

PACIFIC ADA CENTER  
WEBINAR: FEMA PROMISING PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE  
COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING IN  
EMERGENCIES

Thursday, July 14, 2016  
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### Remote CART Captioning

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>> Lewis Kraus: Welcome to the Emergency Management and Preparedness Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities Webinar Series. I am 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 and the collaborative effort between the ADA National Network and FEMA's Office of Disability Integration and Coordination. The ADA National Network is made up of 10 regional centers that are 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. That number is in your chat window.

FEMA's ODIC covers the same 10 regions with regional disability integration specialists. For more information about FEMA, it can be found at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), then type ODIC into the FEMA website search. And that is also in your chat window.

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 with 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 organizations, and other community partners to exchange knowledge and information 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 Rehabilitation 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 familiarize yourself with the full array of webinars available at [www.adapresentations.org/schedule.php](http://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 a.m. Pacific time. 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.

Before we go on, I do want to make a special announcement that there is a conference that we are hosting on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Emergency Management from Federal to Local. It will be in San Francisco on July 27 of this month. Our speakers are Marcie Roth, the head of Office of Disability and Integration at FEMA, Vance Taylor, the head of the Office of Access and Functional Needs at the California Office of Emergency Services, Denise Grimm from BCFS HHS, who has done many of the plans for several cities around the country, and Kathy Gerck, the Emergency

Services Manager of the City of Richmond Fire Department. The web address is there on your screen. You should really go and do that today or tomorrow at the very latest. The address, so we have it in the session is, [www.adapacific.org/emergencymanagement2016\\_conference](http://www.adapacific.org/emergencymanagement2016_conference). That is there in your chat window. You can hit that link to go and sign yourself up even as we go through this session.

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

In this session, only the speakers will have audio. The audio for today's webinar is being broadcast through your computer. Make sure your speakers are turned on and your headphones are plugged in. You can adjust the sound by sliding the sound bar left or right in the Audio & Video panel. If you're having sound quality problems, go through the audio wizard which is accessed by selecting the microphone icon with the red gear symbol on it in the Audio & Video panel.

If you do not have sound capabilities on your computer or prefer to listen by phone, you can dial 1-805-309-2350 and use the pass code 555-2153. Note that this is not a toll-free number but the local numbers can be found at [www.adapresentations.org/local\\_numbers.php](http://www.adapresentations.org/local_numbers.php).

This webinar is being recorded and can be accessed on the ADA presentations website next week in the archive section.

Realtime captioning is provided for this webinar. The caption screen can be accessed by choosing the CC icon in the Audio & Video panel. The box showing the captions can be resized to show you more or less text as you would like.

The whiteboard, where the presentation slides are shown, can be resized smaller or larger by choosing the dropdown menu located above and to the left of this whiteboard. The default is "Fit Page."

You can resize or reposition the chat, participant, captioning, and Audio & Video panels by detaching and using your mouse to reposition or stretch/shrink. Each panel may be detached by using the icon with the several lines and its small arrow pointing down in the upper right corner of each panel.

At the conclusion of today's presentation there will be an opportunity for everyone to ask questions. You may submit your questions using the chat area within the webinar platform. The speakers and I will address them at the end of this session, so feel free to submit them as they come to your mind during the presentation.

To submit your questions, type in the chat area text box or press control m and enter the text in the chat area. If you are listening by phone and not logged into the webinar, you may ask questions by e-mailing them to [adatech@adapacific.org](mailto:adatech@adapacific.org).

If you experience any technical difficulties during the webinar, send a private chat message to the host by double clicking Pacific ADA Center in the participant list. A tab titled Pacific ADA Center will appear in the chat window. Type your comment in that textbook and enter. If you are on your keyboard only, do F6, arrow up or down to locate the Pacific ADA Center, and select to send a message. You can also e-mail your issue to [adatech@adapacific.org](mailto:adatech@adapacific.org) or call 1-510-285-5600.

Today's FEMA Promising Practices is titled Strategies for Effective Communication with People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Emergencies. This presentation will provide two examples of practices for emergency communications with people with disabilities in emergencies. The first is a partnership between the Center for Public Safety Innovation at St. Petersburg College and the State of Florida to provide a course entitled, Effective Strategies for Communicating with People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Other Access and Functional Needs. Speakers will provide an overview of the objectives and course content, as well as discuss the interactions and the purpose of this training as a face-to-face workshop instead of distance learning and why.

In the second half of the webinar, staff from New York City's Office of Emergency Management will cover their emergency outreach efforts to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. They will review the costs, policy and cost, considerations, production tips, and operational procedures that were used to produce and embed approximately 80 signed videos into Notify NYC, the city's free official source of information about emergency events and important city services.

With all of that done, let's meet our first speakers today. They are Chris Littlewood. Chris is an Instructional Technology Coordinator with the Center for Public Safety Innovation at St. Petersburg College. He has more than 20 years of experience as both an instructional designer and public safety educator. As a self-advocate for people with disabilities, Mr. Littlewood uses his law enforcement and emergency responder experiences in training and providing subject matter expertise in the area of inclusive emergency planning and preparedness for people with access and functional needs and disabilities.

Carole Lazorisak is a tenured, retired college professor who has taught human services, American Sign Language, and sociology and interpreter education courses in New York City. She currently works as a master mentor, certified ASL instructor, a certified deaf interpreter, interpreter trainer and workshop facilitator. Carole uses her public safety experience, knowledge of the ADA, and accessibility laws, vocational rehabilitation and disability studies, and her mental health training to enhance her work as a trainer and interpreter.

Chris and Carole, I'm going to turn it over to you now.

