

PACIFIC ADA CENTER
WEBINAR: ADA NATIONAL NETWORK LEARNING SESSION: BUILDING AND
MAINTAINING NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVING EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES:
LESSONS LEARNED

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>> *Lewis Kraus:* Welcome to the Emergency Management and Preparedness - Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities Webinar Series. I'm Lewis Kraus from the Pacific ADA Center, your moderator for this series. This series of webinars is brought to you by the Pacific ADA Center as a collaborative effort between the ADA National Network and FEMA's Office of Disability Integration and Coordination. The network is made up of 10 centers federally funded to provide training, technical assistance and other information as needed on the Americans with Disabilities Act. You can reach your regional ADA Center by dialing 1-800-949-4232. I have put that number in the chatroom for you. FEMA's Office on Disability Integration and Coordination, ODIC, covers the same regions with specialists. For more information about FEMA, it can be found at www.fema.gov and then type ODIC into the FEMA website search.

This is the third year of this webinar series which shares issues and promising practices in emergency management inclusive of people with disabilities and others are access and functional needs. The webinars provide an opportunity for emergency managers, people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, first responders, planners, community organizers, community organizations, and other community partners to exchange information and knowledge on promising practices in inclusive emergency preparedness and management for the whole community. The series

topics will cover emergency preparedness and disaster response, recovery and mitigation, as well as accessibility and reasonable accommodation issues under the Rehab Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the ADA, and other relevant laws. The series alternates monthly between ADA National Network Learning Session and FEMA promising practices.

We encourage you to view the series website and familiarize yourself with the array of sessions available in this year's series at www.adapresentations.org/schedule.php. These monthly webinars occur on the second Thursday of the month at 2:30 Eastern, 1:30 Central, 12:30 Mountain, and 11:30 Pacific time. And by being here you are on the list to receive notices for future webinars in this series. The notices go out two to three weeks before the next webinar and open that webinar to registration.

For those of you who are new to this webinar series and software, we'll review some of the features of the webinar platform before we begin the session today.

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At the conclusion of today's session there will be an opportunity for everybody to ask these questions and submit those in the manner I just described. So feel free to submit them as they come to your mind because we are going to be dealing with them at the end of this session.

Today's National Network Learning Session is titled "Building and Maintaining National Partnerships for Improving Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery to Individuals with

Disabilities: Lessons Learned." Since 2012, national partnerships have been forged between the disability and emergency management world. Our presenters today will discuss the strategies involved in developing a partnership between national organizations. They will share what they have learned during the past three years, including what has worked and what has not worked during negotiations to develop and implement Memorandums of Understanding between Portlight Strategies, the National Council on Independent Living and the Red Cross. The information is intended solely as informal guidance and is neither a determination of legal rights or responsibilities by NIDILRR or FEMA.

Our speakers today are Paul Timmons, a veteran disability community organizer. Paul is the Board Chair of Portlight Strategies, a national disaster relief organization founded in 1997 by people with disabilities to serve the preparedness and response needs of people with disabilities and to advocate for inclusion in all aspects of this discipline.

Our other speaker is Christy Dunaway. Christy has over 30 years' experience in the disability rights movement, retiring in 2014 as the Director of Living Independence for Everyone, LIFE, of Mississippi after 19 years of service with them. She currently consults with various entities to provide training and technical assistance on equal access, equal rights, and emergency planning, response, and recovery. She is the Chairperson of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Subcommittee of the National Council of Independent Living.

Paul and Christy, I am going to turn it over to you now.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thanks, Lewis. Good day, everybody.

Today's session, as Lewis has already mentioned, is building and maintaining national partnerships in emergency management and the lessons that we have learned. It's presented to you by Mississippi ADA and FEMA. Paul and I are with Portlight Strategies. We're also representing the National Council of Independent Living today.

Our objectives were to work with partners on the implementation of Memorandas of Understanding or agreement to identify available resources in an emergency and share those with the CIL.

And I'm sorry, I think that my slides may be out of order. One second.

Ok. Let me back up.

The organizations that are involved in national partnerships for emergency preparedness and response thus far are Portlight Strategies, the National Council of Independent Living, the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, and their Office on Disability Integration and Coordination, the American Red Cross, and the National Disability Rights Network.

Portlight -- I'm going to turn it over to Paul at this point because Paul is the Board Chair of Portlight and he's going to explain to you about Portlight Strategies.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Thanks, Christy. Thanks, Lewis. It's great to be here with everyone.

Portlight Strategies was founded in 1977 by a number of people with disabilities. We've been involved in direct disaster response for about 13 years. We've worked in Haiti, Southeast Asia, Japan, New Jersey California, you name it. Since about 2001 if it's a disaster, we've been involved working with people with disabilities. But two and a half years ago we launched a conference series we call the Getting It Right conference where we bring people from the disability community, representatives of our stakeholder organizations together with emergency management and response professionals. We look at issues, look at problems, figure out solutions. And a big part of that is creating and nurturing relationships.

The Getting It Right conference, we've had a number of cities around the country. We have more scheduled next year. One of the things that's come out of that also is we give out a national award named after Mark Johnson, the Director of Advocacy at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, called the Mark Johnson Getting It Right Award. This year we recognized the State of Virginia for some of the things they've done to get things right with our community. The year before that we gave it to the Robin Hood Foundation in the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund. That's become a rather sought after prize as well.

Thank you, Christy.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: You're welcome.

I apologize, y'all. The slides are out of order so I'm using my computer PowerPoint.

