

**Emergency Management and Preparedness -  
Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities**

Pacific ADA Center

Thursday, August 11, 2022 1:15-3:00 P.M. CT

>> LEWIS KRAUS: Welcome to the Emergency Management and Preparedness inclusion of persons with disabilities Webinar Series. I'm Lewis Kraus from the Pacific ADA Center, your moderator for this series. This series of webinars is brought to you by the Pacific ADA Center on behalf of the ADA National Network.

The 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.

Realtime captioning is provided for this webinar. The caption screen can be accessed by choosing the CC icon in the meeting control toolbar at the bottom of your screen. To toggle the meeting control toolbar permanently on, you can press the alt key and then press it again.

As always in our sessions, only the speakers will have audio. If you do not have sound capabilities on your computer or prefer to listen by phone, you can dial 1-669-900-9128 or 1-646-558-8656, and use the webinar ID of 845-3662-6656. Also I want to note that this webinar is being recorded and will be able to be accessed at ADA presentations in the archives section of emergency management next week.

This is the eighth 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 series topics 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 Disability Act of 1990, the ADA, and other relevant laws.

Upcoming sessions are available at [ADApresentations.org](http://ADApresentations.org) under the schedule tab in the emergency management section. 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.

You can download a copy of today's PowerPoint presentation at the [ADApresentations.org](http://ADApresentations.org) web page in the schedule section. 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 the session. So feel free to submit them as they come to your mind during the presentation. So submit those questions use the chat area text box. If you're using keystrokes, you can press alt and H and enter your text in that chat area. If you are listening by phone and not logged into the webinar, you can ask your questions by emailing them to [adatech@adapacific.org](mailto:adatech@adapacific.org).

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Today's ADA National Network Learning Session is titled "What Did They Say: Why Effective Communications Is Critical in Emergency Management." This webinar will review the importance of effective communication in emergency management using real-life examples and from the field speakers will address what effective communication means and how emergency managers can improve their public communication to make it effective to people with disabilities

Today's speakers are Aaron Kubey. Aaron is a certified deaf interpreter and Communication Access Specialist with FEMA since 2017. He graduated with his masters in public administration with a focus on emergency management in 2020. Aaron is a strong believer in effective communication access, especially in emergency management. Gay Jones is a Communications Access Specialist with FEMA. So I will now turn it over to you, Aaron and Gay. And Kevin, will you be speaking? So we can unmute you? Yes, okay. All right, Aaron and Gay, over to you. Gay, you are muted.

>> GAY JONES: I thought you were unmuting me. I'm sorry. I have known Lewis for a long time. So, anyway, I work at FEMA headquarters, and I have been at the headquarters since 2011 in this capacity. Over the last couple of years, the last five years that I have been working with Aaron, we have come up with a lot of different ways to look at effective communication access, and that is our primary focus today, is to give you some practical solutions to being able to provide this to your customers in the field. Next slide, please.

So I'm not going to go over the laws with effective communication. The ADA Centers have done a really good job of that over the years. I have been involved with the ADA Centers since 1990. I know they do an effective job of trying to train people on what the laws are and what they are expected to do. But when we talk about effective communication, we're talking about everything from written, spoken, and even alternative modes of communication that would allow people who do not effectively communicate to be able to talk to others and to communicate in their own mode. Next slide.

So, of course, what we're talking about is just about everybody. Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, cognitive and intellectual disabilities. Lots of limited literacy

and those with limited English proficiency. Aaron is going to go through a lot of information on how to make language more accessible, so that you can get the message out to the community better. Next slide, please.

So most of you may already know that when we talk about communication access, we're talking about access and accommodations. We're talking about alternative format, conceptual plain language, and accessible messaging. The last two are things that Aaron and I and a lot of people in the emergency management field has been working on for quite some time now. The accommodations access and alternative formats are kind of -- there's traditional ways of looking at providing accommodations to folks, and so hopefully after today you will see some other things come into play that will give you some alternative to what we traditionally think of as providing accommodations. Next slide, please.

I'm trying to deal with a chat room on top of...

So FEMA as a whole, like any other federal agency, is under Section 507, 504 and 508, the Rehab Act of 1973, and we also have strait and local for the Americans with Disabilities Act. So it's set up a little bit different, but the same principles are applied across the board. When we talk about effective communication, we look at 504 and 508.

Not only talks about interpreting and captioning, but it also is talking about how we get that information out to people through video product and other alternatives to -- for people to get. And that includes foreign language and audio description. Audio description is a little bit -- is fairly new in comparison to other things, but it really is developing quickly on being able to provide that within a video if you need to. Not every video needs to be audio described. So we'll go through some of that a little bit. Next slide.

