ADA National Network Learning Session

Recommendations for Emergency Managers to Improve Disaster Services for Persons with Disabilities

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

July 11, 2019

Presentation Topics

- Recap of CRCL Authority and Functions

- Listening Sessions Overview

- Recommendations from Listening Sessions
  - Recommendations
  - Related resources

- Civil Rights and Emergencies Webpage

Key Authority

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (prohibits discrimination based on disability) (DHS does not enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act; the ADA is modeled after Section 504; their provisions are generally interpreted the same)

- Section 504 applies to the Department's programs and activities and to recipients of the Department's financial assistance

- Recipients of federal financial assistance, e.g., entities that receive federal grants

Key Functions

- Advise Departmental leadership, operational program managers, and public affairs officials regarding civil rights and civil liberties considerations in preparedness, response, and recovery

- Investigate and resolve formal complaints about compliance with civil rights

- Engage with stakeholders to understand the impacts of disasters, address issues, and provide civil rights related information and resources

Key Functions

- Coordinate with federal interagency partners (e.g., FEMA Office of Equal Rights and FEMA Office Disability Integration and Coordination, U.S. Department of Justice Disability Rights Section and Federal Coordination and Compliance Section, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

- Develop civil rights resources, deliver training, and provide technical assistance

Listening Sessions Overview

- What: CRCL, in coordination with FEMA, listening sessions in states and territories heavily impacted by 2017 and 2018 hurricanes and wildfires

- Why:

  - Hear directly from disability stakeholders in communities that were impacted by these disasters

  - Document concerns and effective practices

Listening Sessions Overview

- Desired Outcomes:
  - Recommendations to emergency managers
  - Greater awareness of recipients/sub-recipients' civil rights responsibilities in disasters
  - Enhance and/or spotlight coordination between emergency managers and disability organizations
  - Ultimately lead to civil rights compliance=nondiscrimination and inclusion

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

- Target audience: recipients and subrecipients of federal financial assistance, including emergency management agencies, first responders, governmental service providers

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Preparedness

- First and foremost, proactively include organizations that support and provide services to individuals with disabilities in emergency planning and preparedness efforts, including exercises.

- Explicitly plan for individuals with disabilities who rely on power for medical equipment and other needs, such as insulin and dialysis. In the event catastrophic disasters result in widespread loss of power, as well as communications; disruptions may disproportionately impact the elderly and individuals with disabilities who may be reliant on these services to remain in independent living arrangements.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Preparedness…

- Develop a comprehensive plan to supply and distribute key lifesaving medications and supplies, such as oxygen to oxygen-dependent individuals, during and following disasters.

- Include in the plan how to deal with time sensitive medical treatment interruptions, such as to those who need dialysis, or those who have insufficient supplies of important medications.

- Develop effective alternative solutions to address the needs of people who rely on power-dependent medical equipment during extended power outages.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Preparedness…

Resources:

- ADA National Network: **Emergency Power Planning for People Who Use Electricity and Battery Dependent Assistive Technology and Medical Device** https://www.adapacific.org/assets/documents/emergency-power-planning-factsheet_revised-5.2018.pdf

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Evacuation

- Train first responders and volunteers on disability awareness and different rescue strategies that are safe and effective for individuals with a variety of disabilities.

- Develop and use redundant and accessible forms of communication regarding the location of evacuation routes, pick up points, and shelters. Examples include; email, social media messages, American Sign Language interpreted videos, and outbound calls and text messages.

- Engage community-based organizations in planning and leverage use of the full array of existing accessible transportation assets in each community

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Evacuation…

- To the extent jurisdictions use emergency registries to identify individuals in the community who need assistance during evacuations—or for other disaster-related purposes—be aware of the shortcomings of relying solely on these registries (e.g., outdated information, public confusion about the purpose of a registry, expectations created by such use, reluctance of some eligible individuals to register) and develop additional ways of identifying those in the community in need of assistance during evacuation, such as through use of applications and other technologies.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Evacuation…

- Partner with the array of existing disability and healthcare service providers and non-governmental organizations, such as Centers for Independent Living, and use appropriate government databases, such as local services beneficiaries, as applicable, and U.S. Census Bureau data sources, to help identify those with access and functional needs in the community to safely meet their emergency evacuation needs.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Evacuation…

Resources:

- DHS/FEMA: **Draft Planning Considerations: Evacuation and Shelter-In-Place (check FEMA.gov for final draft)** https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1533580334064-72e9356ed35b726b1a25f4a8c3372c9d/DRAFT_Planning_Considerations_Evacuation_and_Shelter-in-Place_201808.pdf

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Effective Communication

- Increase the use of accessible social media for transmitting alerts, warnings, and real-time response information to individuals with disabilities, in addition to traditional systems used.