Paul explained a little bit to you about Portlight Strategies and the work that they do. I'm representing a National Council of Independent Living today as the Chairperson of their Emergency Preparedness and Response Subcommittee. For those of you who are not aware, NCIL is the longest-running cross-disability grassroots organization that's run by and for people with disabilities. It was founded in 1982. It represents thousands of organizations including Centers for Independent Living, Statewide Independent Living Councils and individuals with disabilities.

NCIL's mission is to advance independent living and the rights of people with disabilities, their vision is they envision a world in which people with disabilities are valued equally and participate fully in all aspects of their community. Their committee structure is they have a governing board committee, they have subcommittees, they have task forces, and they have conferences that ensure that the tremendous amount of work that we can accomplish is truly grassroots and consumer controlled.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Subcommittee was founded probably four or five years ago. I came on as the chairperson in October of 2012. Our statement of purpose for the Emergency Preparedness and Response Subcommittee is to address the needs for people with disabilities to be involved in the development, the assessment, and implementation of emergency preparedness in all stages of disaster.

Our goals on that committee created by the committee members and recently updated as recent as 2013 are to educate, advocate and address the needs of people with disabilities at all stages of disaster, to work with agencies and partners at the federal, state, and local level, to assist and educate NCIL membership in advocating and collaborating on emergency preparedness and management issues.

Our objectives are to work with partners on the implementation of Memorandas of Understanding or agreement, to identify available resources in an emergency and share that with Centers for Independent Living, to provide guidance and advocacy on negative policy, and to educate

about federal and state civil rights of people with disabilities in disasters through position papers, articles, etc.

That's what the NCIL Emergency Planning Subcommittee has been working on the last couple of years. Our primary goal in the last couple of years has been to create and draft and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the American Red Cross, which we'll talk about in a few minutes. We do currently have one with the FEMA's Office on Disability Integration and Coordination as well.

With that, I'm going to turn it back over to Paul. Lewis told you a little bit about FEMA's Office on Disability Integration and Coordination. Paul has a lot of experience working with them. So Paul, if you would, just talk about their mission and what you've been able to accomplish with them so far.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Glad to, Christy.

So the Office on Disability Integration and Coordination at FEMA is run by -- many of you know of Marcie Roth, a long-time, fierce advocate for our issues. Marcie has been in this job I think about six years. When she was appointed to this position, it was a one-person position in a cubicle in the basement of the FEMA Headquarters. In that time Marcie has developed a impressively meaningful disability infrastructure within FEMA. She's developed a fully staffed office in the headquarters. She's developed a team of reservists to deploy around the country in disasters and who have subject matter expertise in this area. That piece is expanding now with new hires, new positions are being filled in that regard all around the country to help serve our needs. So Marcie has done a tremendous job from what was essentially a standing start in creating a dynamic FEMA infrastructure. Obviously FEMA is a major player in this space. And the better equipped FEMA is to address our issues, the better off it is for survivors, disaster survivors with disabilities.

FEMA's entered into a number of Memorandums of Agreement with various essential stakeholder organizations. I think we're going to talk about that a little more, a little more later. But we've seen firsthand recently in both California, with the fires, and South Carolina with the floods, that the positive changes that have gone on at FEMA relative to our community have born meaningful fruit.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thanks, Paul.

One of the other partners in emergency planning and response with several disability organizations is the American Red Cross. The mission of the American Red Cross is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. Their goals are all people affected by disaster everywhere will receive care, shelter, and hope that communities are ready and prepared for disaster, that everyone has access to life-saving blood and blood products, that armed services and their families can find support and comfort when needed, and that trained individuals are ready to use their Red Cross skills to save lives.

Red Cross has community partners throughout the country, throughout the world, I believe, that provide additional assistance on the ground beyond the resources of the American Red Cross. And those community partners are a vital link between the Red Cross and the communities that they serve.

Another organization that's been involved in partnership with emergency planning and response in the National Disability Rights Network, which is a nonprofit for protection advocacy systems and client assistance programs. The National Disability Rights Network is in partnership both with the American Red Cross --

Paul are they in partnership with FEMA as well?

>> *Paul Timmons*: Yes. Yes, they also have an MOA with FEMA.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Ok. The National Disability Rights Network works to improve the lives of people with disabilities by guarding against abuse, advocating for basic rights, ensuring accountability in healthcare and education, employment, housing, transportation, and within the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

So our current partnership is the main thing we want to talk about today. There are several ongoing. The first one that we'll talk about is between NCIL and Portlight. And with that, I'm going to turn it back over to Paul and let him explain that partnership.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Ok. Portlight and NCIL entered into this Memorandum of Understanding with the following thoughts in mind. Each organization brings different essential skill sets to the game. We're

able to working together to enhance each other's reaching capacity in disaster situations. And one of the ways this has manifested itself -- and, again, I'll use the two most recent episodes, California and South Carolina. Portlight staff was able to work with local Centers for Independent Living staff to find people from our community who have acute post disaster needs and go about resolving those things. We also work together on things like shelter accessibility, transportation accessibility issues. We're working on housing stuff. Portlight is an operational disaster relief organization and so there are pieces of that that we can bring to the game and help enhance CIL capacity. The CILs are plugged into the consumer networks at the grassroots local level and they're able to help us connect with those folks.

So those are some practical grassroots ways that this MOU has manifested itself. At the national level we've been able to work together with other stakeholder organizations to work in tandem with FEMA, the Red Cross, and other organizations to make sure that our people's needs are being filled to hold these organizations accountable, and to work together to do planning and relationship building and do the things during the steady state time that help mitigate some of the suffering when an episode is present.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thanks, Paul.

