

REALTIME FILE

Pacific ADA Center  
ADA NATIONAL NETWORK LEARNING SESSION:  
ONE YEAR AFTER HURRICANE MARIA HOW IS PUERTO RICO  
FARING AND HOW ARE THEY PLANNING FOR THE NEXT  
DISASTER?  
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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. This webinar is brought to you by the Pacific ADA Center on behalf of the ADA National Network, made up of 10 regional 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.

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This is the fifth 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 covers topics in 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. Upcoming sessions are 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 p.m. eastern, 1:30 p.m. central, 12:30 p.m. 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. And those notices go out two to three weeks before the next webinar and open that webinar to the registration.

You can follow along on the webinar platform with the slides but if you are not using the webinar platform, you can download a copy of today's PowerPoint presentation at [www.adapresentations.org/schedule.php](http://www.adapresentations.org/schedule.php).

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 and the speakers and I will address them at the end of the session. So feel free to submit them as they come to your mind during the presentation. To submit your questions, type your question in the chat area text box or press the control m and enter in the chat area. If you are listening by phone and not logged into the webinar, you can ask your questions by e-mailing them to [adatech@adapacific.org](mailto:adatech@adapacific.org).

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Today's National Network Learning Session is titled, One Year After Hurricane Marie; How is Puerto Rico Faring and How are they Planning for the Next Disaster? As our attention is now with the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Michael, we wanted to remember to continue looking back at areas that are still recovering. Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico about one year ago. In this presentation members of the Puerto Rico Disability Community Relief Network, PRDCRN, will review the impact of the hurricane on people with disabilities and how this experience moved them to create a disability network that is involved in disaster planning, response, and recovery issues for people with disabilities in the future.

Today's speakers are Betzaida Ramos, a licensed social worker in Puerto Rico with

20 years of experience with socially marginalized populations including children, adolescents, adults and people with disabilities. She has been the Executive Director of Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente, or MAVI for its Spanish acronym, the largest Independent Living Center in the Caribbean that serves over 2,000 people with disabilities. Since Hurricane Maria, Ms. Ramos has been actively participating with the response, recovery and mitigation efforts of Puerto Rico by participating in many work groups in Puerto Rico and the United States.

Dr. Carol Salas Pagan has been the Director of Puerto Rico University Center for Excellence in Education, Research and Service on Developmental Disabilities, PR/UCEDD, since November 2015. Before she was the Associate Director for almost three years. As a doctor in clinical psychology and previously a PR/UCEDD trainee, she also graduated from the National Leadership Institute. She represents the PR/UCEDD in the Multi-cultural Council and on AIDDs National Diversity Advisory Council. Currently she is faculty of the Graduate School of Public Health of the Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. She is also an appointed member of the Puerto Rico Protection and Advocacy Office Board and member of the PR-DD Council. Locally, Dr. Salas is an active member in diverse Advisory Councils and boards of nonprofit organizations for the Protection, Advocacy and Independent Living Movement for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and Violence Against Women.

Myraine Roa-Mendez is the Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Developmental Disabilities Council. She holds a degree in political science and a Juris Doctor. She is the graduate of the Leadership Institute for Cultural Diversity, Cultural And Linguistic Competence from the Georgetown University and a founding member of the Disability Community Relief Network. Through her work at PRDCRN she is promoting the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of emergency management. She is also supporting systems change with the creation and implementation of a training curriculum at all levels on emergency management for people with disabilities.

Betzaida, Carol, and Myraine, would you like to take it from here?

>> Dr. Carol Salas Pagan: Good evening, everybody, from Puerto Rico. Good afternoon.

>> Can you hear us ok?

>> Lewis Kraus: Yes, you sound fine.

>> Dr. Carol Salas Pagan: Ok. Good evening from Puerto Rico, everyone. We are very thrilled and honored to be speaking to all of you in this afternoon. So let me go ahead.

I can move the slide.

>> Lewis Kraus: I can do that for you if you would like.

>> Dr. Carol Salas Pagan: Ok. Here we go.

So, first of all, we want to start the presentation with a brief introduction of where we are and who we are, our island. We are located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. And we are very close to the Dominican Republic and to the west of the Virgin Islands.

Puerto Rico is a big island with smaller cays, including the Vleques, Culebra, Mona, Desecheo, and Caja De Muertos. In the islands we have 78 municipalities around the island. This is a map to give you a sense. As you can see, they are two municipalities but they are not located within the island. So to get to those municipalities, you need to have a boat or by airplane transportation. To the west, they are not inhabited but they are used as tourism and research facilities on the island.

Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. We have a Hispanic heritage, culture, religion, and

language. We are the smallest of the biggest ant hill in the sea. We are American citizens, born American citizens. And because of that, since we are a part of the U.S. and are American citizens, we do have some illegal immigration from other Hispanics it's quite common, especially from the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

These demographics that I'm about to show you, I want to let you know that these are based on the American Community Survey and they are all before Maria hit the island. As you may see throughout the presentation, things have changed especially in the demographics of the island after the hurricane with all the immigrations of the Puerto Ricans to the islands.

