



**Individuals with
Disabilities and Others
with Access and
Functional Needs
Emergency Preparedness Resource
Guide**



**ILLINOIS-INDIANA-WISCONSIN COMBINED STATISTICAL AREA
REGIONAL CATASTROPHIC PLANNING TEAM (RCPT)**

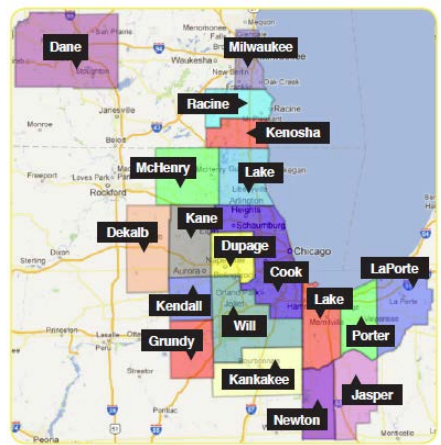


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Purpose

This *Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs Emergency Preparedness Resource Guide* is designed to help individuals with disabilities and those that work with individuals with disabilities prepare for emergencies. Individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may be more vulnerable to the impacts of a disaster. For example, an individual who uses an electric wheelchair will be impacted by a disaster that causes a long-term power outage, and may not be able to evacuate if they do not have a backup power source. A disaster that impacts a neighborhood for a long period of time might prevent someone from receiving medications that they need to take on a daily basis. By being prepared for emergencies, individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs can maintain their independence increase and increase personal resiliency.



Illinois				
Cook	Dekalb	DuPage	Will	McHenry
Lake	Kendall	Kankakee	Kane	Grundy
Indiana				
Lake	Jasper	LaPorte	Newton	Porter
Wisconsin				
Kenosha	Dane	Milwaukee	Racine	

Gear up, Get Ready (GUGR) is a community preparedness campaign established to increase awareness and drive action by preparing community members for all-hazard emergencies and catastrophic events. The campaign is a product of the Illinois-Indiana-Wisconsin Combined Statistical Area (IL-IN-WI Region) Regional Catastrophic Planning Team (RCPT) Citizen Preparedness Subcommittee and covers the City of Chicago and nineteen counties across the Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin Region.

To help increase the preparedness of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, this Guide is divided into the following sections:

- 1. Considerations for Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs.** This section provides an overview of steps that individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs can take to increase their preparedness. This includes conducting a self-assessment and considerations for specific disabilities or needs. This section also covers steps that

individuals with disabilities can take to develop a personal support network. This section can be used by family, caretakers, and others who work with these individuals to help increase their preparedness.

- 2. Guidelines for Assisting and Supporting Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs.** This section provides information to caretakers, family members, and others who may work with individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs to support them during an emergency.
- 3. Resources, Tools, and Templates.** This section provides additional resources that might be used to develop emergency plans and increase preparedness. It includes web links to tools, information, and resources.



Considerations for Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

Individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs can be any age, and may have one or more access or functional limitations. These may include a reduced ability or inability to see, read, walk, speak, hear, learn, remember, understand, and/or respond quickly. Access and functional needs may also include a limited ability to speak or read English, and limited access to transportation. It is important to recognize that some disabilities or functional needs are visible, while others are hidden, such as heart conditions, emotional or psychiatric conditions, arthritis, significant allergies, asthma, chemical and other environmental sensitivities, respiratory conditions, and some visual, hearing and cognitive disabilities. Under this definition, many of us—or someone within our household fall under the definition of someone who has an access or functional need.

The chart below, based on the 2010 census, illustrates access and functional needs in the Illinois-Indiana-Wisconsin Region. Remember that Census Data requires self reporting and self identification. Some with disabilities and functional needs may not be comfortable or willing to identify their status on the Census. Therefore, the numbers presented here are an estimate of the population in the IL-IN-WI Region. It is likely that these numbers are significantly higher across all categories.