>> Chris Littlewood: Hello, everyone. This is Chris Littlewood. I hope everybody can hear me ok. Thank you for having us. And thank you to everyone joining in. Hopefully I'm not too loud. I'm very hard of hearing myself, late-deafened. So I tried to check and make sure that my volume was not too loud. I guess Lewis can type in the chat window for me if my volume control gets a little overbearing for everybody but that shouldn't be a problem.

This portion of the webinar is about training that we developed in partnership with the State of Florida, we being St. Petersburg College and the Center for Public Safety Innovation, and providing free training to local communities around the state for public safety workers.

One important point for this presentation is it is not the training or workshop itself but what we did to bring the course to local communities in Florida, as Lewis said before. Our hope is that we will continue the training and take our training outside of the State of Florida or encourage others to do similar methods to do the same.

Just so everyone is aware, this presentation or slide has a lot of words. That's partly by design. It's a reference tool for after the webinar when it becomes available in the archive through ADA Pacific. It's also for if people like to read along with the slides as we go. But what we say covers pretty much everything. So you don't have to worry about following me and also following the slides. This is done partly for accessibility reasons.

Also, there's a couple of places or a couple of slides where there are website links. Those are for your reference and review after the webinar when it becomes available. For the sake of time, we're not going to show the links in the videos, in those links, but I'll explain more when we get to those slides.

Ok. This is the problem that we've known about or that's been somewhat clear for all too long. It's the need for better communications in emergencies or disasters. You'll see more about this in future slides but the problem, once again, was displayed when Carole and I first met, are actually, in a training for sign language interpreters at a local Florida county emergency facility. Even though the county emergency management was partially hosting this training, there was obvious disconnect when the local county made statements that they didn't really know how to connect with interpreters or how to connect with deaf and hard of hearing people in the local area. In our debriefing and discussion with the state, it was suggested that we make training available for public safety and communication with people that are deaf or hard of hearing.

The solution that we offer is the State of Florida and CPSI offers cost-effective, face-to-face training around the state to responders, emergency managers, and healthcare workers to increase awareness and highlight the need of a broad spectrum, which is very important, of visual communication needs, especially for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. And the workshop is delivered by people who are deaf or hard of hearing and who are education professionals. The delivery was done both by myself and Carole, who you'll hear from more in just a few moments.

The partnership began between the Florida State Department of Health and the Bureau of Preparedness and Response and St. Pete College, CPSI, with very special thanks to Janet Collins who is the coordinator on the Florida Department of Health end of it, and also continuing with [Indiscernible] who is the access coordinator for both the Department of Health and the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Even before we started the training in this partnership between the state and CPSI, Carole and I conducted a training at St. Pete College where we did the same curriculum or a very similar curriculum exclusively for law enforcement. We used video clips and interviews from that training to market our partnership with training for the state. And that's the YouTube link that you see on this slide. That will be available to you later if you want to view the marketing video. It's only about a minute long. It was a very good tool for us to let people know about the course as we made it available.

At this point I'm going to turn it over to Carole for a minute and she is going to discuss a little bit more about why we were doing this training.

>> Carole Lazorisak: Yes, hello. This is Carole speaking. I'm deaf. I'm speaking through a sign language interpreter.

One of the most important things that you have to understand is the population numbers of deaf and hard of hearing people that we service in America, in general, basically the statistics show that one out of 10 Americans are deaf or hard of hearing. So if you think about the numbers and think about where you live in your local area, in your region, in your state, and even nationally, the average is that one out of 10 people are born deaf or hard of hearing. But the numbers are doubled by the year of 2030 due to environmental noises that we have to deal with. We have more and more people that are losing their hearing because of that. That's why we wanted to offer training and sensitivity training to first responders, emergency managers, so that they can be able to have effective communication access and so that they know what is important, what to keep in mind. They need to keep in mind those numbers that we serve.

Now, the state of Florida, we have roughly three million people who are deaf or hard of hearing who are going to CDC, Center of Disability Services. The numbers could be roughly a little bit more, a little bit less. The state of Florida has 16.1 in the population who are deafened or have had some sort of hearing loss. So you can look at the slide for more references.

Ok. Next slide, please.

Because of that hearing loss we're concerned about the legal issues and possible lawsuits because people do not have access to communication during disasters or emergency situations. Now, ethically, how do we communicate effectively with these individuals who have hearing loss? With the media, we need to work with the media. We don't want people to experience any sort of injury during services. Also, we want to make sure that we reduce the possible number of deaths for people who are deaf or hard of hearing or have some sort of hearing loss during an emergency situation. We want to make sure we can prevent any sort of legal issues that might arise regarding injury or death.

Next slide, please.

>> Chris Littlewood: Ok. These communication issues and the broad spectrum of people with hearing loss that Carole just mentioned in the last couple of slides, they are highlighted or more visible in emergency observed disasters. The National Organization on Disability, NOD, did a report on special needs assessment after Katrina and they determined that the most underserved group were people that are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition to that, the National Association for the Deaf has convened a committee for emergency management, which both Carole and I serve on. We have created a position paper that's posted on NOD's website, which explains the importance of things like the training we are talking about and involving people that are deaf and hard of hearing in community and emergency and disaster preparedness.

So we're talking about delivering training and visual communication training for emergency responders or public safety professionals. And one of the things that came up is, well, why don't we just make a video? Well, of course we can make a video. We actually use a video or excerpts of a video. The State of Washington, specifically Spokane, Washington, and Public Safety, they created

some excellent videos on communicating with people that are deaf or hard of hearing. They are also available at the YouTube link that you see there on your screen.

And we show little pieces of those to set the stage, if you will, for the class. But we think it's essential and very, very important for a lot of different reasons to have face-to-face training for public safety professionals. Number one is, people need to see via multiple perspectives of different people that are deaf or hard of hearing. And they get to see that in our class with the different deaf and hard of hearing instructors.