So before Maria, the median age was 39 years old. The percentages you may see in the presentation are the estimates of percent of population based on the age. So under 5 years we had a 5.2%, 78% were 18 years and older, 17% was age 65 and over. As you can see, 95% of the Puerto Ricans speak Spanish and 5% speak only English.

In Puerto Rico our main language, which is Spanish, but we do use English as second language. And English is taught through the public systems and the schools. And at the universities.

Before Maria, below poverty, 45% of people in Puerto Rico were considered to live under poverty compared to the mainland which the estimate was 15% of people in the mainland living under poverty.

On the economics, before Maria and I believe after Maria we have been considered and we are the poorest jurisdiction of the United States. We used to have, before Maria, a population of 3.5 million residents. And as I said before, 1/4 of the population live under poverty, but we included for you to compare that the poverty level of people with disabilities in Puerto Rico is higher of people without disabilities. So we reflect what you see. As you can see, 50% of people with disabilities of Puerto Rico versus 38% poverty level of people without disabilities in the island. And that was, again, before Maria hit the island.

As you can see in this next slide, this is a comparison of the income per capita of different states, including Puerto Rico, and the percentage of people living under poverty.

As you can see, Puerto Rico, the income per capita and the percentage of people living below the poverty level are very high. So, yeah, we are about three times more poor than the poorest states of the mainland.

On the disability employment rate we wanted to give you this information that people with disabilities are 58 -- the employment rate, people with disabilities, is 23%. And there is a gap between people with disabilities and people without disabilities which are employed right now. And this was before Maria, again.

And then Maria came, as we usually say. Many of you may be aware, on September 20, almost a year ago, Puerto Rico suffered the onslaught of Hurricane Maria. And it was an event that changed the lives of Puerto Ricans, including the people with disabilities in the island.

Ok. Maria entered the island as a Category 4 hurricane with winds up to 155 miles per hour. We had reported 40-inches or more of rainfall that caused river overflows and actually it caused areas that were not flooded ever before to be flooded. The ocean waves were up to 25 feet high. And it covered -- Maria was so big that it covered the whole island, crossing diagonally. It hit land by the east town, south of the island, and exit through the northwest of the island. And because of the hurricane, practically the whole island was under the hurricane.

100% of the island was left without power. More than half of the island was left without potable water. The whole communication system went down. Including our Doppler radar got broken by the hurricane. So in the midst of the hurricane we didn't have true information about where the hurricane was because the Doppler radar was not working, cell phones were not working, no internet connection, and very small areas had connection for weeks.

The gas stations, the ones that were able to survive -- most were destroyed but the one that had gas were not able to re-open because they didn't have power to re-open and distribute gas. Only one radio station was operational for weeks. No TV. So people depended on only one radio station where all the reporters and people gathered around to start disseminating information to the communities. We lost 98% of our vegetation and trees.

As you may have seen on the news, we had communities with collapsed roads. They were uncommunicated by land because the bridges collapsed and the roads were wiped out. They were isolated. They had no access to anything. So the local stores were not able to operate. Local farmers were not able to operate. And there was no way of getting to those communities to deliver supplies.

The majority of the island's hospitals lost power. The ones that got to operate, after a week, were doing so on generators so that was a big crisis because they had high demands of people needing services but they were not able to provide those services to communities. And in the aftermath of the hurricane, the emergency personnel of the government and FEMA had to rescue approximately 2,000 people in boats during the night because, as I said before, a lot of our areas that were not too close to floods started flooding because of the high tide and all the rain. The rivers could not get to the sea so the tide flooded a lot of areas that were not supposed to be flooded before.

We lost agriculture, which is one of our major economic pillars. An estimated 472,000 homes sustained damages. 25,000 to 30,000 were destroyed.

Still today, as we are here speaking to you, to the audience, we have people that still are living under [Indiscernible] from FEMA because they have not been able to get their homes fixed, their roofs fixed.

And as you have heard, we have a lot of migration to this day and we're still wondering what people are doing about if they're not going to extend that program and if they are going to be able to come back to the island or stay in the states.

The original estimate of deaths has no longer been used. The reality is not what we had hoped but on the Harvard and George Washington University studies both estimated death toll of people related to the hurricane that could be at least almost 4,600 people. And we could tell you from our experience, and being on ground or deployed two, three days after the hurricane, and for a year working here in the island, that most of the people that died were people with disabilities and with special healthcare conditions that could not be provided with services or access services due to complications that took the toll of the hurricane and died.

Again, this is a literature review of this study. As you can see on the slide, the risk of death was 45% higher and persistent of the people of the poorest municipalities of the island and especially for older people and people with disabilities who could not access the services that they needed.

This is data revealed by the local government. 68% of the people who died between September and December of 2017 in Puerto Rico was mired to the catastrophe caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, as I said before, and also revealed by the Demographic Registry

established that most of the deaths recorded in that period occurred among people who were in need of special healthcare services, in the hospitals, and people who needed some special healthcare needs and service.

Similarly, deaths -- all the deaths occurred through those months immediately after the hurricanes, the data study revealed and as we know here deployed in the island, we know that they were related to people with chronic disease and also with disabilities.

So right now I'm going to pass the microphone to my fellow, Myrainne Roa-Mendez, the Puerto Rico DD Council Executive Director. She will take it from here.

