

Disability & Health Home

Emergency Preparedness: Including People with Disabilities

Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning, forcing people to quickly leave or be confined in their home unexpectedly. For the millions of Americans who have disabilities, emergencies, such as fires, floods and acts of terrorism, present a real challenge.

Resources from State Disability and Health Programs

The following resources were developed by CDC funded State Disability and Health Programs. Public health professionals, emergency personnel and communities can use them to create emergency preparedness and response plans that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

Monitoring

Learn how State Disability and Health Programs identify the

Tools and Resources

Find tools and resources developed by State Disability

Assessment

See how State Disability and Health Programs have worked

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/emergencypreparedness.html
What is caregiver stress and how can people minimize it?
Everyone Reacts Differently to Stressful Situations. Typical Reactions to Emergency Sheltering:

- Anxiety about the situation
- Worry that family members will be separated from caregivers
- Guilt about not being able to perform regular caregiving activities
- Feeling lonely, isolated, sad, or bored
- Fear and worry about loss of income
Self-Care for Caregivers

- Stay informed from reliable sources.
- Avoid excessive media coverage.
- Connect with others.
- Call SAMHSA’s free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, if you feel lonely or need support.
- Overwhelmed with thoughts of hurting self or others? Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- SAMHSA Website: https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness
- Materials on resilience and stress management
- Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990
- Disaster Technical Assistance Center supports state and local governments
- Behavioral Health Disaster Response Mobile App
What should response organizations and their employees do to be ready to help people with disabilities during emergencies?
Suggestions for First Responders and Emergency/Shelter Workers

- Don’t assume. Ask people at shelters if they require any assistance or resources.
- Look for any type of special health instructions (bracelets, other information posted).
- Maintain the connection of people with disabilities to essential equipment and supplies:
  - Wheelchair, walker
  - Oxygen
  - Batteries
  - Communication devices (head pointers, alphabet/picture boards/speech synthesizers, etc.)
- Consider use of service animals.
Special Word on Service Animals

- A service animal means any animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.
- Service animals might perform different tasks.
  - pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button
- They are not pets.
- Do not separate individuals from their service animals.
- Ask owners for permission to touch their service animals.
Tools for First Responders and Shelter Workers

“Order Show Me” from [www.mass.gov/dph/showme](http://www.mass.gov/dph/showme) Apps via App Store or Google play
“Tips” available from [http://cdd.unm.edu/dhpdtips/tipsenglish.html](http://cdd.unm.edu/dhpdtips/tipsenglish.html) in either a downloadable PDF, or order form for laminated, color-coded, ring-bound booklet. Also available in Spanish.
What can communities do to be inclusive of people with disabilities?

Source: https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1296926/louisiana-national-guard-aids-in-texas-nursing-home-rescue
Building Partnerships for a Resilient Community

Source: https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/images/69344
Mitigation
Core Capabilities

Effective Partnerships Include Diverse Groups

- Government agencies, all levels
- Independent living councils
- Developmental disabilities councils
- Nonprofit organizations
- Academia
- Businesses and business organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Advocacy groups
- Neighbors
Puerto Rico Disability Community Relief Network (PRDCRN)

- Hurricane Maria hit PR on September 20, 2017.
  - Category 4 hurricane with sustained winds of 155 mph

- Network partners
  - Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente (MAVI)
  - Protection and Advocacy System of Puerto Rico
  - Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program
  - Puerto Rico Developmental Disabilities Council
  - University Center for Education on Development
  - National Association of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD)

- View presentation about PRDCRN
Resources: CDC

- CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response
  - [https://www.emergency.cdc.gov/protect.asp](https://www.emergency.cdc.gov/protect.asp)
  - Reaching At-Risk Populations [https://emergency.cdc.gov/workbook/index.asp](https://emergency.cdc.gov/workbook/index.asp)

- CDC National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Online Catalog
  - [https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/index.html)

- CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index
  - [https://svi.cdc.gov/](https://svi.cdc.gov/)

- Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Cooperative Agreement
  - [https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/phep.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/phep.htm)
Resources: Other Federal/National

- Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response
  - https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/atrisk.aspx

- Administration for Community Living
  - https://acl.gov/programs/emergency-preparedness

- FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination

- ADA National Network Learning Sessions

- National Association of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
  - http://www.nvoad.org
Resources: State Partnerships

- Association of University Centers on Disabilities
  - University Centers of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities
    [https://www.aucd.org/directory/directory.cfm?program=UCEDD](https://www.aucd.org/directory/directory.cfm?program=UCEDD)
  - Emergency Preparedness resources: [https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=544](https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=544)

- State Councils of Developmental Disabilities
  - [https://nacdd.org/](https://nacdd.org/)

- Centers for Independent Living

- State Departments of Public Health
  - Emergency Managers
  - Disability and Health Program

- Portlight Strategies, Inc. “Getting It Right”
  - [http://www.portlight.org](http://www.portlight.org)
Thank You

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.