Like I said, I'm very hard of hearing. I'm late-deafened. I use some sign language but my sign language is really more sign English than American Sign Language. Carole uses exclusively American Sign Language. So there are different communication needs. For all the audio throughout this webinar, I'm using the caption, just like Lewis explained at the beginning of the webinar here. So everything that is shared through audio, that's how I'm receiving that information. Carole, on the other hand, communicates through a sign language interpreter. And it is very important for public safety professionals to understand the differences that are needed.

Also, in face-to-face training, you're doing it live and people are kind of thrown into the experience. And the impact is so much greater from that firsthand experience. Participants communicated with us right away through gestures. It requires 100% eye contact with deaf and hard of hearing instructors. And we're not going to get that through watching a video. You may get the basic idea of it, but you're not really going to understand. We saw so many a-ha moments or moments of panic in people's faces when they realized that some of the things that they were doing for public safety or emergency management in their own community are not necessarily going to work for people that need visual communication, especially for people that are deaf or hard of hearing.

The next area that I want to talk about is what we covered in all the modules. I already talked about the different perspectives of people that are hard of hearing, people that are late-deafened, people that are culturally deaf, people that may have a mild or moderate hearing loss, and the different things that they may need. We cover all of these different perspectives in all the different training sections throughout the course.

We talk about the legal and ethical implications for public safety professionals and providing effective communication for people that are deaf or hard of hearing and also explain the various sub groups. We talk a lot about the stress created by communication barriers, not just stress for people that are deaf or hard of hearing. We are very much on the side of our emergency managers, emergency or first responders. We definitely wanted to make sure that we provided them with different resources, if you will, to reduce the stress and find different ways to use visual communication.

Finally, we talked about pretty much all through the course including people that are deaf or hard of hearing in emergency preparedness and response. It's very important if you have training or if you have a drill or something like that, that real people who are deaf or hard of hearing are included in the efforts, including somebody in the process. It's so important every step of the way. We determined what needs to be addressed. And these basically converted to our objectives in the training. First, and one of the most important things, was the federal laws related to effective communication or for people with disabilities; very specifically, the ADA or Americans with Disabilities Act, and more recently, the CVAA, which is the Communications Video Accessibility Act. We talked about those and other federal laws extensively and how it applies to emergencies and disasters and public safety professionals.

You can see the other topics that we talk about here. A couple of things that I want to talk about very specifically are the activities. We try to go a short period of time before we were you actually -- we were actually involving all of the people that were in the room in doing something. And every bit of it required visual communication.

One of the most impactful activities that we do is the head-to-toe assessment. Several years back I worked in partnership with some other groups at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. And several firefighters and emergency responders came to Gallaudet, the university for the deaf, and were demonstrating triage and a head-to-toe assessment to determine injuries on a person. And you should have seen the look of panic on these firefighters when they realized that they couldn't just ask

somebody does this hurt and how they had to think outside the box right away and find different ways to communicate with somebody visually and get a message across and get valuable information for triage back from that person. And we do exercises like that throughout the training.

One of the other activities you'll see here is the lip or speech reading exercise. We try to shy away from exclusive the term "lip reading" because it's more than just a person's mouth that you're watching when you're using speech reading. Also, we make it very well-known that speech reading is not an effective form of visual communication. And even the best speech reader can only get about 40%, the best speech reader can only get about 40% of the message that's conveyed through speaking. We talked about that it's using entire facial expressions and things like that.

You can see all the other topics that we thought was very important to be addressed. We began to pilot or continue with the course. It was pretty evident that we were on the right track. And I'm going to let Carole talk some more about some of the other subjects that we talked about.

Go ahead, Carole.

>> Carole Lazorisak: Ok. We also discussed about using sign language interpreters. I do want to emphasize that when it comes to communication with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, often they use many different modes of communication. Some use American Sign Language. Some use signed English. Some are maybe from foreign countries and use native sign languages from their own country. So they use their own sign language. Some prefer to just speech read. Some people maybe don't know sign language and so all they have to communicate is gestures.

You have to get cues from those various individuals to find out what mode of communication will work. So we need to train emergency responders to be able to start with gestures first. It's important to use what visual strategies that you have to figure out what is the best way to communicate with that individual. We also discussed about using interpreters. Make sure that they are qualified interpreters. We talked about various organizations like the RID, which is a Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. It's a professional organization that certifies interpreters. We talked about certification, certified interpreters as opposed to interpreters who are not certified. We talked about what are the emotional stressors, emotional factors that are involved in these types of situations, especially when you find it hard to communicate.

It's also important to have some type of visual communication; like, for example, we talked about my experience with the Red Cross after a disaster. There was no sign, no signage. So they made an announcement about hot meal service but I never got that information. They put -- if they had put up some sort of signage so that people would know that the hot meals were available, where to go for clothing supplies. Now we have CVAA and that's encouraging more and more organizations to provide that information visually for those that can only access it that way.

Also, evacuation. What do you offer as far as shelters? What about animals that need shelter?

So one of the wonderful opportunities that we did was we taught them how to work with interpreters, where to stand, where interpreters stand, where interpreters sit.

Now I'll turn it back over to Chris.

>> Chris Littlewood: Thank you, Carole.

What we did was in the early stages when we were delivering the training, we looked at and we talked about what works and what wasn't working and made adjustments accordingly. As well, we continued to talk -- I'll talk about it in a few slides here. But this is what we found.

Participants worked really well with other first responders or healthcare workers. Participants worked in varying disciplines: hospitals, support agencies, police agencies, fire departments or emergency managers; and they worked to think outside the box for different visual communication methods. And this, once again, is where all of our activities were so important in what to do. Because we were talking about a big group of people here and a diverse group that had different communication needs.

Generally our class size was between 20 to 25 people. We said that we could accommodate more but generally that turned out to be a perfect number because it made for the perfect size for interaction and hands-on experience, activities.