Thank you.

>> Myrainne Roa-Mendez: Hello. Good afternoon to all. Thank you for joining us. I will be talking to you about continuing to talk about the aftermath of the hurricane and how we tried to move on and move forward.

As you can see in the next slide, immediately after the hurricane, the migration skyrocketed. Preliminary estimates suggest that 270,000 people left Puerto Rico in the first month after the hurricanes.

Meanwhile, there's data from the movement of passengers that shows that suggests that migration indicators that Puerto Rico lost 3.7% of its population within the first two months after the hurricanes. In fact, by October of 2016, Puerto Rico had lost 85,500 more people than had already arrived. Migration was sky high during that time.

The next slide shows that the exodus of Puerto Rico and states where Puerto Ricans went to after leaving.

So as you can see, the chart shows you the lower band estimates are doubled the amount of people, migrants, registered during the prior three years. So Puerto Ricans fled to Florida, Pennsylvania, and those states received probably double they had received prior years.

Also, there was a mental health crisis. And we are still suffering from this mental health crisis. The number of suicide-related calls to the suicide prevention hotlines doubled from 2,046 in August to 4,548 in January according to the health eliminate department statistics. And also, suicide attempts also climbed from 782 in August to 1,000 in January. This is information from the USA Today Network.

As Carol mentioned earlier, the poverty levels also rise. The census information center of the University of Puerto Rico has established that poverty ratings for Puerto Rico has gone up from 44.3% of the population to more than half of the population living under the poverty level.

So after the impact of the Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico we had a crisis of shelters. There was only one shelter with access and functional needs for people with disabilities in the metropolitan area only. So people outside the metropolitan area did not have access to those shelters, probably because there was no going through the area where they were or they did not want to leave their community. Shelters did not have generators. And the one that had generators didn't have enough fuel to run the generators all day every time.

The issues with the hospitals that were destroyed after the hurricanes, many of them were closed while others were providing partial services. And those that were not working at full capacity. There was a diesel crisis, too. Those hospitals that were work at half capacity were impacted, too, because they couldn't provide the services. And some hospitals were only accepting critical cases.

So if your situation or medical condition wasn't that big, you just had to go home

because hospitals were not receiving any more patients.

There was also a crisis with the dialysis centers that were damaged and had no electricity. Some centers were prepared but were not prepared to be working without any electricity for such a long period of time. They were just prepared for a loss of electricity for one to three days, not weeks as we were. They were not offering services regularly as they used to. Some centers had to cut their services for dialysis to probably one treatment a week.

And as an example of how bad the situation with the dialysis centers were, right now, just a week ago, in the little islands that Carol talked about, just last week they received a mobile dialysis center that was taking others. So they were still having that issue of dialysis one year after the hurricane.

As I said, equipment was a big problem, too. First we lost some of our equipment because some of the providers were impacted by the hurricanes. So people lost their equipment or when they were trying to replace them, insurance did not pay for the replacement of their equipment. Some people were living without their assistive technology equipment or the medical equipment.

As I said, people that were within the shelters did not have immediate access to medical services. So medical conditions worsened. And then hospitals were not equipped to receive those people that were having medical conditions worsened.

The situation with the communication was very bad. 24 hours after the hurricane hit Puerto Rico there was only one radio station in the whole island. So there wasn't a way to communicate. There wasn't a way to receive information. And that loss of communication left -- there was no TV. The lack of communication left the Deaf community without any source of information of what to do, where to go, where to get assistance, how to apply for FEMA services. So there wasn't a lot of information for that community.

The community -- the communications continued within the municipalities, too, and the state agencies, central government of Puerto Rico, making it very difficult to assess the extent of the damages in the municipalities and, therefore, trying to manage the response efforts. So not having access to some of those municipalities didn't help us in planning what to do or where to go to offer services.

So in Puerto Rico, we were not planning for alternative energy sources, sources of energy. Right now we are looking to every single one of the alternative energy sources but before the hurricane people were not prepared and people with disabilities that required energy for life-saving equipment had to purchase generators after the hurricane. And as we know, those generators are not for continued use. And sometimes have problems with voltage and they damage the equipment, creating a problem of having to replace those equipments and there was also the rationing of fuel, of gas and diesel and gasoline, which also created a problem because to do long lines, families had to leave their family member with disability at the home to do a line of probably 10, 12 hours. So there was a lot of care for people with disabilities when they were trying to find a way to survive and help their family members survive.

Of course, there was no power. There was no way of opening pharmacies. There was no money. And there was a problem with pharmacies which created a shortage of medications. The medications that we were receiving, there was first aid medication. It wasn't specific -- special medications for specific medical conditions.

So there was an issue, also, with some of the health plans that were not allowing the pharmacies to cover for the refill of the medications that was a big issue, too. There was a

crisis of oxygen in the island. The oxygen producers in the island were decimated. We had to rely on oxygen getting into the island. So what little oxygen that was revved was given to the hospital and -- that was received was given to the hospital and there was no plan to supply oxygen to people that were in their houses or were not in the hospital. So that was another big issue that we had, too, which then created -- made the conditions worsened because they were not receiving their medications correctly or were not receiving their oxygen which then had to go to those hospitals that were just giving partial services which made that a big issue, a continuous loop of not having services.