This is the most important slide that we're going to talk about today. And for all of you out there -- and the huge variety of experience, I think this picture alone speaks volumes to what we're trying to do at FEMA. And so when we talk about equality, accommodations and accessibility, we hope to move from equality to accessibility, so that we can have more inclusive services, particularly at FEMA. Equality, we allow somebody into the classroom, but they may or may not be accommodated. They may not have the access that everybody else does. Accommodation in the second slide -- okay, so you now have an accommodation, and you may have the same, quote, access, but not really. It's an individual-based system and it's reactive. And the reactive part is that you have to have a process in place. People have to know about it, and then people have to respond to that process in order to get the accommodation. And for a lot of you on the phone call, like Aaron and I, and many people not only at FEMA but in federal government, that is -- developing the process can be rather difficult, and they change all the time, because people change, technology changes, and so you

don't always have a consistency in being able to provide an accommodation. And even if you do send out a message to say, if you need an accommodation, call such and such, it doesn't get to everybody either. So we want to be more proactive, and instead of having a -- there's still processes, but it's more proactive way to ensure that people are getting the program and services that they need. So when we do that, as you see in the first slide, you actually have made your program accessible so that instead of having to rely on a reactive way of getting an accommodation, you're actually providing that already.

So what are we doing at FEMA is taking a more proactive stance to how we provide accommodations, how we provide access to people at FEMA. So that's the goal. And by providing accommodations and providing equal access, and to buildings and so forth, it would allow us to be able to do that access piece. Aaron, do you have anything to add before I go on? I know you do.

>> AARON KUBEY: Yes. First of all, thank you very much. I would like to add, and I really want to emphasize that accommodation and accessibility, there is a big difference there., and it is important to keep them separate. With accommodation, that means we're going to provide the tools. That means interpreters, written language, etc., we're going to provide all of that. And that does not equate to accessibility. So accommodation is the tool. Accessibility is we're going to make sure that everything works. So for that we're going to make sure that we're getting the questions and we respond appropriately. And this is actually a conversation. So as we get the information, we will share that with other people. And that is going to be the accommodation versus the accessibility. So if you go to the next slide, please.

>> GAY JONES: Can I add something?

>> AARON KUBEY: Sure, yeah.

>> GAY JONES: Want to give you examples of what we're doing at FEMA to provide access as opposed to accommodation. When we talk about providing access, we are asking people, for instance, when they apply for services and they register for services for a disaster they need to provide us with their state relay service number that they have been provided if they signed up for that service. And for all of you ADA folks out there, Title IV has been around. It's the premier in communications services. And so each state is required to provide that service within, and along with that, like anything else, what happened in 1990 was the only thing that they had was "the TTY," and today they have a variety of services that have been developed because of technology changes. And because of that, we now have video relay service. We have captioning. We have TTY. We have online -- we have all this variety of services, but they're all controlled by the FCC and through the states. And so when you sign up for one of those services, in most cases, you are provided a specific number for that service. And so what happens is, if people would put that number down as their main number when they register for disaster assistance, that then allows that person to fully communicate with a FEMA person, because the communication goes both ways. If you put that

number down, the FEMA employee, the FEMA person will be able to call you back on that number and get direct access to captioning or an interpreter. And so you have that back-and-forth. That's access. We often think of something that FEMA has to do in providing a service that is access. But that's not necessarily true, that you can provide that number to FEMA, then you have that back-and-forth conversation. So when we talk about technology, technology is driving a lot of how we communicate, and it is driving how people with disabilities communicate. And as we move from an analog system, which is what 711 and a TTY is, to the digital system, the TTY is not going to be there, and it has been replaced by RTT or realtime text, which is available on any of your mobile phones. So I'm not going to get into detail about that, but as we move into more advanced technological advances, you're going to see a lot of federal agencies moving that way and companies moving towards more inclusive types of communication. And one of the bigger things that is going on right now, not only at FEMA but potentially other federal agencies and definitely the FCC is what we call direct video communication or access to communication for everyone, or ACE. And if you go to the FCC and type in ACE, you will get to what we're talking about. That is a direct communication to some, where in our case, if -- if and when this develops, it's a long process. Deaf individuals will be hired at FEMA to become agents like hearing professionals, and they will be professionals just like anybody else. So anybody who uses ASL can go on the platform or the computer and communicate with a person directly and register for services. And communicate with somebody who communicates in ASL. Not only that, but we also are looking at the captioning part of it too, which would be separate, because there's two separate pieces of technology

So as technology starts moving forward, one of the things that Aaron and I do is look at how those things fit into future technology needs for accessible communication. With that I'm going to send it over to Aaron and let him finish up the rest of the slide. Thank you.