Finally, the American Hospitals -- I'm sorry, AHCA, the Agency Healthcare Administration, Janet Collins from the Department of Health and I, worked very hard to make sure that we had everything in order to allow healthcare professionals to get CEUs. They were pre-approved for the training. So that made it more effective for people to want to participate in the training. They could walk away with CEUs for their job or organizations. So that was very good.

What we did for delivery cost reduction is there was shared costs within state agencies. The Department of Health and Division of Emergency Management, they worked together to make sure that everything was available to provide the resources to get our training to come together.

Also, the State of Florida Vocational Rehabilitation was used in part for our accommodations. Like I said, we had captions, Communications Access Realtime Translation, in the room. All the participants could see it. As important as it is for me to interact with other people in the room, it was also a great learning tool for people that have never seen CART in action and how fast and accurate it is. It is very good for emergency management and for public safety professionals to see this, as well as our other service providers, sign language interpreters. So that was all worked out, in part, for the training through the State of Florida Vocational Rehab.

The other thing we did is St. Pete College, CPSI, waived all the administrative costs to bring this training forward. A minimum curriculum development cost. And the marketing video that we made when we kicked it all off, that was done at no cost. And also we had reduced travel costs. So those were all things that were very important to keep the costs down for the training because we know in economic times how important it is. And finally, the course was offered for free for any participating agencies.

The 2014-2015 delivery. We did two half-day sessions at the Governor's Hurricane Conference. This was our first delivery in partnership with the State of Florida. The first two deliveries, actually. These were half-day sessions. We got excellent evaluations. The biggest request for improvement was that people thought it needed more time. The activities being such that we did, they were really crammed into a very small period of time and that made it difficult. Participants were left wanting more, which is a good thing but we don't think that they got the most out of it as some of the people that you'll see when we deliver the full-day training. It worked out a lot better.

Also, we did get the comments that because we delivered it at the hurricane conference, there were a lot of people that it didn't reach because even though it was free training, you had to pay the registration fee for the Governor's Hurricane Conference, and that was not affordable for a lot of agencies to send workers to, public safety professionals, to that.

The 2015-2016 delivery we did on two half-day sessions in Broward County, which is South Florida, near Miami. Again we got excellent evaluations almost across the board. Again, we did get some comments that this really needed more time and that people wanted to be more involved. In our discussions, too, with everybody, they said that they wanted more activities, more times for the activities.

So the second part of this fiscal year we were approved to deliver two full-day sessions. We did one in Tallahassee, Florida, and we did one in Gainesville, central Florida. We were able to spend more time on the activities. We basically didn't change the curriculum at all. We just spent more time sharing experiences. And we weren't so rushed on the activities. And that was very important.

And these were pretty much what the finalized objectives were. I'm going to let Carole tell you a little bit more about that.

>> Carole Lazorisak: So the impact of the course modules are really powerful because they really learned about various needs for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and also various effective ways of communicating with those individuals. They experienced role playing and different opportunities and methods for communicating with those people via whether that be gestures or writing back and forth, how to handle the stress in those situations, how to handle -- people are emotionally

vulnerable during those times. So trying to find ways that are effective communications for each individual to help them through disasters.

All right. Take it away, Chris.

>> Chris Littlewood: Ok. Thank you, Carole.

We talked about the course and how it was delivered. We talked about feedback being crucial for the participants. We also offered a pre-test and post-test and evaluations to each participant. We were able to see what they were getting out of the course, maybe where we needed to tweak something. And we provided all of that information back to the state in an after action report which I'll get to in a minute.

We also explained that a lot of the terms and the acronyms that we would be talking about might be very new. We included a list of glossary or acronym terms in the handout. We had basically a 70-some-page book that was given to everybody. We repeated a lot of the subjects, and that was by design to reinforce the learning.

I do want to talk just a little bit about the icebreaker. This is our first activity. It was just so powerful for a lot of different reasons but basically we had participants do a quick interview with somebody. They had to do the interview following these three steps. During a brief interview with one other person, they had to stand 15 feet away from that person with candy in their mouth, like a hard candy or lollipop, and ear plugs in their ears. And what we saw people doing were just amazing in how quickly people learned to use visual communication. We only did this for like three to five minutes but during the second half of the interview, we allowed people -- we stepped closer to each other but then we asked them to turn and face away from each other.

And some of the information that we got out of that and some of the panicked faces that we saw, we learned something new ourselves every time when we did this. It was just a very valuable tool. We talked about for the icebreaker imagining the relationship between the activity and conducting an interview with an emergency or disaster even how it some very, very important information that you get out of this activity. Many of these same challenges can be overcome through awareness, through accommodations it can become available, and through visual and effective communications.

Like I said, finally we did after action report to the state. We provided copies of all the evaluations. We did a debrief after each workshop with the instructors, the service providers, and the coordinators with the State of Florida and included our forward plan for training. Like I said, we hope to continue this training and be able to continue to offer it throughout the State of Florida or otherwise.

At this point I'm going to hold off on questions so I think we can get to our next speaker. I'm going to just put our contact information up for just a second. If anybody has any questions, you can feel free to contact either me or Carole.

I'm going to turn it back over to Lewis. I believe we're going to take questions at the end of it.

>> Lewis Kraus: Great. Thank you so much, Chris and Carole. That was a great presentation.

I do want to remind everyone, if you have questions that you want to ask now, you can enter them in the chat window and we will take them at the end of this session.

As you saw, there's a lot of information on their slides that they didn't even get to say very much about.

This also reminds me that the archive section of [www.adapresentations.org](http://www.adapresentations.org) will have all of the information, the slides as well as the archive of the transcript, next week. All right? So if you didn't get all of that detail, you want more detail, can you go there next week and find the details that Chris and Carole were not able to get really into here.

All right. Moving on, we're going to go to our next speakers. Our next speakers are from New York City, the New York City Emergency Management.