	Population	People with Functional Needs	Limited English Proficiency	Individuals Below Poverty Level, All Ages	Unemployed
Chicago, IL	2,685,598	10.5%	16.5%	21.4%	6.2%
Cook County, IL	5,194,675	10.0%	15.4%	15.8%	7.2%
DeKalb County, IL	105,160	7.5%	5.5%	15.9%	7.2%
DuPage County, IL	916,924	7.7%	10.2%	6.2%	5.5%
Grundy County, IL	50,063	8.2%	9.6%	7.4%	6.7%



	Population	People with Functional Needs	Limited English Proficiency	Individuals Below Poverty Level, All Ages	Unemployed
Kane County, IL	515,269	7.4%	9.6%	13.1%	6.2%
Kankakee County, IL	113,449	13.1%	3.4%	15.0%	6.2%
Kendall County, IL	105,602	N	5.1%	3.8%	5.3%
Lake County, IL	703,462	7.4%	11.0%	8.2%	6.2%
McHenry County, IL	308,760	7.9%	6.3%	6.9%	6.2%
Will County, IL	677,560	7.6%	9.6%	7.1%	6.1%
Lake County, IN	496,005	13.5%	9.6%	16.6%	6.5%
Jasper County, IN	33,487	14.6%	0.9%	7.7%	6.2%
LaPorte County, IN	111,467	13.7%	2.3%	15.2%	6.2%
Newton County, IN	14,244	9.4%	1.5%	11.3%	6.2%
Porter County, IN	164,343	10.8%	1.8%	9.6%	6.2%
Dane County, WI	488,073	8.9%	4.4%	12.0%	6.2%
Kenosha County, WI	166,426	11.4%	4.0%	11.6%	6.2%
Milwaukee County, WI	947,735	12.5%	6.9%	19.9%	6.2%
Racine County, WI	195,408	11.0%	3.7%	11.7%	6.2%

N - Entry in the estimate and margin of error columns indicates that data for this geographic area cannot be displayed because the number of sample cases is too small.

Population figures are from the 2010 Census

People in Poverty of All Ages is from the American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2007 to 2011

Unemployed - American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2007 to 2011

Limited English Proficiency - American Community Survey 5 Year estimates, 2007 to 2011

Disability - Selected Social Characteristics in the United States ACS 3 Year Estimates 2009 to 2011 (Hearing, Vision, Cognitive, Ambulatory, Self-Care, Independent Living)

In addition to creating new physical barriers, emergencies can reduce or eliminate the amount of public services available in an area. For people with access and functional needs, this may take away their ability to perform certain functions that were previously possible, their capacity



to live independently, and their ability to navigate the available response and recovery systems effectively.

It is recommended that all populations take basic actionable steps to increase their preparedness. First, individuals and households should be informed about the emergencies and hazards that might impact their household. Information on these events can be found in the table below. Specific information on how to be prepared can be found at www.gearupgetready.org under “Disasters” or by visiting your local emergency management agency webpage.

HAZARDS THAT MIGHT IMPACT YOUR COMMUNITY	
Earthquake	Tornadoes
Extreme Heat	Chemical and Hazardous Materials
Fires	Cybercrime and Cyber Terror
Floods	Nuclear Power Plants
Foodborne Illness	School and Workplace Violence
Pandemic Influenza	Terrorism
Winter Storms	Radiological Attack
Thunderstorms	

Next, individuals and households should develop a plan. This includes what to do if a disaster happens, and how to reconnect after a disaster. An emergency contact card can be downloaded at www.gearupgetready.org. This contact card contains basic contact information for who should be called if an emergency were to occur. A family emergency plan can also be downloaded at www.gearupgetready.org. The family emergency plan should be adapted to the needs of each family, and specifically to the needs of individuals who have additional needs.

Having emergency plans in place before an emergency allows you to determine how to protect yourself and your family. It is important to ensure the whole family is a part of the planning



process so that your plan addresses everyone's needs. The brochure “Prepare for Emergencies Now: Information for People with Disabilities” emphasizes the importance of creating a personal support network, a family communications plan and a family emergency plan. An emergency can interfere with your ability to communicate with your family, friends and colleagues. It is vital to have backup plans for staying in touch with your support network, and for your network to be aware of where you will shelter or evacuate. This brochure can be downloaded at: http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/FEMA_Disabilities_R-6_web_june2012.pdf

In order to tailor your emergency plan to your specific needs, the American Red Cross developed the “Preparing for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs” Guide.¹ This Guide recommends that people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs complete a self assessment to help determine what you can do for yourself, and what assistance might be necessary before, during, and after a disaster. Questions and considerations raised in the guide are presented below.