>> AARON KUBEY: Thank you very much, Gay. So from now on I'm going to be talking about the language and talking about accessibility and you're going to be able to see in the slides, sometimes you can see people really struggle with how to understand the information, if it's sent out in print, if it's sent out in newspaper or something else. The problem is a lot of times written information is written at a 12<sup>th</sup> grade level or higher. And many hearing people have about a 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, whereas deaf and hard of hearing individuals tend to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. Also you have people who have a cognitive disability, etc., and so if you've got information being strayed at a 12<sup>th</sup> grade level, that is not accessibility. You are actually missing out on the communication. And so we have to be really careful who we are writing for. In general, when you have something printed that you want to share with the public, you want to make sure you're writing at a level that is going to match the people the information is being shared with. So you want to make sure that it's at an appropriate grade level for people to understand and access that information. Next slide, please.

As you can see right here, this is an example. You can see it says Gravis ideo patet rationis usu linguam. I'm sure you're trying to think, what does that even mean?

Next slide, please, if you can go down, right here. That is why it's very important to use simple conceptual language. So people can look at it and understand clearly exactly what is being said. Because we want to make sure that the average person can read that and understand. We want to make sure that it is equal to all people. We don't want people to look at it and have a misunderstanding. You want to keep it simple and conceptual. And then people can respond accordingly. Next slide, please.

We want to keep it in plain, simple language. What that means is we're going to provide the information in the most simple and clear way to understand. If you use English or captioning, many deaf or hard of hearing people don't have the strong enough linguistic skills in English to understand. You have to understand that their language is ASL first, so then they have to constantly try and translate between the two languages. And it doesn't always work that way. So if you keep in mind how we keep the information simple and clear and plain, then it will help for access, and people will understand it better. And also continuing with that two-way access. If we can go down to the next slide, please.

So when we talk about conceptual language, what does that mean?

Keeping that simple language. What that means, I really want to emphasize this. This doesn't mean you're dumbing down the information. That's not at all what we're saying. Keeping it simple as possible. That means that people can understand it, so that conceptual language means that you can take the simple language and then we can add on top of that as well.

And I really want to emphasize, you want to keep it clear and concise and plain, so people can look at it and understand. So you want to keep the concept of what is being said. So people can imagine, like an imagination of the language, they understand what you're doing and they can get a clear picture in their mind. There's no ambiguity that is going to be there. So, you know, sometimes we keep the plain English like if we're talking -- one moment, please.

So you want to keep the simple language on one hand and then we have the conceptual language as well. And we want to make sure that it's going to be a clear and easy communication.

A peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Plain language is peanut butter and the conceptual language is the jelly.

Next slide, please. So how do we make that happen? How do we keep that conceptual plain language? You're going to look at the information that you are trying to share. You know, also the context. We want to make sure that's very clear and it's easy to understand. Again, we don't want the ambiguity. We don't want to use huge

long words that maybe are not easy to understand. You want to focus on the point. And sometimes when you have that higher level language with really large words, it's harder for people to understand. So if you keep it more simple, basic language, then it's easier for people to understand and follow. Also you can use a lot of repetition. You know, think back to like your second, third, fourth grade. When you're learning new vocabulary, that type of wording is what you want to use. And you also want -- understand there is a lot of repetition, and you used the context to be able to develop the meaning for that and understand what is being said. You know, some words can have several different meanings and can be interpreted many different ways. You want to avoid that if at all possible. So we want to avoid that confusion. You know, maybe you say one word thinking it means one thing and the person misunderstands and thinks it means something else, you're going to lead to confusion. So you definitely want to keep it clear and concise so people can follow. Next slide, please.

So you can see what we're talking about here. Insurance will cover property that is in your pool I assume. And the word "cover," most people will look at that and think "cover," like a blanket that is covering something, or I have paper that is going on top of something. That is not at all what we mean. So you want to try and say "Insurance will pay for the property that is listed in your policy." So "cover," that's easy to lead to a misunderstanding. And that is how we want to make that conceptual language so it's easy to understand. Next slide, please.

You can see two messages here on this slide. You can kind of compare which one is more clear, which one is easier to understand, which is more conceptual language. So if you look at the first example there and read through that...

We want to make it more general for people to be able to understand it. So next slide, please. We've got many different examples here. Instead of signing them, you can go ahead and read them. It says you and your family can recover from the emergency. There's many different -- you can make sure you're ready and you have the preparations, and you can make those preparations today. And make sure everybody has -- everybody has their own unique needs when it comes to preparation. And you've got to make sure that you are ready for any type of interpretation -- I'm sorry, any type of an emergency, whether it's going to be a hurricane, weather changes, fires, earthquakes, etc., and you have to have your personal needs, you have to have your own personal emergency plan to meet what you need and to make sure your family is prepared in the best possible way.

So you want to talk about, you know, for people with disabilities, how can they take care of themselves? How can they get that support? And it says what you can do as an individual to prepare for what you need during that emergency situation. So it's going to make more sense to more people. It's a mouthful, I know I said that, but it's just kind of example 1 that you can look at.

Next slide, please.