There's also a working relationship at this point between NCIL and the American Red Cross. We entered into negotiations, the NCIL Emergency Preparedness and Response Subcommittee entered into negotiations with the Red Cross. They actually began in August of 2012. The Memorandum of Understanding, or the MOU, was signed July 31, 2014, at the NCIL conference in a ceremony. Most of the NCIL board was present as well as myself and Paul. In addition there were quite a few Red Cross administration individuals there from their national headquarters. And we had a little press release on that and I think got a little media attention on that.

At this point there had been discussions regarding terminating the MOU which began in October of 2015. Now, this slide says that those negotiations -- that the discussions regarding it are ongoing. That's no longer the case. As of Monday, the NCIL Emergency Preparedness and Response Subcommittee had met again and with advice and guidance from the NCIL Board of Directors, we will

continue with the Memorandum of Understanding between NCIL and the American Red Cross which reviews every 60 days of that Memorandum of Understanding. So the Memorandum of Understanding, indeed, is in place and it's a two-year agreement that was signed in 2014. So it lasts through the end of July of 2016.

We're cooperating our methods of cooperation between NCIL and the American Red Cross. We're sharing current data regarding disasters. That's been going actually quite well. We're sharing situational and operational reports and changes in policy or personnel relating to the MOU.

Our engagement at the local level, each partner, both NCIL and Red Cross, will encourage their local representatives. For us that would be our Center for Independent Living or State Center for Independent Living or Independent Living associations, any other disability stakeholder organizations that we're aware of. We'll encourage those local representatives and then Red Cross will encourage their local chapters to engage in collaborative relationships with each other.

In engaging in preparedness activities, we've done a few community presentations and will continue to do those. We have developed plans for emergency preparedness; for example, exchanging information on disability demographics, locating service providers in an area, facilitating introductions, and the engagement of the Center for Independent Living at disaster, Non-Governmental Organization meetings and forum.

I know that a lot of y'all probably are already quite familiar with disaster recovery and response preparedness. What we have learned, and we'll talk a little bit more about, but facilitating the introductions on a local level seems to be one of the most important things that these two organizations can do. I think that that's where our partnership has seen its strength, is in introducing people at the local level to one another so that not only do they engage in providing disaster relief for individuals with disabilities at that point, they can continue to engage when the disaster has been mitigated and develop a further relationship.

In engaging and response activities, we've done pre-disaster planning. We've helped them do some accessibility surveys of shelters, and helped them to determine what the Centers for Independent Living's involvement can be.

For those of you unaware of how our center operates, we all operate -- they all operate quite differently. Our capacity to serve individuals with disabilities is vastly different depending on the size of the center, their funding sources, how much their funding is, the number of staff they have in place.

One of the other things that we have requested from American Red Cross was that they would create a leadership position in their disaster relief operational structure as well. And we're going to talk more about that in a minute.

When ARC -- when the Red Cross is leading the establishment of a multi-agency recovery center, then they will invite the Centers for Independent Living and disability stakeholders to participate in those recovery centers. Both agencies will engage in post-disaster follow-up to develop an after action report on what worked and what did not work.

We don't require background checks, which I think is something that Red Cross normally does but we're not requiring that of our Centers for Independent Living.

And then we're also doing any other cooperative actions that we see necessary. As you know, in a disaster, they all look different depending on the location, what type of disaster it is. So you never know what the needs are going to be exactly. So we just assess what those needs are and take it from there.

There's also a Memorandum of Understanding between Portlight and the American Red Cross as well.

So with that, I'll turn it back over to Paul and let him tell you a little bit about that.

>> *Paul Timmons*: So Portlight's agreement with the Red Cross is coming up on its two-year mark. It's my understanding that we're going to be renewing that in January. It's very similar to our agreement with NCIL, to share information, facilitate relationships.

The critical piece, in my opinion, is that the Red Cross committed to deploy Portlight staffers into disasters of a certain level. We've actually had three experiences with that this year. It's worked out very well. Each time it's becoming more and more successful. It allows us to immediately have people with expertise in the field, on the ground, and in the immediate wake of an event and begin to address concerns that they may find. And we're also doing some things to create some infrastructure to help address those concerns more expeditiously. The relationship with the Red Cross and Portlight is also beginning to bear some fruit. I think we're going to be talking about that in a little bit as well.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thanks.

There's also a Memorandum of Understanding in a partnership between the National Disability Rights Network and the Red Cross. What we've learned is that a lot of these Memorandas of Understanding -- theirs was signed in 2010 and is still in place. Most of these MOUs are almost an exact replica of one another. That's fine. The goals and objectives are good. While they may be similar, each of the disability stakeholders that Red Cross is partnering with, we come at it from different viewpoints. The National Council of Independent Living brings something to the table. The National Disability Rights Network brings something to the table. The Client Assistance Program and Protection and Advocacy systems also will bring something different to the table. So while the MOUs may look the same I think the relationship between the disability organizations and the Red Cross are slightly different because we all have different expertise and we're bringing different things in. So it's going to look a little bit different.

NCIL, the National Council of Independent Living, also has a Memorandum of Understanding or a Cooperative Agreement, I should say, with FEMA that was signed in July of 2010, still in place. The agreement there was that FEMA would provide NCIL with access to disaster recovery centers after a disaster and to offer disaster assistance services to individuals with disabilities in households. The NCIL staff would have access to FEMA's joint field office for purposes related to the MOU.

NCIL and FEMA have worked very well together. There's a great working relationship there. As those of you who are familiar with NCIL know, there's not a whole lot of staff in place but there is a

whole lot of volunteers throughout the country that work with NCIL. Their board, their committee members are spread out throughout the country. So when there is a disaster, if there is a need, FEMA and NCIL are quickly in contact with one another on the national level and that quickly filters down to the local levels. And then Marcie Roth will filter information down to her people who are on the ground, dealing with the disaster. Kelly Buckland, who is the Director of NCIL, will filter information down to his Emergency Planning Subcommittee members and then we, in turn, will filter it on down to local Centers for Independent Living and try to make those connections.