- Review the capacity of 911 call centers to receive and address calls from individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, among other individuals with disabilities, such as through use of video relay service and text messaging.

- Remind local broadcasters to position sign language interpreters next to government officials providing emergency-related information and have government public affairs staff ensure the interpreters are visible to television viewers, and thus within the screen shot. Engage local broadcasters in advance on this need and on providing real-time captioning for emergency information.

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Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Effective Communication…

- Develop and use existing and emerging accessible technologies (e.g., alerting devices, new applications) to reach people with disabilities— wherever they are located— during an emergency.

- Continue to use non-technological strategies for conveying alerts and warnings to individuals with disabilities who do not have internet access, such as those living in remote areas. Additionally, train and work with disability organizations in advance of disasters to obtain their help in amplifying government messaging to persons with disabilities during disasters.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Sheltering

- Arrange for rapid deployment of replacement durable medical supplies to general population shelters in emergencies.

- Plan ahead to partner with community organizations, such as organizations that serve individuals who have dementia or others that serve children with autism, to provide support services to individuals with disabilities in emergency shelters, as needed.

- Plan to embed staff or other community resource individuals with disability-related expertise in each shelter.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Sheltering...

- Strengthen disability-related capacity and training of volunteers in shelters.

- Ensure physical accessibility of facilities and strengthen accommodations for individuals with behavioral and sensory disabilities. Additionally, ensure shelters provide access to power for electrical medical equipment and that they serve not just individuals with disabilities but also their family members and/or care providers.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Sheltering…

Resources:

- ADA National Network: **Maintaining Site Accessibility during Emergencies Checklist**

- https://www.adapacific.org/assets/documents/maintaining-site-accessibility-checklist-factsheet-12-7-2015.pdf

- DHS/FEMA: **Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services In General Population Shelters** https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/26441

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Long-term Recovery

- Fully integrate disability stakeholders into long-term recovery planning activities.

- Ensure that plans related to meeting housing needs of the population take into consideration the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.

- Provide mental health services and communicate how to access those services in order to address disaster-related mental health impacts. Providing mental health services as early as possible following a disaster is important for supporting individuals' ability to participate in their own recovery.

Recommendations for Emergency Managers

Long-term Recovery

Resources:

- DHS/FEMA: **Effective Coordination of Recovery Resources for State, Tribal, Territorial and Local Incidents**: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1423604728233-1d76a43cabf1209678054c0828bbe8b8/EffectiveCoordinationofRecoveryResourcesGuide020515vFNL.pdf

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration **SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center** https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac

Role of National and Community Organizations?

- Provide support to local emergency managers when implementing the recommendations

- Disseminate to organizations and individuals

- Other?

Civil Rights in Emergencies and Disasters Webpage

- Materials from Listening Sessions

- Recommendations for Emergency Managers for Improving the Delivery of Disaster Assistance to Disaster Survivors with Disabilities

- Other Resources for Ensuring Nondiscrimination in Disaster Preparation, Response, and Recovery

https://www.dhs.gov/civil-rights-emergencies-and-disasters

Civil Rights in Emergencies and Disasters Webpage

- Request Technical Assistance - Send requests for technical assistance to: crcl@hq.dhs.gov or call 202-401-1474 | 1-866-644-8360 (toll free)

- File a Complaint - For more information about filing a complaint with CRCL, visit: Make a Civil Rights Complaint.

- Training Materials and Webinars

Contact Information

Presenter Information:

- Brian Parsons, Senior Policy Advisor
  Antidiscrimination Group, DHS/CRCL
  Brian.Parsons@hq.dhs.gov

- Margaret Schaefer, Senior Policy Advisor
  Antidiscrimination Group, DHS/CRCL
  Margaret.Schaefer@hq.dhs.gov

- Rebekah Tosado, Section Chief
  Antidiscrimination Group, DHS/CRCL
  Rebekah.Tosado@hq.dhs.gov