So this is example 2. How are you and your family preparing for this before something actually happens? We want to make sure that you have -- before it happens, you have everything for your own recovery. You are going to have your own needs. Everyone is going to be prepared. Everyone has their own different needs that are going to happen during the emergency, whether it be a fire, hurricane, earthquake, hurricane or severe weather. So everybody needs to be prepared. And when you're aware of what your needs are and have that emergency preparation, you can make sure that everything is set for you when that happens. And people with disabilities are going to need different supports and different helps to make sure that they are prepared, and you can take that time to make sure prior to the event happening that all your special needs have been met. So then you can look at the two examples and you can see number 2 is more concise. It's more clear language. It's more conceptual language, it's more simple and to the point. With the first example, there's just a lot of words, a lot of big words, a lot of sentences going on, and it's easy to misunderstand the message or not have a clear message. I talked about with insurance, the word "cover." You can see that example number 2 is a better way to really make your point. Keep it brief and to the point.

Okay, may I have the next slide, please?

So, how can you look at this conceptually and make these changes yourself. And take a look at this paragraph and see how you can apply plain language to it. The applicant will be the primary source of information regarding his circumstances for the purposes of determining eligibility and need, and if the Secretary needs secure information from other sources, the Secretary will ask the applicant to authorize the release of information. The Secretary will inform the applicant of the kinds of information needed and the sources to be used. What can you do with that? Again, that's a lot. A lot of verbiage. So, let me give you 15 or 30 seconds to think about how you that -- change that into plain language.

Okay, next slide, please. First level answer. And I'm saying first level answer. This is a federal website called [plainlanguage.gov](http://plainlanguage.gov), and they made that change to the previous paragraph, and this is what they come up with. This is the plain language. So you will see that you will be the primary source of information regarding your circumstances for the purposes of determining eligibility and need. If we need to secure information from other sources we will ask you to authorize the release of information. We will inform you of the kinds of information needed and the source to be used. You will be the main point of contact for your disaster assistance application. So that's from the government website and that's the government's version of plain language on that website. So next slide, please.

So this is how I took the same verbiage from [plainlanguage.gov](http://plainlanguage.gov) and I added some more conceptual language to that to make it even more plain conceptual language. So, you will be the main point of contact related to your application and eligibility. If we need more information from other agencies, we will ask you to authorize releasing your



information from them to us. We will let you know what information we need from those agencies.

So, you can see that it's more concise and you notice, you know, with the other examples, the people might not have understood the first one. And what do they mean by sources? What do you mean by disaster preparedness? You know, all these things. So we have made these changes. Agencies, we give them some ideas. These are the places you can get information, organizations, for example, and I understand that concept. It's more an understandable concept. So that's much more concise and to the point.

Okay, next slide, please.

So now we're getting on to -- we've dealt with some of the language issues. So when you're trying to make accessible materials for distribution, there's print, there's different modes of communication. So now we get into accessible video, and what do we need for accessible video. And so you have to think, what do you need, what are you providing, is this going to be in American Sign Language, Puerto Rican sign language, there's different forms of sign language, international gestures, English, spoken Spanish. There are various languages that can be used. So who is your audience, and are you going to be speak English or Spanish or whatever, and are you going to be captioning in English? Will you be captioning in Spanish? The whole thing is a package there.

So you have to add audio description, for example, or, you know, make sure that is accessible. And consider all of these factors. And who is your audience? Is it just the public in general? Often it's that. But it's an internal audience of the general public. Or, you know, what are you trying to convey with this message? And how are you disseminating it? Are you putting it out on Facebook or other social media or Zoom or Twitter or you know, YouTube? And you have to think of the means of distribution.

Okay, next slide, please.

Okay, so you want to make an accessible video. So now what?

So first you have to ask... what is the purpose of making this video? What are you hoping to achieve with it? And then you might have your own library of accessible videos, and FEMA, we have our library of accessible videos that have been developed over 20 -- maybe 17 years or so. I imagine about 20. 17 to 20 years. I've just been with FEMA for a while. But we've been developing these things over time and there's 75 different movies and we keep on adding to them as we go along. So take a look at what videos you already have, like evergreen... what does that mean? We have to make sure that the movie is generally covering, it's not too specific, and we use this film. We can use some of these materials again and again for, you know, any disaster, or some are specific to a particular kind of disaster. So if you have like a library of video materials, check that first. You know, maybe you have something that is appropriate for

this context. There's no reason to make something all over again. You don't have to reinvent the wheel every time. So see what you've got. And then work with the head quarter Communication Access Specialists for your local organization or regional organization, and help determine if that video is actually needed. And can I have the next slide, please?