So it's working quite well. If we have a hang-up or a hitch in anything, then we simply go right back up to the top, to Kelly and Marcie, and the two of them will get it worked out. And thus far it's worked beautifully and we have not had any issues with it.

FEMA also has an agreement with Portlight Strategies. I'll let Paul tell you a little bit about that one.

>> *Paul Timmons*: So we signed the Memorandum of Agreement with FEMA this July at the FEMA Headquarters in DC as part of the 25th anniversary of the ADA celebrations that were going on. It was a great day. The agreement sort of formalizes the relationship between Portlight and FEMA. We're able to sort of serve as the lead partnering organization on some things; for instance, convening FEMA partner meetings. One of the things Marcie has done is bring all of the FEMA partners together. She had done it once and we're planning another after the first of the year. We bring the partners together -- it's a working session where we're able to work through issues that come up, identify maybe down the road a little bit, see around the corners, and anticipate issues and game out ways to deal with them.

Christy alluded to fact that the stakeholder organizations bring things to the table. FEMA brings certain things to the table that are important to the whole process. So the fact that all of these agreements exist, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And we've really seemed to pay off on that end.

In California, and especially in South Carolina, I think the wheels ran pretty smoothly here. And in Texas to some extent, after the floods.

Thanks, Christy.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Sure.

Ok. So what have all of these partnerships taught us? I can tell you -- I started as the Chairperson of NCIL's EP Subcommittee, as I said, right after they had begun negotiations with the Red Cross. It was quite a learning experience for me to negotiate working on that Memorandum of Understanding. And then the one between NCIL and FEMA was already in place. So a learning curve, again, for me. These are fluid, quite frankly. They change. But we have learned some lessons over the last couple of years. I think Paul would absolutely agree with that, as would anybody from NCIL, FEMA, and the Red Cross as well.

One of the things that we have learned -- these are just our suggestions for people who might want to consider entering into MOUs. Before you enter into an MOU or a partnership, we feel like people should really first determine: Is a formal written partnership really necessary? We've learned that in some cases, no, it's just not. When it comes to emergency planning and response, sometimes the human factor is just there as it should be and you're going to serve people in the best way you know how. And you don't necessarily need a written partnership in place in order to get that done. So sometimes a partnership is maybe really not necessary.

So we suggest that people look closely at that before they actually enter into that. We spent two years negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding and it's two years that -- you know, was it worth it? Yes. We've done some good work with the Red Cross and certainly with FEMA. And I'm speaking as a representative of NCIL. Were the partnerships absolutely necessary? They look good and I think it's important to have that stand of solidarity that we are working together and it makes it formal. Were they absolutely necessary? Maybe not. Maybe not.

The other thing that we've learned is that each of the partnering organizations should really have a full understanding of the operational structure of the other. Once we did enter into our

Memorandum of Understanding, both with NCIL and Red Cross, we learned quickly that we didn't always understand how they operated. So what we as a disability stakeholder organization felt like should be happening, if it wasn't, we might not have understood why. And a lot of times it had to do with the structure and the way things were working. And it was difficult to understand at first. So it's important that you understand the structure.

I can tell you that the reason it took two years to get our Memo of Understanding with the Red Cross was because they actually underwent an administrative change, pretty significant from what I understand, in the middle of all of it. So it kind of got put on hold as they underwent some administrative changes.

And then with NCIL -- I mean with FEMA, they have grown. They continue to grow. As Paul said, Marcie has been in her position maybe five or six years. But the Office on Disability Integration and Coordination is relatively new. So, again, it's growing. And as it grows, it changes. And the structure changes. So it's important that these partners understand the structure of each of the organizations that they're working with.

We also think it's highly important that from the very beginning that you appoint specific individuals to coordinate the relationship and conduct follow-up and follow-through. If it's not the directors of the two organizations, then you need to know exactly who it is going to be. And there needs to be a meet and greet. And you need to be able to get along and work well together. So it's highly important that you have someone specifically appointed and that those two work together.

Back to my other slides. Hang on.

Ok. Some other lessons learned specific to emergency preparedness and response. Establishing the local connections -- I'm telling you, Paul and I cannot say this enough. Establishing those local connections between disaster relief organizations and the disability communities before a disaster is imperative. If you don't have those relationships already in place, it's very difficult in the middle of a disaster or immediately following a disaster to coordinate it. There's too much going on. People's lives are at stake. People -- you know, response and recovery is ongoing. There's confusion.

There's different things happening all around the area. People are trying to get served the best way they can. And just try to facilitate introductions at that point is very difficult.

We have done it. We will continue to do it. But I can tell you that NCIL's EP subcommittee is highly focused on trying to make introductions on a local level and encourage NCIL's membership to go out and meet the disaster relief organizations in their area and get to know them, go to lunch, become part of task forces and boards and committees ahead of time. And that way when a disaster does hit, you've already -- you're passed that learning curve. You already know each other and you know how you can work together.

The other thing we've learned is it's the boots on the ground, so to speak, in the disaster that are getting things done quickly in that disaster setting. It's not necessarily the top-level administration in DC. So when a disaster strikes, say, Oklahoma, if a tornado hits Oklahoma, Kelly Buckland, the President of NCIL, he's not in Oklahoma and he's certainly -- not on the ground trying to provide services directly to people with disabilities. It's the local Centers for Independent Living and the other disability organizations in the area doing that. They're the boots on the ground. Not a lot Kelly can do from his office in Washington, D.C. There's not a lot that the Red Cross administration can do from Washington, D.C. They're coordinating, certainly, but it's the local disaster response teams that are on the ground; that know exactly what's going on at any given moment. And that's who you're going to be dealing with and working with.

