Including Emergency Preparedness in Disability Organizations

The Independence Center’s Perspective – Colorado Springs

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Why does an Independent Living Center have an Emergency Preparedness Program?

1. Historically persons with disabilities and others with access and functional needs are greatly impacted by emergencies and disasters

2. Government led emergency planning efforts are limited in resources and require committed community partners with expertise

3. Centers for independent living/disability organizations know their consumers and disability resources in their communities

4. People with disabilities generally know an ILC is a information and support channel

5. In a world of increasing complexity, organizations have a stake and obligation to prepare for disasters
Problem

• Don’t know what we don’t know
• Limited resources

Communication

Manage Expectations

• Lack of individual preparedness
• Don’t know what we don’t know
• Getting the right folks to the table

What do disability organizations bring to the table?

➢ Ways in which persons with disabilities communicate

➢ What resources persons with disabilities use

➢ Transportation systems used by persons with disabilities

➢ How persons with disabilities maintain independence
Background: Waldo Canyon Fire 2012

Community members contacted The Independence Center to discuss accessibility barriers encountered during the fire.

Challenges and findings included:

- Ineffective and lack of multifaceted communication during emergency broadcasts
- Accessibility in shelters
- Transportation and mobility
- Lack of individual and family preparedness

Advocacy efforts after Waldo Canyon Fire (1)

- Engaged Local Emergency Services about accessibility gaps identified in forum
- Developed Emergency Preparedness Workbook for People with Disabilities
- Held numerous community information sharing events
Advocacy efforts after Waldo Canyon Fire (2)

- Engaged local broadcast stations about FCC regulations
- Began internal ILC planning to pilot Emergency Preparedness Coordinator position
- Presented at several EM/EP conferences across the region

Systems Change During Black Forest Fire (2013)

- Sign language interpreters were visibly present during news briefings
- Live captioning was provided and current
- Shelters were fully accessible and staff knew what to do if someone with a disability needed to utilize the shelter
What is the point?

*Without an ILC engaging, the need may have not been recognized.*

Discussion

- Perspective change?
- Challenges?
- Opportunities?
Centers for Independent Living (CILs)?

- Core services
  1. Peer support
  2. Information and referral
  3. Individual and systems advocacy
  4. Independent living skills training
  5. Community transitions support

Funding Opportunities?

- Reality check: Fixing this problem will require funding

- Through innovative practices CILs can fund other programs such as emergency preparedness initiatives

The IC’s Emergency Preparedness Program

1) Integrate into local emergency management community

2) Build a Community Advisory Group (CAG)

3) Conduct preparedness trainings for people with disabilities
The IC’s Emergency Preparedness Program
Line of Effort (1) - Integration into Emergency Management Community

 Understand the capacity and role of the local office of emergency management

 Gain stakeholders trust and serve as a community resource

 Analyze areas the disability community can provide solutions

 Establish diverse working groups focusing on identifying gaps and negotiating systems change

 Actively participate in community emergency management functions

The IC’s Emergency Preparedness Program
Line of Effort (2) - Build Community Advisory Group (CAG)

 Build a manageable cohesive team who live with disabilities (CAG)

 Train CAG on baseline FEMA independent study courses

 Integrate CAG with emergency planners & stakeholders

 Build preparedness training material together and position CAG to conduct PWD preparedness trainings

 Assess and aid in enhancing communities EOPs and supporting contingency plans where appropriate
The IC’s Emergency Preparedness Program
Line of Effort (3) - Conduct Preparedness Trainings for People with Disabilities

- Utilize ILCs and other disability organizations to market trainings
- Integrate CAG into training development
- Seek one off training opportunities
- Build relationships with American Red Cross & Community Emergency Response programs for cross training opportunities

Lessons Learned

- Emergency management and disability organizations have very different cultures and language. *This is ok! Accept it and move on.*
- Plans
- Disability organizations and emergency planners want the same thing - more resources to ensure safety for all.
- Disability organizations have access to grants for special projects
- Disability organizations need to be committed to community based disaster systems
Program Successes