So the key components to making an accessible video is whatever program, whoever is responsible for that information, you have to partner with them to make sure the information is accurate, right? That's of primary importance. You know, because you, you don't want to make something and then say, no, that's not the right information. So make sure you partner with the appropriate organization to make sure the content is accurate, and then you want to develop what we talked about, you know, the people, consider their reading level and are we going for the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade level, and to make sure that your script is in plain language so it would be accessible for that target audience. And then you want to encourage the use of deaf interpreters or sign language interpreters, and if you're working with a deaf audience, for example, because they will be more comfortable relating to who the message is coming from. And then you might want to have captions or voiceover or both., and you might have a spokesperson, for example, to narrate the video. And just to make sure...

So like right now, I'm the face of FEMA for the deaf community, more or less. I'm trying to pull in some other people as well. So we can diversify who our representatives are. So we want to make sure we can accommodate or match the different communities that we are serving.

Next slide, please. So when you develop the accessible video script, you have to, again, think of who your audience is and what you're doing with it. Is it grandma or is it for young children, or is it for your neighbors? You know, write the script with that in mind. The conversational level. And you're trying to make simple points. So you write out the script. Again, partner with a program to make sure everything is accurate and conceptually correct, and go through all of that stuff. And it's appropriate to the context. And then when you have this script developed, you might have a Microsoft Word doc, for example, and you can look through it and then you can sign it in ASL and make sure that -- it should be about three minutes or so. It should take about three minutes to get the point across. You know, make sure it's concise. You know, maybe a half page could be 2 minutes or so. So take a look at it. And, you know, because people won't watch a video if it's overly long. If it's 25-minute video they're not going to watch the whole thing. Make sure it's concise and to the point. The goal is not to make too many points and you don't want to be too elaborate there.

Next slide, please.

Okay, now this next point is you added things, you have done the editing. At FEMA, we have -- we make all of our YouTube stuff accessible, and you can look at all of the

accessible movies or videos we have there, and then we disseminate those. We have our library and we try to see who needs -- which people could benefit from this. And we have our preparedness plan responsible for distributing these things. And we would include links and put it out on Facebook or, you know, whatever social media that you might want to use. So it's all ready for distribution. And work that out with the people in your region, the regional organizations and the partner that is you work with. This is very important. Whether it's flood or hurricane or, you know, water safety, whatever it is. So these videos have to be disseminated quickly. Through the appropriate media.

Okay, next slide, please.

So in a nutshell, I think that's pretty much it. We have had print accessibility, discussion of that, video accessibility, and I would like to welcome back Gay at this point. Gay, would you like to join in with us Gay, is there anything you would like to add, any other information? Gay, you're on mute.

>> GAY JONES: I think that when you're thinking about communication accessibility of anything, I think technology is going to be your driving force. The other biggest issue that I find still after all these years that I have done this is money. And it's getting easier and easier to make accessibility happen, but I want people to think about how they can think outside the box. Because we often get stuck on, well, I have this in-person interpreter at this meeting or whatever, and a lot of these meetings are becoming Zoom meetings like what we're talking about here. And I can honestly tell you from a user of captioning that these Zoom meetings are clearly more accessible than anything that I've used before. Adobe Connect, you know, every technology, every technology platform that you see has different features and so forth, and Zoom and WebEx and Google and a lot of -- and Teams are starting to add the automated captioning. Not great. I still struggle with -- and I only use that if I'm talking one-on-one with somebody. I was using Teams this morning and, unfortunately, I need a new cord for my work computer, because I have no audio on my computer. So I'm relying totally on the captioning, and it didn't go well. Because it just didn't capture that well. But I can remember starting out in assistive technology 30 years ago, everybody talked about voice recognition as being the greatest and best thing ever, and it's come a long way, and it's come a long way to being able to understand even my voice where it couldn't before. But it's still not there. It's still not -- it will just take time. So when you think about communicating with somebody in your community, think about all the platforms that you can use. Think about, you know, how you can include an interpreter in those platforms and captioning and so forth, because that is kind of the way things are going. And it's a lot more accessible than Adobe Connect. You have captioning, but you had to be able to stream that captioning and so forth. But Adobe doesn't allow you to really insert an interpreter in there very well. So when we also talk about effective communication, we talk a lot about some of these other pieces that you wouldn't think are part of effective communication. Because in 1990 and 1973, we didn't have the technology that we have now, and I think the ADA and Title IV has really done so much for people that are deaf/hard of hearing and have speech disabilities, and that technology just keeps

evolving. Making it easier and easier for people to communicate back and forth rather than putting an onus on one or the other.

So I wanted to add that, because I didn't see that piece in terms of platforms, and how many of us communicate now. So, yeah. So my accessibility at work has improved 1,000% because of the platform and the accessibility of platforms, and the ability to include interpreters. And it takes a long time. And Aaron can say the same thing. It takes a long time for people within an agency to get to the point where we have been able to get with FEMA. A long ways to go, but anyway...