We also have learned that the top-level administration will generally defer to the local representative. Again, it's the local representatives dealing with the immediate issues, dealing with shelter issues, with recovery issues. They're the ones who know what's going on because they're local. They're seeing it.

So if the local people are not interested in working with you then you're not going to get very far. That's why we are encouraging -- our strongest mantra, I think, has been you've got to establish those relationships locally as soon as possible and before the disaster strikes.

>> *Paul Timmons*: That's right.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: The other thing we've learned is that key players in the wake of a disaster are not the contacts that you have in negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding. So while you can spend plenty of time negotiating the MOU and you're establishing a partnership in a disaster situation, that's not -- that is not who is going to be doing the work on the ground. However, the national staff can and should facilitate those introductions whenever possible. And we have seen that work well.

Paul, do you want to say anything about that? I know Portlight and NCIL and Red Cross and FEMA have been really pretty good about facilitating introductions on local levels when needed.

>> *Paul Timmons*: I only want to reiterate what you said in that that's the critical piece in this. In places where this works fairly well, it's where these relationships exist. And places where it doesn't work well, the relationships aren't there. As you said, the day after the tornado comes through Jackson, Mississippi, is not the time to try to create those relationships. You've got to start doing it now.

And I think you've also got to reach out and touch those relationships fairly regularly. Relationships, not just through passing acknowledgment of it. Keep the relationships going. This whole world is very fluid. It's important to show up at the meetings, and be a part of the planning sessions and all of that stuff you mentioned, Christy.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: As we said, you know, when you establish and maintain the blue sky relationships, as we call it, when things are looking good and the weather is ok, when you establish the relationships ahead of time, it facilitates inclusive planning and preparedness and that ultimately benefits the whole community.

It's also important because you know -- I'll tell you -- I'll give you a little anecdote. We had several tornadoes, 17 tornadoes, in one day in Mississippi on April 30, I think, of 2014. We had 17 tornadoes. We had an F3, an F4, and an F5 that hit different towns in the state. So we had a major disaster on our hands. I was invited to come into the local Red Cross headquarters and work with them on trying to better serve the individuals with disabilities that had been affected by the disaster. So I spent two or three days -- I had been in the local Red Cross headquarters here in Jackson for two days and finally turned to the two ladies from the national Red Cross who had come down to work with me. I

finally turned to them after two days and said, "I've not met the first person yet from Jackson." They were from Louisiana and Texas. That's the way their structure works. When there's a major federally declared disaster, they send in other teams of people and they're not necessarily from the state of Mississippi.

So while I did know a few people in the center, I didn't know most because they weren't from here. So those people who were here, working that disaster and were actually coordinating it and the response and recovery, they really did not know what services we had available here. They didn't know -- they were unaware of the community resources that we can offer. So that was what was so important that the disability stakeholders were able to provide them with lists of people who provide durable medical equipment and might be willing to provide it quickly and worry about how they're going to get paid later, lists of other disability stakeholder organizations who may have durable medical equipment and supplies that they could lend to people who had lost equipment.

So the folks who came in to deal with the disaster -- and this was both FEMA and Red Cross -- they weren't from the state but we are. The Center for Independent Living, State Center for Independent Living, we're here on the ground. We're aware of the community resources. And that was the most important thing, I think, that came out of that working relationship, was being able to introduce those disaster relief organizations to what was locally available. And sometimes, you know, that's a local church on the corner of Highway 463 and Highway 27 that nobody else knows about except for the disability community in that area.

So that's why Paul and I have continued to say it's so important to establish these relationships early, to maintain them constantly so that when a disaster does strike, you've already got all of that done and you can get down to the business of serving people with disabilities or serving everybody in a disaster but for us serve people with disabilities in a disaster.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Can I make one quick observation about this whole process?

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Yup.

>> *Paul Timmons*: With these MOU, MOA, etc., etc., it's really important for all of us to remember these are not binding legal contracts. So I've seen people get sort of bogged down in the granularity of it. What they really are is a framework for nurturing and creating a nurturing relationship. So I would just encourage all of you -- when Marcie and I were negotiating the Portlight-FEMA MOA, we began to describe it as going steady as opposed to getting married. I kind of like that. It's supposed to be a framework for creating relationships. If they work in that way, they can be very, very successful. So I would encourage everyone to try to remember these aren't binding legal contracts. They're just sort of a formalized framework for the bigger piece, which is the piece Christy and I harp on, the relationship piece.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thanks.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Mm-hmm.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Where are we now? At this point, the NCIL and FEMA relationship is very strong. It's been very strong. We have a good working relationship with FEMA, both pre- and post-disaster. NCI will be and Red Cross, the last slide here that says where are we now, the EP Subcommittee recommended termination of the MOU to the NCIL board. The NCIL board and ARC administration have met and discussions are ongoing.

So I can tell you now -- we didn't have a chance to even get it into the PowerPoint because this was developed a few weeks ago. There have been some changes that have been made in the last couple of months. When we did -- the NCIL EP Subcommittee voted and made the recommendation to the Board of Directors that they terminate the MOU, that was the result of dissatisfaction from the NCIL community -- the commitments outlined in the MOU were not being met. We were just very dissatisfied. It also had to do with some situations that took place in disasters around the country after the MOU had been signed. Some of that, I'll go back and say under lessons learned, we just did not have a clear understanding of how the other organization operated and so our expectations might not have been exactly what they should have been and vice versa. So that's on both.