- VOAD / Unmet Needs
- Inclusive exercises
- Community understanding that an ADA coordinator needs to be integrated with the policy group during a disaster
- Disability organizations have freedom for granting
- Established sustainable relationships

Information Brief
Organizational Language & Culture

Disability Language

CART: Communication Access Real Time
AFN: Access and Functional Needs
ODIC: FEMA’s Office of Disability Integration and Coordination
HoH: Hard of Hearing
TTY: Tele Type / Text Telephone Device
BH: Behavioral health
PAS: Personal assistance services
DME: Durable medical equipment
CMS: Consumable medical supplies
NCIL: National Council on Independent Living
SILC: State Independent Living Council
Emergency Management Language

CART: Community Animal Response Team
OEM: Office of Emergency Management
ESF: Emergency Support Function
NIMS: National Incident Management System
SITREP: Situational Report
IAP: Incident Action Plan
ICS: Incident Command System
VOAD: Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
DRC: Disaster Recovery Center
DAC: Disaster Assistance Center
NRF: National Response Framework

Bridging Cross Organizational Understanding

- Request FEMA L197 training, Integrating Access and Functional Needs into Emergency Planning
- Engage a nearby Center for Independent Living
- Engage your local Office of Emergency Management
- Reach out to your regional ADA Center / National ADA Network
- Setup periodic meetings & assess what disability resources your community has
- Seek opportunities to cross-train
Current Projects

➢ Establish a network of emergency/disaster trained ASL Interpreters

➢ Seeking grant funds to produce a information disk (DVD) providing visuals highlighting an ADA compliant shelter

➢ Engaging state disability committees on establishing a state emergency access and functional needs emergency advisory group

➢ AFN mobile resource kit

What looks promising

➢ We are seeing AFN working groups establish across Colorado

➢ Our local government is taking lead with our AFN working group

➢ Baseline trust/skills are established to work in an EOC
CILs & Cohesive Preparedness Coordination

The Way Ahead

- CILs assign center level coordinators
- CIL coordinators develop collective resource plans & operating procedures
- CIL preparedness coordinators work with all OEMs to bridge disability networks and resources

Basic Steps to Develop an Emergency Preparedness Program

1. Funding
2. Hiring
3. A plan to integrate
4. Sustain community relations
5. Train and exercise with partners
6. Repeat

Process and evolution
Key Community Stakeholders & Partners

- Offices of Emergency Management
- American Red Cross
- Other Independent Living Centers
- Regional ADA Center/ADA National Network
- Other Disability Organizations
- National Association for Mental Illness
- Area Agency on Aging
- Assistive Technology Centers
- State Vulnerable Populations Coordinator/s
- State Voluntary Agency Liaisons
- FEMA Regional Partners/ODIC advisors
- Regional & State - Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
- Long Term Recovery Groups
- Unmet Needs Committees
- Health Care Coalitions
- County Health and Human Service Departments
- Fire Departments
- Public Safety

Critical Takeaways

- People and organizations have an obligation and right to be part of the “whole community” disaster planning life cycle.

- Individuals and their families have a responsibility to plan for themselves and to engage their government entities and other key service providers about gaps that may exist in their communities’ emergency operations plans.

- Disability organizations can impact their communities’ preparedness.

- All stakeholders need to learn to communicate and accept that organizational differences will surface.
Integration and Preparedness Resources


2) The Independence Center’s Personal Emergency Preparedness Workbook

3) FEMA’s Office of Disability Integration and Coordination
   http://www.fema.gov/office-disability-integration-coordination
   http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.aspx

4) American Red Cross
   http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240199_A4497.pdf

5) Rocky Mountain ADA Center’s Emergency Management Information
   http://adainformation.org/emergency-management

6) ADA National Network’s Emergency Preparedness Information
   http://adata.org/topic/emergency-preparedness

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Questions?