So, now, after all that we experienced and after our partners, my partners, started to identify all of the situation that we were encountering and we were trying to help our community with disabilities, we decided to work together because we couldn't continue working separately if we wanted to have success within the relief efforts. So we decided to join in the Puerto Rico Disability Community Relief Network. And we didn't know how we were going to do it at the moment. We were just reacting.

So the Puerto Rico Disability Community Relief Network is born by the collaboration of the Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente, the Independent Living Center, the Protection and Advocacy system of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program, University Center for Education and Excellence on Disabilities, and Puerto Rico Disabilities Council which I am the Executive Director.

MAVI, as I said, is the biggest Independent Living Center in the Caribbean. And Betzaida is the Executive Director. The Protection and Advocacy system program addresses the impairments problems, needs and complaints. Of course, the Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities through the assistive technology, providing access to assistive technology services which the Executive Director is our friend Maria Miranda. And the Puerto Rico DD Council that works to promote full integration and inclusion of people with disabilities in the U.S. and its territories. And last but not least important, the University Center for Excellence in Education, Research and Service on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Puerto Rico that offers community living, training, educational activities and continuing education in the areas of developmental disabilities aimed at professionals, students, people with disabilities, families, and the community. It is directed by Executive Director Dr. Carol Salas Pagan.

So that's how we started. Now, Betzaida Ramos is going to conclude with what we've done since the hurricane impacted the island and what our plans for the future are.

So I will leave you now with Betzaida Ramos.

>> Betzaida Ramos: Good afternoon to all. It's a pleasure to be here with you.

As Myraine was saying, as presented previously, it was chaos. It was chaos after the hurricane. Everyone was scrambling to get back on their feet. And agencies, many of our agencies suffered damages to their structures. So Carol's office was completely demolished. Myraine and Janet's offices had no power, no electricity, no form to get there.

So our agencies, per se, were scrambling as well. We were witnessing with our own eyes what was happening as our colleagues were at the command center, at the Puerto Rico Convention Center, whereas part of government agencies, all of the leadership of those agencies, had to convene at that facility.

As you can see, this was such a catastrophe. No one was prepared for this magnitude. So both state and municipal governments, as Myraine said, doesn't have any type of communication with one another. There was no way to coordinate efforts. State and federal

still hadn't established clear lines of communication.

And my colleagues at the convention center trying to establish, ok, what are we going to do with the people with disabilities? How are we going to get to them? What kinds of services are we going to provide? There was no answers no one knew. Everyone was trying to deal with the big picture and no one was really looking at what was happening with our people with disabilities and what was going to be done with them.

So seeing that lack of response on behalf of our state agencies, we decided as agencies to come together and establish a plan upon ourselves.

Keep in mind that at this point there was no gasoline. I mean, if you wanted to move from point A to point B, you better hope that you put gasoline in your car because at this moment you would probably have to do 12 hours, four to 12 hours, in order to get a little bit of gasoline.

So for one agency on its own it was impossible to provide response efforts. So thankfully we have all worked together in the past. We had strong collaborative relationships already in place. So Carol got us all together. And one week after the hurricanes we came together and started working to see how we were going to move towards identifying and responding to the needs of people with disabilities.

So one week after, we all met together. We created an action plan. And we decided, ok, first thing we need to do is establish a needs survey. We need to see what the needs of the people with disabilities across the island -- and keep in mind most of our agencies are located in the metropolitan area, which is sort of the northeastern part of the island. We wanted to get the whole picture of what was happening all across the island.

So we established this action plan. We divided the island amongst all of our agencies. We divided the 78 municipalities. And we all started visiting shelters, elderly homes and hospitals. And we started to administer a needs survey.

We were receiving an influx of e-mails and calls from people from abroad. What do you need? How can we help you? So we had to take this first step of establishing these needs surveys to see what the needs were so that then we could reach our partners in other parts of the U.S. and outside of Puerto Rico so that we could let them know what was needed across the island, to deal with the needs of people with disabilities.

So we did the needs survey. We went out to these shelters. We created a call center because obviously not everyone was going to be at shelters or in elderly homes or hospitals.

So we also established a call center so that people from other parts of the island that were not at these facilities but had needs could call in if they were lucky enough to have a phone line or some type of connection to call us. But we also had the alternative. We created a collection center where we got thousands and thousands of articles that we later handed out to people with disabilities to help them survive in the first few weeks of the aftermath.

Because what we saw is that most of the response efforts that were carried out at the municipal levels when supplies were handed out, these supplies were taken to a central point in a municipality, say a basketball court or a park within a neighborhood, for people that were bedridden, people with mobility issues, the deaf population. They had no idea that they were supposed to go to that point so they were not able to access that point. So we went to the homes. We went with the supplies we gathered in the collection center and we started going home to home providing the supplies and the equipment that these people needed.

And throughout these services, we impacted more than 9,000 families on the island which represented approximately 68 of the 78 municipalities of the island. The municipalities

that we were not able to reach were those that were in the more western part of the island where although we have an Independent Living Center in that region, there was no way to communicate or coordinate response efforts with them.