I will tell you, though, that things -- we've made some changes. One of the things in the MOU between NCIL and Red Cross was that they would meet to discuss it before either party terminated. And that happened. The NCIL board met with several top-level administration with American Red Cross. They appealed to us not to terminate. It was a sensible appeal, rational. It made sense. We had begun to see some changes since we had made that recommendation in the first place, in October.

So the NCIL EP Subcommittee came back on Monday after hearing from a couple of people about the changes that Red Cross has been making. And after talking to them about the meeting that we had, it was agreed that we would change our recommendation from termination to maintaining it with a 60-day review. So that's where we are at this point. The MOU is still in place between NCIL and Red Cross. And it will be reviewed every 60 days between now and when it ends at the end of July. And at that point in June, or 1st of July, we will review it all, probably face-to-face meeting again, review it all to see where we are and to see if we're happy and if it's something that we want to continue and renegotiate another one. So that's where we are at this point between NCIL and Red Cross.

Paul, I'm going to turn it over to you to talk about Portlight's relationship with FEMA and the Red Cross and where those stand at this point.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Great.

I think I mentioned earlier, the Portlight-FEMA relationship is strong and it's bearing great fruit. We did some things in South Carolina that were unprecedented, just in terms of all of the partners communicating on a daily, sometimes hourly basis. We had staff, the local CIL, the P&A folks all had staff at the JFO, the Joint Field Office. We've had a number of personal visits from ODIC staff around the state with the stakeholder organizations. FEMA's been great about facilitating all of that.

Portlight had a training that FEMA did in our office the day before yesterday that was attended by a number of important representatives of stakeholder organizations. So that's spinning up really, really well. Marcie and I are both very, very pleased about how that looks.

The Portlight-Red Cross relationship has been somewhat problematic. There have been great conversations at the higher levels. There have, frankly, been some missteps at the service

delivery level, shelter delivery level, that have caused us a lot of concern, concern to the point that we were also considering voiding our agreement with the Red Cross.

Their dynamic has changed dramatically in the last 90 days and I'm glad to say it. There were two things we really wanted to see the Red Cross do that for a variety of reasons met with resistance. One was letting our community have access to the grassroots folks as soon after a disaster as we possibly could and do some training to the folks who were on the ground, running the service delivery operations, running the shelters so that they could hear from people from our community about what they might encounter and how they might deal with it.

In South Carolina, Texas, and California, I'm glad to report I've spoken to in excess of 400 what we call retail-level Red Cross folks, almost all volunteers, by the way. It was very, very well received. It's exactly what we wanted to see. I think Christy alluded to this earlier. Me and [Indiscernible] at the Red Cross can agree with this all day long; if it doesn't reach down to the people that are delivering the services and running the shelters, it doesn't matter. So the Red Cross has been great about stepping up to the that.

Another piece that a number of us from the community have asked the Red Cross for is a full-time disability inclusion coordinator, very similar to the role Marcie has at FEMA. The Red Cross now has a new vice president of operations and logistics. His name is Brad Kieserman. He's been in the job about 120 days. Prior to that he was the general counsel at FEMA. Brad has committed to standing that position up at the Red Cross and he's also committed and entered into a contract with Portlight to help create an infrastructure so that when we put someone in that job, they're set up for success.

So these two things that have been met with so much resistance, the dynamic has changed, the atmosphere has changed dramatically in the last 90 days. The Red Cross, I think mentioned earlier, allowed us to deploy staff with them. They're also financially supporting some acute casework for people with disabilities in both California and South Carolina. I think I mentioned earlier we're going

to renew our agreement based on the fact that the dynamic seems to be changing in a fairly rapid and dynamic way.

Thanks, Christy.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Sure. That really concludes the presentation. I hope it's been a value to you.

I suppose now at this point, Lewis, I turn it back to you for questions.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: That's correct. Thanks so much, Paul and Christy. That was really great.

So let me -- before we move to any questions, let me remind everyone that you can submit questions in the chat window there. We'll get to those as they come in.

Let me start off, Paul and Christy, by saying, I think one of the messages that I'm hearing from this, which is something that we've been hearing a lot on these webinars, is that all disasters are local first and all the work really is at the local level.

You were speaking a lot about the national level. Since you've covered the turf here about national partnerships, I'm wondering if you think that there's anything to learn or any kind of advice if people are -- anybody who is listening here might be thinking about partnerships at a more local level or state level.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: I would say -- the national partnerships are really -- they're great. They're good, formal, to indicate to the world that these organizations are partnering together and in this together and they all want to serve people with disabilities and make sure that we're saving lives and doing the best we can on the disaster level.

But the bottom line is -- and I'm proud of the national partnerships that we have in place. I'm very proud of them. I think that without those we wouldn't have gotten nearly as far as we have in this field. But that said, people who are interested and thinking about partnering on a local level, do it. As we've said, lessons learned, it's not the national level people in Washington, D.C. or wherever the national headquarters are that are actually the boots on the ground providing disaster relief. It's the local people.

I think Paul would agree with me. We highly encourage disability organizations and stakeholders, please, consider partnering with those on a local level. If you're unsure of how to go about doing it, that's what us folks up here on the national level are here to do. We're happy to facilitate it, to help you draft something if that's what you need, whatever. But that's what our role could be as national partners, is to help you guys on a local level facilitate those local partnerships.

>> *Paul Timmons*: That's absolutely right. In fact, I think maybe the most important function of these national relationships and agreements would be to serve as models for state and local agreements. Portlight is glad to help anybody in any level in any way work through this. It's the crucial piece to it.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Great.

Our next question is: Do you have separate protocols in place to assist people with mental health disabilities versus physical disabilities or health impairments?