CHECKLIST: DAILY LIVING

<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you regularly need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming? Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What will you do if water service is cut off for several days or if you are unable to heat water?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you use a shower chair, tub-transfer bench or other similar equipment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity, such as dialysis, electrical lifts, etc.? Do you have a safe back-up power supply and how long will it last?

¹ http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240199_A4497.pdf

CHECKLIST: GETTING AROUND

<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you cope with the debris in your home or along your planned exit route following the disaster?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you need a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you need help to get groceries, medications and medical supplies? What if your caregiver cannot reach you because roads are blocked or the disaster has affected him or her as well?

CHECKLIST: EVACUATION

<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you need help to leave your home or office? Can you reach and activate an alarm? Will you be able to evacuate independently without relying on auditory cues (such as noise from a machine near the stairs – these cues may be absent if the electricity is off or alarms are sounding)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there other exits (stairs, windows or ramps) if the elevator is not working or cannot be used? Can you read emergency signs in print or Braille? Do emergency alarms have audible and visible features (marking escape routes and exits) that will work even if electrical service is disrupted?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you call or summon for the help you will need to leave the building? Do you know the locations of text telephones and phones that have amplification? Will your hearing aids work if they get wet from emergency sprinklers? Have you determined how to communicate with emergency personnel if you don't have an interpreter, your hearing aids aren't working, or if you don't have a word board or other augmentative communication device?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What will you do if you cannot find your mobility aids? What will you do if your ramps are shaken loose or become separated from the building?

CHECKLIST: EVACUATION



Will you be able to care for your animal (provide food, shelter, veterinary attention, etc.) during and after a disaster? Do you have another caregiver for your animal if you are unable to meet its needs? Do you have the appropriate licenses for your service animal so you will be permitted to keep it with you should you need or choose to use an emergency public shelter?

After conducting this self assessment, individuals should make a plan that accounts for these specific needs. Recommended actions and specific considerations are listed below for blind or low vision individuals, deaf or hard of hearing individuals, individuals with cognitive, developmental, and health needs, speech disabilities, mobility limitations, and service animals.

Blind or Low Vision Individuals

If you are blind or low vision, consider the following when developing your emergency plan and increasing your personal preparedness.

- Consider including a cane in your emergency kit, even if you use a guide dog.
- Include a pair of heavy work gloves and sturdy shoes in your emergency kit to help offer some protection when exploring an unfamiliar environment.
- Know the evacuation routes of your buildings, including your home and office, as well as places you frequent. Sometimes the way that you would typically enter and exit the building may present a hazard to you.
- Know alternative transportation and pedestrian routes in your neighborhood, where you work, and where you frequent.
- Include prescription glasses and other necessary eyewear in your emergency kit.
- Include any portable assistive devices in your emergency kit. Consider including, in writing, information about your device to present to emergency workers. For example: "I need my (name of device). It will enable me to write down information to be able to



refer back to. This is the equivalent to a pen and paper to me” or “I am deaf and blind and I use (name of device) to facilitate communication.”

Deaf or Hard of Hearing Individuals

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, or use an assistive hearing device, consider the following when developing your family emergency plan.

- Identify methods where you can receive emergency alerts. This may include through text or email. Your local office of emergency management is likely to have a system that you can sign up for to receive these emergency alerts.
- Local media may also have a website where you can sign up for emergency alerts.
- Consider including a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) radio in your emergency kit. These radios provide alerts on severe weather as well as chemical spills and other hazardous conditions that may occur in your community. NOAA radios have jacks that can allow you to connect an alerting device, such as a visual alert or tactile alert, which will notify you and allow you to seek additional information.
- Ensure that your emergency kit contains backup batteries or other supplies if you use hearing assistive technology.
- If you use assistive hearing technology, be sure to put your supplies in a secure location at night. If there is an earthquake or event that causes your furniture to move, these supplies can be easily shaken off of a nightstand or table.
- If you need an assistive device or interpreter, include a paper in your emergency kit that identifies what you need. For example, “I use American Sign Language and need an interpreter.”
- Consider having index cards with pre-printed phrases in your emergency kit to help communicate with first responders.