But even so, we impacted 68 of the 78 municipalities. We provided food, water, clothing, medications, assistive equipment, personal hygiene products, adult diapers, children diapers, first aid supplies, solar generators, battery backups, portable stoves. You name it, we were getting them. And we were going out into the island and providing them to people with disabilities. And something that they really were require wrg gasoline cards. Because people with disabilities that had assistive equipment needed their generators on 24/7. And these generators were really sucking up gasoline at an incredible rate. And their income was not enough for them to have to keep purchasing, not to mention the lines that they had to make in order to get the gasoline.

So we provided gasoline gift cards and any other special requests that people had and needed we would move mountains in order to get supplies to them, in order to be able to see to their needs. And this would not have been possible if it weren't for the incredible amount of collaborators that we had. One of the main ones, and we say this everywhere we go, Portlight, disaster strategies, said here I am. From day one they put people on the ground. They gave us supplies. They gave us contacts. They contacted us with other collaborators in the U.S., some of them being Trach Mamas of Louisiana that sent us an incredible shipment of medical supplies and equipment, FODAC, the City of Houston, Texas, a local foundation Unidos that had been helping us with our educational efforts.

But these people were critical in the aftermath. It was vital in helping us get supplies, money, equipment, anything that was needed. And to this day, I need to say, we are still providing some of this equipment because there are still people, as Myrainne said that have not been able to get their equipment replaced because of issues with their insurance plans. So one year later we are still providing supplies to people that need them.

So within our first meeting -- our initial efforts were geared towards response and recovery. So we did this supply -- handing out these supplies -- I mean, the response effort went on for months. Recovery lasted a shorter period because the response effort lasted so long.

Within this process we decided, ok, we're dealing with response and recovery but we have to think long term. The network needs to establish long-term plans on what we're going to do to avoid the situations like the ones we just lived by, continue to occur in the future.

So we established a long-term plan. And within that long-term plan we decided that we had to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. It was clear from our experience that our emergency plans did not take into consideration the disability population. So we had to move towards advocating for these rights. We had to build capacities not only in our individuals but also public and private organizations and communities.

One thing we've learned is as individuals, as communities, we can't just sit around and wait for the government to come and provide aid. We need to prepare beforehand. We need to be ready for anything that can come.

So part of our long-term plan is to create -- build capacity among all levels of society. We want to disseminate what evidence we are accumulating and disseminate this information to promote research, evaluation, and the creation of better emergency preparedness measures and plans. And we need to be involved in all aspects of the emergency preparedness; namely, the planning, response, and recovery phases as well.

So from day one we've been working towards this plan and we have had quite a few accomplishments. We have been advocating not only with regard to the local level with Puerto Rico legislature where there have been quite a few legislative pieces that have tried to pass since Hurricane Maria. We have been very vocal with regard to these legislative pieces and what we think the impact should be on our people with disabilities.

We were also at Capitol Hill in Washington , D.C., advocating for the use of the CDBG-DR funds that were estimated to arrive in Puerto Rico, which is \$18 billion, that we want to ensure that are used following Universal Design that are inclusive to the greatest degree possible for people with disabilities. We have been providing workshops. We received funding from Red Cross and from a private foundation in Puerto Rico.

So we have started the past building piece. We are providing these workshops not only for individuals but also different workshops for agencies so that we can learn to prepare better for emergencies. We have created a toolkit which is being handed out to people that will facilitate their preparation as well. We have been working very closely with FEMA from day one. We have been very active with them throughout the response and recovery phases. And we continue to work with them in other efforts that they carry out as well.

We were invited to present our collaborative effort and our results at the Getting It Right Conference sponsored by Portlight in May 2018. And we will also be presenting at the Virginia Emergency Conference in 2019, March of 2019, as well.

We are working actively with FEMA with regard to the development of the Core Advisory Groups that we hope will bring together different community disability organizations as a single voice before the Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency, which we still have not been able to access even one year after the hurricane. We are still trying to get their attention and make sure that we are sitting with them and discussing emergency preparedness issues for people with disabilities. So we're hoping that with these Core Advisory Groups we will open that door and the communication will finally start flowing.

We are actively participating in any and every work group that is created on the island with regard to emergency preparedness. Examples of this include VOAD, Volunteer Organizations After Disasters, Long-Term Recovery Groups, Strategic National Stockpile Program of the Department of Health, Red Cross Task Force, Portlight Inclusive Disaster Strategies Coalition, HUD Housing Plan. You name it, we have been there meeting after meeting, call after call.

Our efforts have been disseminated not only in Puerto Rico but in the U.S. and as such we participated in the National Hurricane Conference in Florida and received the recognition of the Alan Clive Service and the Memorial Award for our response and collaborative efforts with people with disabilities in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Thanks to all the collaboration we received, donations, we are -- we still have a stockpile of Durable Medical Equipment ready and available in case of another emergency, which is something we did not have and had to create from zero with Maria.

So where is Puerto Rico? My colleague is screaming out, we have but you never have enough. So we still are receiving as of this date donations of supplies, equipment, etc. And we are using them on a day-to-day basis because, like we said, we are still getting requests one year later for this equipment.