I just saw a question from Donna Platt, and I really want to answer that one. That is what I was talking about in terms of AHDVC. That is the help line. And the person that I'm working with on that is on this call, and I have appreciated everything that she has done to this date, but there are -- it's a little ways away because there's still a lot of hoops that we have to go through. But it will get there. So, yeah. That's for you, Donna. That's all I have.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: All right, thank you, Aaron and Gay. Let me turn on my camera. And now is the best time for all of you who have been listening, if you have questions, go ahead and put them in the chat window, and I'm going to read them out to Aaron and Gay also so that we get this -- the questions into the captioning and also to make sure that anybody who is looking in the archive gets to see what these questions are as well.

So the first question, which was a little before you guys started really going into it, so it may or may not be connected to you or what you were saying, but the question is: Will FEMA provide certified ASL interpreters to disaster shelters after a disaster? Like a hurricane, for example.

>> GAY JONES: I want to answer that question. That is the disaster -- that's the American Red Cross or those providing the -- that's not FEMA's responsibility. And they work with their local Red Cross, and there is stuff going on in American Red Cross that you should be able to work with them on that. But that's technically not FEMA's responsibility.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: And so just if -- for the questioner or anyone else, if you don't understand what Gay is talking about here, there have been many of our webinars that have clarified the different responsibilities at the different levels. What the federal does, what the state does, what local does, what American Red Cross or other nonprofits do. So go back in our archives and look at that if you need to understand how that works. Okay?

Next question. And I think, Gay, this one really speaks to your comment about the changes in technology. This person says, I'm part of a program where we partner with community-based organizations to disseminate emergency preparedness messages to their community members. We do this by sending out Slack messages and emails.

How do we make this more accessible for our community organizations that communicate with our disabled population?

>> GAY JONES: That's Aaron.

[chuckles]

>> AARON KUBEY: Yes, let me quickly read the question. Hold on one second. Really my response, maybe it's a little vague, you know, but it's going to be what works for you, what works for your community. I can't tell you what to do. You know, if you use Slack or email or Zoom like this, there's so many different ways, but it's really important to match the needs of your community. Gay, do you want to add anything else?

>> GAY JONES: Will you repeat if question, please?

>> LEWIS KRAUS: And let me add to what Aaron says. I think that part of what is there -- our speakers may not know specifics about Slack and how to make that accessible, but I think what Aaron is saying is that if you work with your community and you talk to your community and you find out what is going to be accessible for them, or what -- what parts you need to do, what accommodations, as we were using the terms before, or accessibility features do you need to have to make that accessible for them, that is going to make it -- that is going to be your answer. No one is going to be able to tell you any Bert than your community that you're working with. So, Gay, that's the question, using Slack or email messages and how to make it more accessible for the community organizations to communicate with.

>> GAY JONES: I'll be honest with you, I do not know what Slack is. If somebody can tell me. I mean, I do not know what it is.

>> AARON KUBEY: Slack is a communication tool, like an email system that you can use. Remember before you had AOL/AIM? Not really -- it's not automatic. You have a different channel. So you can have different discussion groups where you will be discussing specific topics.

>> GAY JONES: Okay. I get it now. Are you wanting to know thousand make those accessible, the actual chat room accessible? You don't have to go -- you have to go to the company that developed that chat room to work with them on accessibility issues. That's not something that we do. That would be like -- I mean, we've go to Google and say, hey, your captioning is really not that great, but what can we do to make it better? Or, you know, if Aaron and I work with FEMA folks on the FEMA app, I would recommend all of you to download the FEMA app, because it's brand-new, there's a lot of accessibility features in there and we have worked really hard to get that to that point. And we had a lot of users helping us to develop that app. So, yeah, a lot of things that we talk about are applicable to the disaster going on, because if you're sending out messages, they need to be accessibility. If you need to provide an interpreter, you need

to work with your local interpreter agency or your local state deaf organizations and commissions and so forth. Every state is different. So we don't have them. And get their input. It really is commonsense. And I just find, like I said before, I think the biggest driver of the reason why a lot of these things don't get done is because of money. People saying that the money is not there. But we can budget for money. And I think it's really important that what we're talking about today is we may not have all the answers to some of the things you're talking about, but if you want to know what the accessibility of Apple or Slack or any technological piece, you need to go directly to the company and talk about the accessibility issues. What we do is take those things and put them to use within what we do. And those changes how we present it to the public changes also.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: All right, I'm going to say that the next question is going to be similar, which is how does Grammarly do in simplifying content, it's a little different, because, Aaron, this is when you were talking about simplifying the message. I think the person wants to know this piece of software and how it does in making a simplified message?

>> AARON KUBEY: Personally, I've never really used that program, to be honest. You know, translation, like computer translation is something, and I grew up deaf, so I know how -- I have a good understanding how the deaf community reads things. I remember in the past, you know, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade level of grammar and how to do things and keep it in plain language, and I have a sense of how to do that. As I became older, I became better at grammar and I went through this myself and developed my grammar and language as I grew older. I remember when I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, how I used to write things, it was like I would use... I would use different examples to my point across.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: Go ahead, Gay.