>> *Christy Dunaway*: No, we do not. As a representative of NCIL, NCIL represents people of every type of disability and every age, which is sort of the motto of the Independent Living programs. We serve people of all age and all disability types. So we do not have any specific protocol for people who have mental illness. And I don't think Portlight does but I'll let Paul speak to that.

>> *Paul Timmons*: We don't. Our goal is that all of these service providers provide services for everyone.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Ok.

Our next question is: Are local Red Cross chapters encouraging and supporting training people with disabilities as shelter volunteers? This person also mentions that they have been developing relationships with Red Cross and local emergency preparedness people and found them welcoming. So the question is about if you're aware of local Red Cross chapters are encouraging and supporting training people with disabilities as shelter volunteers.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Oh, let me answer that. This is something I've been passionate about for a couple of years. We were finally able to codify it in Portlight's agreement with the Red Cross. I think we need -- it's not just a matter of the Red Cross training people with disabilities. I think they need to be

recruiting people with disabilities to be year-around volunteers. I think our stakeholder organizations need to be encouraging our folks to volunteer at the Red Cross, too.

Mark Johnson has said it a million times; if they don't see us, we don't exist. So I'm passionate about the community having so much to offer in this space in so many different ways. I think you're going to -- to answer your question, I think you're going to see after the first of the year that local chapters are beginning to be encouraged to do exactly that, to recruit and train and welcome and embrace our community. I know you're going to see Portlight encouraging our stakeholder organizations to facilitate that as well. It's a crucial piece.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Ok. The next question. Someone asks if you could share an example of an MOU.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Sure. I think any of these MOUs frankly-- it's a Memorandum of Understanding between national partners. There's nothing to hide on any of them. At one point the MOU between NCIL and Red Cross and I think NCIL and FEMA was on NCIL's website but you might have to hunt for it. So if that person wants to share their information with you, Lewis, yeah, we'd be glad to send them a copy of this. It's signed. It's public information. So, sure.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: If you want, Christy, you can send a copy to me and I'll put it on -- in association with this website, in the archive so there will be an example for people to look at if that will work for everyone.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: That works fine.

>> *Paul Timmons*: And our MOA with FEMA as well.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Good.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Ok. All right. So people, when the archive goes up -- well, whenever we get this and are able to put it up, it will be there in the archive section of the website.

Next question. Are you aware if Red Cross has any organization-wide training on working with people with disabilities that they make available to their disaster volunteers?

>> *Paul Timmons*: You're talking to it. Yes. And it has just spun up very quickly in light of -- as California and South Carolina. Two women at the Red Cross, Mary Casey [Indiscernible] and

Katherine [Indiscernible] who were both deployed to South Carolina in the floods. There were some problems at that level. And they approached Portlight. Partner CILs. That's what I was referring to earlier, the retail level training. We're really beginning to sort of drill down and give that a little more shape, form, and fashion. So you'll see that be a crucial part of what Portlight and NCIL are working on with the Red Cross over the next eight months.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: That's great.

Next question. What relationship does Portlight have with local government emergency management offices, if any?

>> *Paul Timmons*: All the way from really great to non-existent. It depends upon where. Back to the earlier point that Lewis made, all of this is local. There are some -- one of the things Portlight is working on is a college level course curriculum. Christy's been reading that and can probably speak more intelligently about it than I can. But I think that's actually going to open the door not just for Portlight but for all of our stakeholder organizations to begin to connect with those folks.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: And I think Paul would agree with this. It depends on the local organization. I know that Portlight and NCIL both -- and disability stakeholders in California worked really well, I think, with local government organizations in California after the wildfires. But then in Texas, the relationship was maybe not quite as developed. So it was a little shaky. And then in South Carolina, which, of course, is where Portlight is, really good relationship because they're all there in the same state and they were all affected by the flooding. So the relationship from local government in South Carolina was good. So, again, it's going to depend on where the disaster is and how willing everyone is to work together.

>> *Paul Timmons*: That's right.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Let me follow-up with that question. I think maybe part of the question is not only just the quality of the relationship but maybe the question also revolving around how do you get to a local emergency manager. How -- if there are local emergency managers listening here how -- now they

know because you're on this webinar. But before this, how would they have known how to connect with you?

>> *Christy Dunaway*: I think if -- how to connect with us?

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Yeah. Or -- the person is asking about Portlight in particular but, you know, any of them. Are you out there doing some kind of publicity to get people to realize that there's a resource for them? How do you reach out? How would they find you?

>> *Paul Timmons*: Let me answer that. Go ahead, Christy. Then I'll follow-up.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Well, what I was going to say was, representing the National Council of Independent Living, we're getting information out to other membership, which is the disability community. So I think that getting the information to local emergency managers is really going to be more the responsibility of FEMA. And I think Marcie is working on that. She has started that process. And I know that when a disaster does strike, that she's immediately there to get the disability stakeholders hooked up with those local emergency managers whenever possible. I think that that's something FEMA -- it would be their responsibility. And I think that they're working on this to filter that information down to their local ODIC people as well as local emergency managers.

Paul, you want to add to that?

>> *Paul Timmons*: Two things. One -- this is what our Getting It Right series is about. We've had great success there. The second to that point, the good ones find us before the event. The rest of them tend to find us after the event. The point being to some extent it's imperative upon the emergency managers to being a knowledge that they need to reach out to us and they need to reach out during the blue sky time. They've got to meet us half way is my point.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Right and I would add, also in relation to that, that's part of what this whole webinar series is also about, trying to shine a light on, you know, if you are an emergency manager, how to connect with the disability community in different ways and if you're in the disability world, how to find and deal with emergency managers. So there's a whole series of webinars that we've been doing for

two, three years that are at the ADApresentations.org website under the archive which answer these kinds of questions.