So where is Puerto Rico in general, the island, one year later? As of September 2018, the year anniversary, about 95% of the population had their power back on. One month later, or about three weeks later, the official statistics say that 100% of the

population had electricity, although very fragile. So any tropical storm or any wind storm or anything that happens in Puerto Rico, our power will probably go out at some point. So the electrical grid is still very fragile. But most of the population -- there are certain mountainous regions that are really, really, really in the center of the island that still do not have electricity and are not within these statistics.

Water supply is back to normal. Those bridges that collapsed because of the flooding have been temporarily built back so that communities can have access to services and other community members.

100% of the hospitals are fully or partially operational. Communication systems are in place. And one good thing is that a lot of these communications, telephone and capable companies, are now updating their technologies so that what happens now will not happen again in the future.

With regard to FEMA aid, FEMA approved 462,000 grants. 62,000 people that were denied filed appeals. 14,000 of those appeals have been approved. 48,000 homes are still in the appeals process.

And ineligibility rates for the appeals are 74% in Puerto Rico. And according to Mr. Michael Byrne, the FEMA Federal Coordinating Office, this statistic is similar to that of other states that had disasters in 2017, which are Florida, Texas, etc. They are more or less that same rate.

Most of the cases that are still in the appeals process are there because their lack of title ownership -- yes. Due to the lack of evidence of ownership, these families are now displaced from their homes or, as Carol mentioned earlier, they're still living with blue tarps on their homes. And the lack of ownership very common in Puerto Rico. There have been many legal assistance programs working underground in Puerto Rico trying to find an alternative to this situation.

This is a big issue right now because although FEMA has approved an alternate titleship document in lieu of the official document, a lot of the people whose appeals were denied are not aware of this new document. So it's been an uphill battle trying to get that information to them. FEMA's position on this is that they are announcing the availability of this alternate document but they don't have the man power to call each and every one of these people letting them know, hello, you have an alternate route here. You can file an appeal with this document. So a lot of these families still don't know that they're eligible for this help once again.

Also, 119,000 homes received approval for the temporary repairs under the Tu Hogar Renace program. 75,000, as of June, had begun to receive repairs. Those, 120,000. And only 34,000 have repairs completed.

So one year later or nine months later as of June 2008, there was still a big percentage of people that had no repairs done on their homes. As of July 2008, 1,744 people were still displaced under the temporary shelter assistance program of FEMA. The program was extended in August of 2008.

But as most of you saw in the news, this was a very big situation because families went to the U.S. They had no health insurance, no homes, no jobs, no educational services. And one year later a lot of them still had not been able to get their lives back on track, whether in the states or -- you know, their homes weren't ready for them in Puerto Rico either.

So that's the general situation of Puerto Rico. So what's the network doing? What are we going to do from here? So we want to continue this capacity building which we feel is

vital in order to be more proactive and ensure less damage and loss of life in the future. We want to continue disseminating our results to expand funding opportunities that will promote the sustainability of the network.

As I mentioned before, the networks has not received any official funding from any of our official -- from the agencies. So everything we're doing in addition to our regular work we're doing on our own time, on our own basis. And it's time consuming. It's draining. But we need to continue. So we need to ensure the availability of the network.

And we continue advocating among the state government to ensure that we get that seat at the table, that our voices are heard, that our recommendations are contemplated with regard to inclusive emergency disaster because we want to ensure, the vision of our network, we want to continue to work and strive for so that people with disabilities are safe and secure before, during, and after a disaster. And we want to continue working to ensure that we become a recognized network that advances the policies and practices, that improve the system standards of emergency preparedness for the well-being of people with disabilities in Puerto Rico.

So this is where, like we said, we are still one year after working, striving, doing everything we can to create system changes. And in the middle of all of this chaos and in the middle of all of this struggle, we are trying to keep calm. We are still going. We are strong. And we hope that eventually we will be able to achieve this systems change and ensure that any emergency preparedness plan that is established from this point on takes into consideration the needs of our people with disabilities.

So this is the end of our presentation.

Carol, take it from here.

>> Dr. Carol Salas Pagan: Thank you.

>> Lewis Kraus: All right. Thank you, guys, very much. Gracias. That was an incredibly sobering presentation of the status of how things -- what happened after the hurricane. But what you guys have done is incredibly encouraging as well.

So I do want to remind everyone this is your chance to submit your questions in the chat window. Just either write them in that room tab or you can double click on the Pacific ADA Center tab and just write your questions and bring them in.

Let me just remind you that this is recorded. It will be available at the [www.adapresentations.org](http://www.adapresentations.org) website next week. Also, the PowerPoints are also there right now. So if you didn't hear that at the beginning, that is still -- that is the case.

While people are writing questions in and we're awaiting those questions, let me sort of ask you the first couple of questions. A lot of people here who are listening are probably look at this and wondering, you know, could something like this happen in my community and what do we do. What's the lesson here that we can take away? What would you say to people here about how to think through how to proceed if they had the kind of devastation in their communities that you guys experienced?

[No Audible Response]

Carol? Betsy?

Are you guys on mute? You may want to unmute your phone.

[No Audible Response]

Well, let's see where they are. Hold on one second, everyone.