>> GAY JONES: My daughter is also deaf and she has used Grammarly a lot. And I don't find it real useful. And I certainly can tell you that it is not going to put your language down to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. What that does is just standard grammar of what you have written.

So it's not the same thing. I would probably go to plainlanguage.gov and look at the information that they have. Aaron has taken that information and used it -- even though they may put things down to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, the issue is that conceptually, it may still not make sense. And that is kind of what we're dealing with. So Grammarly is -- I get frustrated with Grammarly and I've had to deal with it for the last 12 years. So, yeah, it's not the same.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: Just to reiterate -- go ahead.

>> AARON KUBEY: And when you use a Microsoft document, there is a program there that you can use to read the -- there's an accessibility index that you can use. And it will show you the grade level of your passage. I forget what it's called, but it's... some kind

of checker that they use, that will give you some estimation of the content and what grade level it's written at, and you can tweak it and make sure it accommodates your audience, if you're looking at a 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: And how to do this is a whole other training that you might want to get to, the person who asked the question. Again, as you can see even from Gay's answer, it's like the way you're going to learn the answer is to talk to people who are in the community and be able to respond to you to say, I don't understand what this is doing. And this is working or this is not working. That is the best way to go.

Next question. Is there a glossary of words with more than one meaning? Now, I believe, Aaron, this is back when you were talking about simplifying things and talking about messages that were -- you know, had the same meaning in two different worlds.

>> AARON KUBEY: Yeah. Yeah, if you're using a glossary, I don't know, it's... again, you need to know what you need to know in terms of the vocabulary, like "run," for example, the word "run" has so many different meanings of run in context. A machine can be running. You can run a race or run to the office or, you know, physically running. There's all kinds of meanings of "run," and I just depends on the context. And you have to add what sort of run to give the concept of that. So in that way you can convey the meaning. So my example before was with cover, the word "cover," and, you know, we substituted the word "to pay" for that, that the insurance will cover, that the insurance will pay for it. So it's not like covering. So we took it to a more specific level. I would go with my gut on this in terms of, like, how I deal with vocabulary like that.

>> GAY JONES: I agree with Aaron I grew up struggling because of my hearing loss, and like Aaron, I think my adulthood I've learned how to write better. I probably write better now than I ever have in my whole life. But I also understand, when I look at something, a sentence, that the difference is just English, and understanding why a person with a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level, and more so a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, because the instruction is school is so different than -- you've got to teach every single thing to somebody who doesn't hear well so that they understand, you know, conceptually what is being said. The biggest problem with somebody who is deaf or hard of hearing is that you say something and my daughter will look at me like, I have no idea what you're saying to me. And then I have to think, okay, conceptually, I've got to change how I sign something, because it's just one word that I need to change. It's like "pay for." For somebody who is hearing, "cover" for insurance is... but if you sign that, it's "cover insurance." Well, that doesn't make sense to anyone. So try to look at those things. And it's not every sentence that you're talking about, but in the context of what you're trying to get somebody to understand, the more conceptual you can be, the better. And that's a big issue that we deal with in the field and why so many people who have language issues -- and I'm talking about literacy issues also, don't understand anything that FEMA is telling them, and with the exception of the legalese that we use, we can't change that, but we can certainly change what our letters look like, and Aaron has been heavily involved in that recently. So, yeah, it's across the spectrum of trying to

get -- get it right for people who don't have a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education -- a 12<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: Go ahead, Aaron.

>> AARON KUBEY: And the other thing I wanted to add, in terms of -- I keep on emphasizing this, the idea of plain language, when, you know, somebody is in a third-grade level, and also applies to people with limited English proficiency or cognitive disabilities and during an emergency, those people are really concerned. They're wondering, they're upset, they're afraid, there are a lot going on with these people, and their brain is spinning on this and they don't know what to do, and people can get quite frantic, and also that is another reason to keep things plain, for people who may normally understand it. But if their mind is going through all these complicated machinations and they're upset, really everybody can pfft from this plain language. It actually helps the community at large. They're trying to evacuate an area, there's been a disaster, they're depressed, they lost someone, their mind is spinning out about this. So really it's a help to everybody to keep the language plain.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: All right, thank you. Now, the question that Gay answered earlier, just to read it in so everybody knows, she was asking -- she was answering the question that asked, any plan to have ASL help line, not the disaster distress help line for those that applied for assistance, and Gay said they were working on it. Just to make sure we catch you up on what that one was.

The next question --

>> GAY JONES: Let me share one thing. For anybody who understands what that disaster distress hotline is now, in terms of the technology that they use to connect with those interpreters, I mean, those mental health professionals, it's the same exact technology that we're looking at, and it will show you, you know, what that looks like in terms of when you call that distress hotline, that ASL hotline, you are directly connected to somebody who is deaf and professional mental health. So that's the direct video communication piece. That's all I wanted to touch on.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: Okay. The next question is: What do you think of the SaMHSA new disaster help line?