All right. Next comment from someone. This isn't a question but a comment that a CIL in Santa Barbara is providing assisting people with disabilities and access and functional needs in a disaster training locally to their American Red Cross, their public health, their EMTs, their CERT groups, their VOADS and Office of Emergency Management. So there are some local Independent Living Centers who have taken it upon themselves to do this themselves.

Next question. This person's asking what were some of the problems that occurred during the recent disasters that caused a reconsideration of the MOUs. Maybe you can just sort of generally go over some kinds of things that might have given pause or thoughts about is this working.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: In general, shelter inaccessibility. The shelters were not -- the shelters in California and South Carolina were not as accessible as they should have been. And our frustration there was, of course, we had been talking about shelter accessibility from the very beginning. Not to mention the fact that we are 25 years post Americans with Disabilities Act. So there's no excuse for those shelters not to be fully accessible and welcoming to all people with disabilities.

And when I say accessibility, I'm not just talking about the width of the doors or whether there was a ramp at the front door. We're also talking about the programmatic aspects of it as well, in terms of, you know, was the information getting to people who were deaf or hard of hearing, did they have interpreters available and in place, were they allowing service animals in and welcoming them, etc. So shelter accessibility was probably one of the biggest issues that we saw in all of these disasters to some extent.

So that was a primary reason why we reconsidered -- why we were considering the termination of the MOU. Because we just felt like after over a year of talking and trying to negotiate and trying to do some shelter accessibility surveys and trying to provide some training to local staff, and we just had not made any headway with those requests. And then when these disasters hit and we saw

people literally being denied service, we just decide at that point that it might be time reconsider. So that's it in general.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Ok. Great.

Did you want to add something, Paul? Sorry.

>> *Paul Timmons*: I think Christy hit the high points very well. There were certainly specific instances that probably don't need to be gone into now. It was essentially a function of the fact that -- resistance in terms of doing things that we knew as a community were going to prevent these instances. And when they happened, it was just prudent to step back and take a look at the relationship.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Yeah. Ok.

So let me ask you both. Would it be helpful and are you willing to put your contact information here on the webinar in case people want to contact you with further information or for further information? And if so, if you don't mind going to the chatroom and putting in your name and contact information and that will pop up for everyone, everybody, that would be great.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Sure.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Great. In the meantime, while they're doing that, we're still open for some questions but I think we're kind of running down on time. Let me mention you that in case you still have any questions or if you come up with other questions for speakers and you didn't get a chance to ask your question, their contact information will be there if you want or you can also contact your regional ADA Center at 1-800-949-4232.

Now, let me also mention you will also receive an e-mail with a link to an online session evaluation after we leave. Please complete that evaluation for today's program. We really value your input. We really want to make sure that we're able to demonstrate that to our funders.

I want to make sure you understand that.

Ok. We have another question for you, Christy and Paul. How effective has FAST been in areas where that training is provided and teams are deployed?

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Paul, are you through?

>> *Paul Timmons*: Yeah. I'm here. I know they were deployed in California initially. I'm hesitant to get too far into this because I'm not in California.

I think what happened was the FAST teams were able to deploy and did deploy for short periods of time. They were able to take essentially a snapshot of the shelter situation at a particular point and that that was useful. And then what happened out there was the shelters were rolling and opening, closing, moving, consolidating. I think the FAST presence might have been more effective had it been a little more strategically long-term.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Ok.

There is another question here. Could you speak a little about the difference between special needs and functional needs?

Before you answer, let me say to the person who wrote this one that you should definitely go into our webinar archive here because this was gone into in this very big detail in several of the webinars but especially including the one about functional needs, the FNSS documentation. That was quite detailed.

But if either of you would like to answer this question in a short way, you can at this point.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: All I would say, Lewis, again, I'd encourage them to go to that webinar, your webinar archive, they've got some good things.

Special needs -- access and functional needs is a newer, better term than special needs. It's all serving people with disabilities of any type of disability in many any type of a disaster. That's what we need to get to. That's the point where we need to be; that everyone is served equally as well, no matter the disaster, no matter the type of disability.

Access and functional needs are people with disabilities who have an access or a functional need. They don't even have to be people with disabilities. It could be someone who is elderly and has an access and functional need. I think -- and your archived session, I think, alludes to this, Lewis. So, again, I encourage the questioner to go to that. Everybody with any type of disability needs to be served no matter what type of disability, no matter what the needs are. They need to be served equally

and as appropriately as anyone else being served in any type of disaster. That's what we're trying to get to.

>> *Paul Timmons*: That's right.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: Right. And I did put up in the main room, the chat window, the address for how to get to the archive. It is the same place where you signed up, at that www.adapresentations.org. And when you get there you'll see an archive section. You can look at all the previous ones there or you can go directly to www.adapresentations.org/archives.php. That's how you can find those previous recordings. There's been a lot of really good information that's been provided. It's well worth reviewing. You can see it at any point. That makes it very nice. It fits with your schedule.

All right. I think that at this point I want to thank Christy and Paul for sharing your time and your knowledge with us. I think it was a fabulous webinar.

I want to remind everybody that this session is recorded, just like all the others, and it will be available in that archive section for viewing next week at that address that I put up on there.

Thank you, all, for attending today's session. We look forward to seeing you on January 14 for our next webinar, FEMA Promising Practices: Communication Outreach and Toolkits.

Thank you all very much for your time being here. And Paul and Christy, thank you for being here and sharing your knowledge as well.

>> *Paul Timmons*: Thank you.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thank you so much. We appreciate it.

>> *Lewis Kraus*: All right. Have a good day, everyone.

>> *Christy Dunaway*: Thanks. Bye.