Ok. Unmute your phone, Carol, so that we can hear you. We are not able to hear you if you are speaking.

[No Audible Response]

Ok. One second.

Ok. We're unmuted here. Carol. So when you guys finished, I think maybe you put the phone on mute. Now you can unmute.

Sorry, everyone. Having a little technical difficulties here. We would love to hear the responses.

Dawn, can we have a check of the teleconference line? Can you say something so we can hear if the teleconference line is working?

[No Audible Response]

>> This is a test. Is that coming through?

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. That's working. So our teleconference line is working.

Well, all right. Let's work on that for a moment. Sorry, everyone. We'll get this straightened out as soon as we can. I'm going to look through and see if there's any questions that I can answer while they're trying to figure out their connection.

One second. We'll be right back, folks. I'm just going to see if we can figure out this technical issue. Thanks.

[CART Captions Standing By]

>> Hello? Hello? Hola? Can you hear us now, Lewis?

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. There we go.

>> Can you hear us?

>> Lewis Kraus: Yes. Now we can hear you.

>> So sorry. Like we said, our communication systems are still fragile. [Laughter]

>> Lewis Kraus: Well, that's a firsthand experience for all of us on that.

>> Betzaida Ramos: So with regard to the question that you placed as to what the biggest lessons learned throughout this -- there are many, right? One of the main ones is that we as individuals need to prepare better. You know, we all know that there's a federal obligation, federal laws protecting people with disabilities. But before disasters where the impact is so huge, we need to make sure that as individuals and as communities we are ready to roll, as we say, in case something of this magnitude hits. Because we need to be able to stand on our own two feet while the official aid sources eventually arrive.

And the other thing is that we definitely learned that emergency plans are not prepared for people with disabilities. Most of these plans are concocted and created for the able-bodied populations so system changes need to go on at both the me -- in the case of Puerto Rico, municipal, state, and federal levels as well.

And also one of the key lessons that we learned is that collaboration has been the key factor towards us being able to get our response on the ground and ready in record time. If it weren't for these collaborative efforts, we would not have been able to accomplish all of that that we've accomplished so far.

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. Great. Yes, those are all important points and ones that we've been emphasizing here. So I'm glad that you had the same thing to confirm.

Ok. So we have some questions for you. So let's take the first one.

How long after the hurricane did the group begin your efforts?

>> Dr. Carol Salas Pagan: The hurricane -- oh, one week after the hurricane hit we were able to get out of our homes, because we also have families and we had our personal struggles and some of us were not able to get out of our communities. But after we managed to get out ourselves, of our communities, and communicate, we started meeting one week after the

hurricane.

>> Lewis Kraus: Right. Go ahead.

>> Myraine Roa-Mendez: I would like to add something else. Just four days after the hurricane, accesses to main streets and expressways and roads were opened so we all went out of our houses to see the impact of our offices and our work areas. And then when we found out what was going on, as some of us are state employees, we went to the joint field office to see what was going on regarding services for the community with developmental disabilities and disabilities. So we met there four days after the hurricane. And once we started receiving information of what was being done, we started noticing that the needs that we were finding out people with disabilities were having, we started working from there. So from four days on we started talking about what we were going to do. And from week one we then started full-blown needs assessment. Let's meet tomorrow. Let's start to see who can do what and who can we talk to.

So, yeah, it was pretty quickly, actually.

>> Lewis Kraus: Yeah. That's really interesting. And you were able to connect with even other -- the phone lines were down. So how did you connect with each other? You ended up at that meeting together or how did that work?

>> Actually, Myraine with the DD Council and the P&A are under the state agencies so they were at the government Central Management Emergency Center. So they met there. And I was able to communicate with them when I got here. We are the Medical Science Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. We are located in the center of the whole Caribbean, of the island and the Caribbean. So power was running here through a big generators because the whole island was coming to here, all the emergencies since we're the biggest hospital and service provider. So I was able to get some access to the phones here and I was able to connect my phone and actually through text message we just said let's meet where you are. We are here. Ok, I'll get there in an hour. And that's how we met. And communicated.

>> Lewis Kraus: Ok. That's pretty interesting. And resourceful for that whole period of time.

There is a question that is being asked that peaked my interest as well. Why was there only one shelter for people of disabilities instead of all shelters being able to handle different types of populations?

>> I'm so sorry. We're very passionate about this, as you can see. That has been one of our -- what we're advocating for. We had Irma first. And when we had Irma, we didn't have that big impact of Irma but our brothers and sisters from the Virgin island did. So they provided this central, great, open new center on the northern island, and actually for the Virgin Islands refugees, ok? So immediately they left it open. And then we got Maria: So they promoted that shelter as the one accessible for people with disabilities because it was prepared and it had generators and it had all the central offices of the government. So they just promoted that as their accessible shelter.

>> Betzaida Ramos: There were very few municipalities. Most of the shelters that were created across the island are schools, are public schools. And that's what's being used as shelters over here. So most of these schools don't have generators. They didn't have access to gasoline. They were not set up taking into consideration -- bottom line, we were not expecting a hurricane of this magnitude.