Allison Pennisi is the Deputy Director of Communications for New York City Emergency Management. She has overseen the strategy, development, and production for the agency's website and publications. She develops and promotes campaigns and programs. And she accelerates the agency's social media presence through the use of new tools and programs. She is a Subject Matter

Expert in the use of social media in emergency management, collaborating with key stakeholders both within the agency and beyond New York City government.

Ben Krakauer is the Director of Watch Command for the New York City Emergency Management, where he provides strategic and operational oversight for the city's 24x7 Situational Awareness and Interagency Coordination Center, including the Emergency Public Notification System, Notify NYC.

Jonathan Rotta served first as a communications specialist at New York City's Emergency Management and is now in the Training and Exercises Division. In his former role, he assisted with the agency's public messaging efforts across various media. And now serving as videographer and editor he worked close by with the Notify NYC team and other members of the External Affairs Division to produce in-house over 50 Notify NYC ASL videos.

I am going to turn it over to the three of you. Allison, maybe you're going to take it from here. Huh?

>> Ben Krakauer: Thanks so much, Lewis. Actually, it's Ben Krakauer. I'm going to get started and then Allison and John will tell me where I went wrong.

So, thanks. Good afternoon, everyone. It's wonderful to be with all of you. We're going to talk about how New York City Emergency Management has leveraged alternative formats for emergency communication. When we talk about this, we're not just -- although I know the focus is on the community but there are more than 200 languages spoken in New York City and we want to make it that we're able to communicate with all of them. So we've taken a series of steps over the last year, actually the last 18 months or so, to make sure that we're able to increase the reach of our Notify NYC messaging.

So, just a little bit about our agency. Founded originally as a mayoral office in 1996, we became a charter agency, which means the mayor can't dissolve us without a public referendum, in 2002, following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and really a four-fold mission, planning and preparedness for all hazards emergencies in and around New York City, coordinating on a daily basis educating the public on emergency preparedness and getting the general public ready for them to respond, their businesses respond, their families to respond to the different emergency that can impact New York City, and collecting and disseminating information. And we do that both to our agency partners to our state and federal partners, and also through the Notify NYC system and a lot of our outreach material to the general public.

So following a lawsuit settlement with disability rights advocates, we formed a new division to strengthen our commitment to the people with disabilities and those with access and functional needs. We have a specific division now that includes staff members that specialize in a variety of disciplines, including accessible communication outreach. Today we're going to speak to specifically how we've incorporated this into the Notify NYC system.

So just a little bit of history on the Notify NYC system. It is the city's official emergency notification system. It began as a pilot project in 2007 following a tragic fire in Lower Manhattan at the Deutsche Bank Building on Liberty Street. In addition to a number of tragedies that happened, Lower Manhattan was filled with toxic smoke. The city had no way to communicate to residents to close their windows, to take any protective action, really to provide people in any formal sense recovery information. It went city-wide in 2009. We're proud to have more than 400,000 opt-in subscribers.

When we factor in people who forward our messages, retweet our messages, and our ability to activate the wireless Emergency Alert System, messages people get on your cell phones that you never signed up for but started appearing, in 2012 we were really able to reach millions of people across New York City. We have a 24/7 desk in our watch center staffed by a public warning specialist whose sole mission is to evaluate all the information about emergencies going on in New York City at any given time, craft that information into public messaging, and get it out to the general public within seven minutes of an incident happening.

We have upgraded the Notify NYC system over the last several years. In addition to offering messages in sign language and through CVIs, which Allison and Jonathan will talk about, we also give

people options to get messages at different times of day, what type of messages they want based on interest group or category, and when they leave this great city for vacation we will stop bothering them and it will automatically turn back on once they come back.

So we're looking at how we can improve Notify NYC. Allison will tell us how we did that.

>> Allison Pennisi: Thank you, Ben.

Good afternoon, everyone. So as Ben mentioned, Notify NYC has been operational since 2007. Obviously it's become apparent to us that in official emergency communications programs, it needs to be as inclusive as possible. So what we had done was we did a SWAT analysis of the program itself, looking at, you know, ways that we are strong with our messaging and also ways that we can improve.

So what we asked ourselves, essentially, was: How can we improve and expand the Notify NYC program beyond its existing offerings? So Ben mentioned we have things like do not disturb. We have features such as beach notifications, public health notifications. But one of the great solutions that we came up with was a way to reach people with disabilities and access and functional needs. The solution that we had concluded was offering a new way to access emergency information in easy-to-understand format.

So New York City, as everybody knows is home to a very vigorous population. So we wanted to address the needs of the public. In order to do so, we developed this long-term strategy to offer New Yorkers a new way to access this emergency information but in an easy-to-digest and easy-to-understand format. So this meant offering alerts in not only multiple languages but this also includes American Sign Language.

We actually noticed that there were municipalities across the country, particularly San Diego, California, that was offering alerts in American Sign Language to its residents. At the time, New York City typically leveraged sign language interpreters only for emergency communications like press conferences. Some of you may have seen the use of American Sign Language interpreters or certified deaf interpreters during press conferences such as Hurricane Sandy, and even some recent building explosions that we've had here in New York City, East Harlem in 2014, and the Village in 2015. But in the spring of 2014, we actually began, we being the agency's Operations Division and External Affairs Division, to work in conjunction to make these notifications available in sign language video format.

>> Ben Krakauer: We created free script messaging. All tolled now, we have our 80 most common messages translated into 13 most commonly spoken languages in New York City, including either American Sign Language or CVI. So we did -- we created pre-scripted messages. We referenced the English version, printed version, of that message for the specifics.

So a message in a foreign language may say there is a fire in your area, please, you know, reference the English text message or the English e-mail to see the details about the location. And then we brought in outside vendors, both ASL interpreters, CVI interpreters, and then a video production team to do all the video production. And what we do is we include this as a link at the bottom of our existing Notify NYC messages.