>> AARON KUBEY: So that's what we were just talking about. We were involved with that working group to help develop that through the direct communication in ASL. And with deaf and hard of hearing mental health professionals who can communicate in their first language. So not using an interpreter. People may be more comfortable using this, direct communication in their first language. It's a natural language, they have a bond with people, and they are the people who can help them right away and refer them on what to do. So I really support that for the deaf and hard of hearing people, that hotline. It's really good. We really want to get that going and advertise that, and for any kind of



disaster that occurs, and really get that going. And that way the deaf and hard of hearing people would know that that is available. And also it has to do -- mental health is priority at these times, because people -- they need to know they have support services available.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: I'm a health educator who trains healthcare and social service providers and health literacy related to accessibility and conceptual language, what are a few things you would want to share with those healthcare providers about how to best communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing? And before you guys answer, and you don't even need to answer if you don't want to, because this is about emergency management, but I do want to tell the person who wrote, we do have another Webinar Series on healthcare and the ADA, and just earlier this month the very last one was about effective communication in healthcare. So you can go to [ADApresentations.org](http://ADApresentations.org) and go into the archive under healthcare and see that archive on that. It was a little bit more about the specifics of the ADA as opposed to two people right here who are talking about practical uses of effective communication and different things they are use. So they may have other things you want to add, but I think there is a lot of -- you know, it's pretty much universal, communications, communications, communications, but if you want to add something to it, you're welcome to.

>> AARON KUBEY: Yeah, I would just add that there is a good referral to that previous presentation, but in general, with any kind of you know, verbiage or vocabulary, healthcare-related things, emergency management, legal things, all of this stuff, it's all very complicated and you have to admit it's hard to translate some of this stuff into plain language. It is not easy, so you have to recognize that, but it is doable. And the important thing is we just have to try and emphasize, hopefully you will remember, your carry-away today is how can we improve the language and make it more accessible for people in general, and also to match their reading level and look at the language that we're trying to put out there, whether it's healthcare or legal or whatever it is, you know, any kind of con temperature, and we have to make that message or think about... we have to think about how to get that message across. And maybe we have to have healthcare or maybe you know, hopefully we would -- you can do this yourself.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: Okay. Next question. Have there been any legal issues or concerns when using plain, simple, concise language in lieu of legalese jargon?

>> AARON KUBEY: I'm going to re-explain kind of what I just said. In legal situations, you can't make that transition, because it is a legal verbiage that you have to follow. Maybe you have to add more explanation to it. You know, say exactly what does this mean? You know, you can try to abbreviate what you're saying. Gay, do you have anything you would like to add?

>> GAY JONES: No, we both have had enough experience with that that I -- you know, I think that most people, when they get letters from FEMA or anybody else, they want to know what to do. And they're not -- the least they're going to do is read the legal stuff, but we can't change it.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: All right. Next question. What is FEMA's policy on audio description?

>> AARON KUBEY: Gay?

>> GAY JONES: Well, I will tell you that it's like any other federal agency. That we need to do that. Here is the issue. When Aaron does a video for FEMA, it doesn't really require audio description because there's nothing in the background that is moving or there's no action going on or anything. But if you're going to -- you need to -- if you're going to narrate something, and you've got something in the background, any federal agency would be required to do that.

I would say at least for us, we were able to construct a contract recently in the last six months that included audio description, and also when somebody is doing a contracted video, that that language needs to be in there.

So I think that there's still a lot of questions around which videos really need to be audio described.

So that's a continuation.

>> LEWIS KRAUS: 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 questions. You have their contact information there on screen. If you would like to send them a question as you think about it afterwards, they have given you their contact so that you can. If your question is about Americans with Disabilities Act, you can ask that of one of your local regional ADA Center, and you can reach us at 1-800-949-4232. You will receive an email with a link to an online session evaluation at the conclusion of this webinar. Please complete that evaluation for today's program, as we really value your input and want to make sure that our funder understands the value of this series.

We want to thank Aaron and Gay today for sharing time and knowledge with us. You can see all the excited comments coming through. What a great presentation you guys did with us, and thank you so much. It was really excellent. And a reminder to everybody that the session will be recorded along with the transcript and that will be available for viewing next week at ADApresentations.org in the archive section of emergency management. We are going to be taking a break next month from our Webinar Series as we will be posting out here our region 9 ADA coordinator summit. If you are an ADA coordinator or connected to your ADA coordinator you may want to consider joining that, especially if you're in region 9, you can find out more information on our website at ADApresentations.org. Other than that, thanks again, Aaron and Gay. Really appreciate all of your information today thank you all for attending and spending some time with us, and we wish you a great rest of your day. Bye-bye now!

>> AUTOMATED VOICE: Recording stopped.