You have to understand that during the past decade Puerto Rico has been hit by many different types of hurricanes and so usually in the shelters they're there a couple of days, maybe a couple of weeks and people are out and into the communities. Pretty quickly

thereafter. However, due to the devastation, it was just very bad planning.

And part of what we're trying to promote with the training that we're providing at community and the local government levels is that per each municipality, obviously ADA specified, that all shelters need to be accessible. But when looking at accessibilities, they're just looking at physical barriers. They have the ramps, and that they have grab bars, etc. But the use of generators, the need for power for people with oxygen machines and medical equipment.

It was not taken into consideration. And a lot of the municipalities were not prepared for this. They were doing something good and efficient by creating this central shelter but what they didn't take into consideration was most of the people were not going leave their communities, were not going leave their loved ones, because this is where they feel a sense of, you know, community and also most of them didn't have the transportation to be able to come all across the island to San Juan in order to be able to use these shelters.

>> Lewis Kraus: And so given that, now planning forward do you think that's changed and the shelters are more accessible around the rest of the island, to the extent that they can be at this point in time?

>> Betzaida Ramos: We know of a lot of initiative that are occurring. Specifically I know of Red Cross that is creating an initiative where they are going into these schools identified as shelters. It's not all across the island. They are focusing on a certain part of the island where they are installing solar panels in order to promote a constant source of power. They are creating wells so that they can have a constant water supply as well.

And I know in conversations that I have with different municipal agencies and mayors, they are more aware of the fact that they need to have generators in their shelters. So I know a lot of movement has been going on with regard to that. Whether they will have the legal, gasoline to run those generators, we'll have to see in the future. But, yes, some lessons have been learned and some movement is going on with regard to that.

>> Dr. Carol Salas Pagan: And I want to add, from our end, next Friday, the 19th, we're going to have training. And we did it by invitation only. And actually we are inviting all the 78 municipalities, all the Housing department employees. And they have confirmed that they are going to be at the training, Housing Department in Puerto Rico is the one that is responsible for establishing and operating the shelters in Puerto Rico. So we have invited them, free to have a training on how to move from the medical view of people with disabilities to the community-based and emergency response and how to plan for a real accessible shelter for people with disabilities.

So it is going to be given by Marcie Roth, Executive Director of Portlight. We are flying her in next week. We are providing continuing education credits through our UCEDD for people that want to have those continuing credits. And we are doing this for free. And we are going to have them trained to have them interested. And we have invited, so far, all the municipalities and we have a very strong confirmation number by now.

>> Lewis Kraus: Great. That sounds fabulous.

Now, in the remaining couple of minutes that we have here, maybe you can tell -- we have a question about this. Maybe can you tell us a little bit about what's in your emergency management toolkit that you've been handing out.

>> Betzaida Ramos: Ok. The emergency toolkit has information on every type of emergency that occurs -- that a person can encounter whether nature or man-made. It has how to prepare for hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding, electrical storms, you name it; any type of

disaster. So the toolkit has information on what to do before, during, and after each of these disasters. It's geared specifically towards people with disabilities. So it will tell you what maybe the Deaf population should do, a person with mobility issues should do under these scenarios. And it also has some worksheets that will guide the person in the emergency preparedness process. So anything from this is what should go in your emergency bag, this is for your emergency bag for your wheelchair, this is a list that basically summarizes all of your medical conditions, all your medications. It's a very comprehensive toolkit.

This toolkit was actually created by the Wisconsin Council on Physical Disabilities, whom we have to appreciate and thank profoundly because they gave us carte blanche in translate this manual and adopting it to the needs of Puerto Rico. But it's very comprehensive. You can fully find it on their website. We are actually in the process of reproducing the toolkit. So once they are ready, they will be up on MAVI's web page as well. So people can download either the Spanish version on our web page or the English version on the Wisconsin Council of Physical Disabilities. But it's available to anyone and everyone that wants to download it.

>> Lewis Kraus: That's great.

And I should also put in a plug that ADA National Network also has a variety of toolkits for people to do their own planning as well. You can find that either at our website at [www.adapresentations.org](http://www.adapresentations.org) under the emergency publications and resources, or also at the National Network's website.

All right. Well, 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.

Please, you have information about them or you can contact your regional ADA Center if you have a general emergency preparedness or management question. And our number, again, is 1-800-949-4232.

You will all be receiving a link to an online session evaluation. Please complete that evaluation for today's program as we really value your input and want to demonstrate to our funder the value of our programs.

We want to thank all of our speakers today for sharing their time and their incredible stories and knowledge with all of us.

Again, just want to remind, again, that the session was recorded. It will be available for viewing next week at [www.adapresentations.org/archives.php](http://www.adapresentations.org/archives.php).

Next month please join us. We are going to have a session -- we're going to get a sneak peek at some legislation that is being prepared to include individuals with disabilities from those who are aging in the disaster preparation response and recovery process from the start, entitled: Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response and Recovery: Getting It Right. Watch your e-mail two to three weeks ahead of that for the announcement of the opening of registration for that webinar.

Again, thank you, Carol, Betsy, and Myrainne. We thank you for your time. And thank you, all, for your time in attending today's session. Have a good rest of your day.

We will see you next month.

>> Gracias.

>> Gracias.