So the way we made it work is we gave people -- rather than giving people the option to notify for Notify NYC messages in ASL or CVI, we embed it at the bottom of every one of our messages. So in all the messages we have translated like we said, 80 in total, we already have a link that says if you want to see this message, you want to view this message in those 13 languages or American Sign Language, you click on a link and it launch as a YouTube video, a dedicated website where it has all the translation that can be shown along with the ASL video. And that ASL video also includes subtitles and voiceover. So if you're unable to see it, we're able to read the message to you.

>> Jonathan Rotta: Good afternoon. This is Jonathan Rotta. I hope everyone's having a nice day. I'm going to keep on going here.

After debuting this initial round of messages, we did extensive outreach to the public. We found out the videos were well received but also found out that people preferred the use of certified deaf interpreters. So we also learned that while TTY is commonly used by persons with hearing

disabilities, Video Relay Service is also a preferred method. So because of this we adjust the call to action in all of our new videos and developed a second round to include TTY and Video Relay Service numbers. It is also something we did across other communication channels, including printed publications.

Our team seized the opportunity to create more pre-scripted messages, the second round. So we decided to do this second round in-house. So we're going to show you now two examples. First was the one that was done by a production team. And the next one is the one we did in-house.

Lewis, if you could pull up the web access for us?

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok, everyone. I just want to let I know we are now going to go on to the internet to pull up their videos. Based on your capability of your machine, the videos may play slower or faster or not at all so just stay with it, if you can. And we'll come back after we play the videos which are somewhat short.

[CART paused for captioned video]

>> Lewis Kraus: New York City folks, I'm not hearing any audio from you. Can you say something?

>> Allison Pennisi: Sure. What we were trying to demonstrate -- there's a difference between the two videos we're going to demonstrate. We're hoping that everyone on this webinar is able to hear the video. We just didn't want to talk over the voiceover option that's part of the video as well.

[CART paused for captioned video]

>> Jonathan Rotta: So that was the first video produced by a third party vendor, featuring an ASL interpreter. We provided them with a written message. We said we want a voiceover, captions, and they ran with this. This was the format they developed for us, one person in front of what I believe they used was a green screen and they kind of stylized it in their own way.

When we went to do a second round, we realized we had in-house capabilities. I'm a video editor. We have a staff member who speaks ASL. So I modeled our second-round after theirs. So this next video was produced in-house and features a CVI and note at the end we included TTY numbers and Video Relay Service numbers.

[CART paused for captioned video]

Building off the techniques and format by the vendor, we used what works and discarded what did not.

Lewis, could you switch us back? Thank you very much.

So best practices. So the most important lesson we learned from a production standpoint was to think modularly. What does that mean? That means standardizing your messaging to make it as simple as possible for both the interpreter and the video editor, having the interpreter sign the same call to action 80 times. Keep in mind this person has to spell out the web addresses and phone numbers character by character. So having them do that over and over again and having the editor have to cut, caption, and voiceover developments over and over is inefficient and tedious.

So write your messages in such a way that multiple messages can end with the same call to action. That means the CTA, call to action, only needs to be filled and edited once and then dropped in at the end of each notification.

Here's an example of modular messaging designed to be modular. You might not be able to read that text too well but it should help. All the way to the left is the group. These are examples of mass transit messaging. We also did utilities and, you know, fires, stuff like that, message title, obviously, is the next column. So the bulk of the message, the point you're trying to get across to your viewers or your readers is that column.

And the call to action. As you see, the bottom three messages all have the same call to action. That was produced only one time and then tacked on over and over again to the messages that it applied to. So it simplified the process for us.

Now to get a little technical, this is a bit of video editing 101 here. So this is a screen shot of a YouTube video, one of the ones we just showed you. You're familiar with that red bar that scrolled across the screen. That's obviously a timeline. On the back end of things of what's going on is the playback feature is scanning audio and video layers simultaneously, frame-by-frame,

second-by-second. And it's outputting that data as what you know to be moving pictures and sound. So those images down at the bottom are the way that we layer these video and audio. So if you have in-house capabilities, this could be something you could do or you could provide something like this to your vendor for them to get an idea of it.

What you see is the intro on the left and the outro on the right are boilerplates. We create those once and they apply to every video. The CTAs, we try to make as few as possible. We try to have all the messages end with the same concept, such as call this number, go to this website. We try to make as few as possible. And then the message is the only unique thing you have to do for each notification. So you compile all of those four elements and you have a complete message.

>> Allison Pennisi: Thank you, Jonathan.

So, you know, one of the things that we hope will be key takeaways for this audience is best practices of how you can apply what we've been able to do here in New York City to your own community, making sign language videos work for your municipality. So as Jonathan mentioned, NYC Emergency Management used a video production team for the first round but as the needs for production evolved, many were produced in-house. So we're fortunate enough to have a video production editor, Jonathan, here, in addition to a few staff members who are American Sign Language interpreters as well. But we did, however, continue to use an outside vendor for interpretation because as we mentioned earlier, one of the best practice that we had learned working with disability rights advocates and several people of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, using a certified deaf interpreter was ideal. In short, what our recommendation is for everyone on this webinar is to do what's best for your budget, time, and resources.

One of the other things we'd like to emphasize is leveraging a website or some sort of a digital format to promote and host your resources. So whether it's creating a YouTube Channel that's dedicated to hosting all of these videos or if you host them on your website, if you have one available, that's also a great idea. And one of the other key pieces is getting buy-in from your community, using your community's partnerships to share and promote these resource and get their feedback. The City of New York has a Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities that New York City Emergency Management works very closely with. They were very helpful in not only reviewing these videos but also providing us with constructive criticism and feedback on these videos before they went live to the public. And we also worked very closely with disability rights advocates on these as well to let them know that we weren't going to just create a few videos and then that would be the end of our production. This is an ongoing process. As Ben mentioned earlier, we have roughly 80 video that have already been created but there are more coming out within the next several months. So we recommend that you stay tuned for that as well.

Above all, consistency is key. Videos should be inclusive, not only featuring subtitles and voiceovers as mentioned but similar in design, length, and call to action. It makes it a lot easier for an audience to understand. It's also just a good practice in terms are of communication. And each of these videos I also want to emphasize were reviewed by a team of people before they were operationalized. It wasn't, you know, created by one person and then launched for the public to see. It went through several rounds of edits before we were actually able to get this off the ground.

>> Ben Krakauer: So we're eager to take your questions. If you want to learn more about the Notify NYC program, you can visit us at [nyc.gov/notifynyc](http://nyc.gov/notifynyc). And if you want to look at all the video that we've had, we host them all on open YouTube Channel, [YouTube.com/notifynyc](https://www.youtube.com/notifynyc). As we create more and more videos, they will be posted there as well.

>> Allison Pennisi: And in addition to the resources we have here in New York City, we also want to emphasize that there are a lot of great partners across this country that have done a great deal of work to assist the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Alert San Diego, Ready Illinois, and Oklahoma City County Health Department have really great resource that I recommend people on this webinar review. They could also provide great best practices as well. We all learn from each other and emergency management is a culture of learning. So we certainly recommend not only looking at what we've been able to do here but also look far and wide, you know from large-to-small in terms of scale as well.

And if you have any questions, of course as Lewis mentioned, we are more than happy to take them. And we also wanted to provide our contact information. You can contact Ben Krakauer, myself, Allison Pennisi, and Jonathan Rotta at the e-mails provided on your screen.

>> Lewis Kraus: All right. Thank you so much. Ben, Allison and Jonathan. This was a great presentation.

I do want to remind everyone that, again, they put a lot of their information and all of these resources on their slides. And the slides actually are currently available right now at the [www.adapresentations.org](http://www.adapresentations.org) website. Also, if you had any trouble watching those videos, the demonstration of the videos, they have the link addresses in their slide and you can look at them at your leisure.

All right. Remember, also, all of you, if you want to ask a question, go ahead and go into that chat window there and enter those in. We're going to start with some questions right now.

Back to our first speakers, to Carole and Chris. The first question was: Can you talk about how your room setup and how that worked? The person saying they assumed a classroom style is less effective than roundtable or u-shaped format.

>> Chris Littlewood: This is Chris speaking. I'll take that first and then if Carole wants to add anything, she can do so.

Keep in mind that pretty much the people in the room that have visual communication needs were myself and Carole, the instructors. So what we basically did is we either had a table environment or environment where they were set up in a regular classroom format but when we were doing the activities where we needed visual communication among everybody, that's where we encouraged everybody to face each other. But we had not really addressed the idea of having everybody face each other at all times. That's actually a very good idea.

Carole, did you want to add anything?

>> Carole Lazorisak: I do. In the practice of Deaf culture, quite often people will sit in a U shape. For a while in our training we were set up in a classroom style format which is the typical rows that you're used to. And sometimes, you know, if we have someone who wants to say something, they will come up to the front. So basically it was the rows with us at the front with the interpreters off to the sides, within our sight line. And even without that it was effective.

Go ahead, Chris.

[No Audible Response]

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. This is Lewis. I'm going to take it from here. Let's get to our next question, which is also a question about did you do anything about including DeafBlind communication in your training.

>> Carole Lazorisak: This is Carole. We discussed about how to work with the DeafBlind individuals as well and how they use their hands as far as tactile communication, how it's important for if you're behind a deaf person, to draw an X on their back so that the person knows that it's an emergency situation. So we covered some of those topics in the training.

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. This is Lewis. Let's move on to our next question.

Someone asked if you would like -- if you have an example of your PowerPoint activities to give out. So I would recommend that person to contact Carole and/or Chris. I will also offer to Carole and Chris, if would like to present anything, you can send it to me and I will post it there on the website for people to look at later if they would like.

Also, somebody reminded us --

>> Thank you.

>> Lewis Kraus: Somebody reminded us that there were CE credits for healthcare workers for those trainings. That was somebody from the Florida Department of Health.

Now, I think there's a few questions here about the Notify NYC. One second.

The first question was -- there was a great idea having the pre-scripted videos. How do you handle corrections or update of messages? This is directed to the NYC people.

>> Allison Pennisi: Thank you, Lewis. I can speak to that.

We actually had experienced making updates and corrections to some of the videos we created in the initial launch back in 2014. So what we did if we were able to is we brought back in the vendors, the interpreters themselves, to create those updates. And also it went through the same editing process where it went through video production and also working with the Operations and External Affairs Divisions to ensure that the message was up-to-date and accurate.

One of those big changes that we had going forward was updating all of the calls to action at the end of the videos to include the Video Relay Service. So in some cases we had to -- in some cases with these videos, we had to correct them several times in order to ensure that the signs were not only correct but also the calls to action were consistent as well.

So this is something that we had to deal with often. We've been able to develop a really great practice with this. So it happens less often. But in the beginning, there were some bumps in the road. But I will say that we have a very strong team here that have been part of this process from the beginning, which has really helped us.

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. The next couple of questions you may need to -- we'll see if you can answer quickly but they may need to contact you.

One question is: How do you start something like Notify NYC? Who do you have to contact to make it possible? And associated with that, someone else asked: What was the cost of your videos and how did you budget that? Any way you can get a lower budget to replicate the effort?

>> Ben Krakauer: Sure. I can talk to about how to start a notify program. First is you have to ask yourself the internal question of who you want to notify. And the answer is going to be very dependent based upon your organization or municipality. And then it's what do you want to notify them about and then getting a vendor in place to actually do all of the messaging.

So we have a third party vendor we contract with. We enter all the information into their system and they handle sending out e-mails, the telephone calls, the text messages, the social media posts. Globally it's called the Emergency Messaging and Notification Space, EMMS. If you do a quick Google search for emergency notification vendors, you'll get a plethora of vendors that are out there. Really there's probably more than a dozen that are in the space right now. And you can bring them in and choose the vendor that works the best for you in terms of price and user experience and user interface.

And then as you build your program, you want to make sure that you develop a solid structure. Put your messaging together so that it's consistent with what you want to achieve as an organization; it's targeted for the audience that you're trying to reach. And then just start sending out messages.

>> Allison Pennisi: Lewis, I can speak to the budget question.

So, we actually have contracts in place for sign language interpretation so we obviously use sign language interpreters for outreach conferences and meetings, also for press events as well. But for filming for these Notify NYC videos, we actually, for the recent videos we only used a certified deaf interpreter and that's because we have somebody in-house who can communicate through American Sign Language. So for a two or three video run it cost us roughly \$700 for that particular service.

However, one thing I will say is not only looking to see what vendors are out there that can provide ASL and CVI but looking into community partnerships as well. You may have people in your community who are willing to provide these services for little to no cost. And that also is certainly helpful. It's helpful for us when we have people in-house that are able to communicate through these languages, too.

>> Lewis Kraus: Thanks, Allison. I think the question may have been about the video part of it. Maybe you answered it correctly but I'm curious to know the answer to how did you set up the budget for the video part of it.

>> Allison Pennisi: Right. So for video production we actually had a video production vendor contract in place for the first round of videos. But as Jonathan mentioned, we did a lot of the video production in-house. So what was done on our end, under the communications unit, was we did a lot of training with different video, editing programs that are out there. So it was really staff time and resources that were dedicated to it. So this was one project, for example, that Jonathan was especially dedicated to.

And that just meant repurposing some of the other priorities we had to other people that were on staff at the time.

So that's really I think the best way that I can answer that is depending on what you decide to do. If you have in-house capabilities to create videos, it's certainly recommended. But having a vendor in place if it's something that you don't have those capabilities in-house, it's also an option to seek out as well.

I know that there are budgetary constraints for everyone including us. So it's definitely something to keep in mind. It's just to look at, as Ben mentioned, who is the audience you're trying to reach, what types of notifications do you want to develop, and then looking at it, what is the budget and the resource that we have.

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. Great. Thanks.

The next question, you talked about your new division and people were wondering whether this person, is it somebody from your division has a seat at the city EOC?

>> Allison Pennisi: Yes, we do. We have a -- several dedicated staff members to the disabilities access and functional needs division. And as part of our emergency operations structure we have dedicated personnel that focus specifically on disability access and functional needs issues before, during, and after an emergency. So they're part of the entire emergency management process from planning through recovery and all the way back over to planning again, which is really helpful for us. And it's also embedded throughout all of the different divisions here at New York City Emergency Management. So this is not just something that happens in the EOC. This is something that happens during blue sky times as well.

>> Lewis Kraus: Great. Thank you.

I do want to remind people. If you are not familiar with the archive of these webinars, there was a previous webinar about communications with deaf and hard of hearing in emergencies, about a year ago or so, a year and a half ago. So do make sure that you peruse the archives and see what's there because there may be other resources that are there for you that you may be interested in.

And to that end, another participant here mentioned that there is a toolkit from the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf. It's at [www.wisdeaf.org](http://www.wisdeaf.org).

Before -- just a couple more questions. We're running out of time.

The comment, Carole, that you used about drawing an X on someone's back to signal them of an emergency. Someone wants -- has a question of how wide and well accepted is that approach.

>> Carole Lazorisak: That's widely used for individuals that are DeafBlind. So, yes, very widely used.

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. And back to the New York City people --

>> [Multi-voice overlap]

>> Chris Littlewood: We make sure that people understand that that is something not shared with general public, that that is for public safety professionals in most cases. We don't want somebody to abuse that particular sign or try to cause problems for somebody that is DeafBlind.

>> Lewis Kraus: Thanks, Chris. My apologies. I didn't realize you were going to add and I spoke over you.

All right. The next question. New York City people, can you share statistics of the video use say on a monthly basis? Interest on the public use, how often and any surprising data?

>> Allison Pennisi: So we have about, as we mentioned earlier, roughly 80 videos pre-scripted. So any message that goes out related to these 80 topics so it could be from weather to a notice emergency such as a building explosion, those are all disseminated with the video link. So whether that's through Twitter or through another means such as e-mail or text message, there will be a link to the videos that way. We also keep the statistics of the number of use for these videos available publicly on our YouTube Channel, which is [YouTube.com/notifynyc](http://YouTube.com/notifynyc).

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. Thanks so much.

We realize that many of you may still have questions for our speakers and apologize if you did not get a chance to ask your question. We have all of their contact information here on their slides or you can also contact your regional ADA Center at 1-800-949-4232 to ask questions as well.

You will receive an e-mail with a link to the online session evaluation. Please complete the evaluation for today's program as we really value your input and want to demonstrate the impact of these sessions to our funder.

I want to thank our speakers today, Carole and Chris, Allison, Ben, Jonathan, for sharing your time and knowledge with us. It was really interesting. I hope everyone out there who listened also found it to be interesting as well.

For all of you, a reminder again that this session was recorded. It will be available for viewing next week at [www.adapresentations.org/archives](http://www.adapresentations.org/archives), as well as all the slides will be there as well.

Thank you all for attending today's session. We look forward to seeing you on our next one, August 11. The next webinar is an ADA National Network Learning Session, Disaster Behavioral Health and People with Access and Functional Needs: Resources from the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA.

Have a great rest of your day, everyone.

Bye-bye.