Individuals with Cognitive, Developmental or Mental Health Needs

If you have a cognitive, developmental, or mental health need, or have a family member that has these needs, consider the following when developing your family emergency plan.

- Learn as much as possible about the different disasters that might impact your community. Write down information and document what you can do if a disaster were to impact you and your household.
- Know your neighbors and share your information with them. This will help ensure that those people close to you know how to contact you and can check on you in an emergency.
- Share your emergency plan with your neighbors.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets with written descriptions of your disability or other health related concerns.
- Keep forms in your emergency kit that can be provided to first responders that share important information about you and your needs. This might include the different types of equipment you use and the best way to communicate with you.

Individuals with Speech Disabilities

If you have a speech disability, consider the following tips when developing your family emergency plan.

- Include any portable assistive devices in your emergency kit. Consider including, in writing, information about your device to present to emergency workers. For example: “I need my (name of device). It will enable me to write down information to be able to refer back to. This is the equivalent to a pen and paper to me” or “I am deaf and blind and I use (name of device) to facilitate communication.”
- If you need an assistive device or interpreter, include a paper in your emergency kit that identifies what you need. For example, “I use American Sign Language and need an interpreter.”
- Consider having index cards with pre-printed phrases in your emergency kit to help communicate with first responders.

Individuals with Mobility Limitations

If you have a mobility limitation, consider the following when developing your emergency plan.

- Label all equipment (wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, etc) with your name and contact information.
- Be sure to have extra batteries and chargers.

- Keep a list of model and serial numbers of medical devices in your emergency kit.
- Consider having manual devices in addition to electric devices.
- Keep backup equipment in your emergency kit. This might include extra tires or tubes for your wheelchair.

Considerations for Service Animals

If you have a service animal or pet, consider the following when developing your family emergency plan.

- Keep supplies for your service animal, including food, identification tags, proof of up to date vaccinations and veterinary contact information with your emergency kit.
- Keep supplies in an easy to carry container.
- Include your service animal or pet in your emergency plan. All animals should be brought with you when you evacuate to keep them safe from any hazards that might exist.
- Develop a back-up plan in case you are not with your service animal or pet when a disaster occurs. This might include someone who can check on the animal, or bring the animal to you following an emergency.
- Make sure your personal network knows where those supplies are, in case they need to assist you in evacuation or they need to care for your animal.

For all populations with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, keep copies of prescriptions, including a list of prescriptions with dosage, frequency, and the name of your doctor in your emergency kit. If you use refrigerated medications, consider bringing a cooler or coolant system with you when you evacuate. Also, consider what hygiene supplies you might need to make yourself or a family member more comfortable if you need to evacuate. This might include absorbent pads or assistive devices that might not be readily available following an emergency. Finally, make sure your plan includes the phone numbers and makes of physicians, health care providers, health insurance information and other contact information that is important to have following a disaster.

Resources and additional information on steps to increase preparedness for individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs can be found at:



- National Disability Rights Network Disaster Preparedness

Checklist: [http://www.ndrn.org/images/Documents/Issues/Disaster_Preparedness/NDR N Disaster Preparedness Checklist.pdf](http://www.ndrn.org/images/Documents/Issues/Disaster_Preparedness/NDR_N_Disaster_Preparedness_Checklist.pdf)

- National Organization on Disability Disaster Preparedness Tips for People with Disabilities: <http://nod.org/assets/downloads/Readiness-Tips-Disabilities.pdf>
- National Resource Center on Advancing Emergency Preparedness for Culturally Diverse Communities: <http://www.diversitypreparedness.org>
- Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network: <http://www.cepintdi.org/>
- American Council of the Blind Emergency Preparedness and People Who are Blind and Visually Impaired: <http://www.surpriseaz.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/2917>
- Special Populations: Emergency and Disaster Preparedness: <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/outreach/specialpopulationsanddisasters.html>

An important part of developing your family emergency plan is ensuring you have a personal support network in place. These individuals may be able to help you prepare for an emergency, or can check on you if an emergency happens in your community. A checklist on developing your personal support network is presented below.

CHECKLIST: PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a list of family, friends and others who will be part of your plans
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure to include a relative or friend in another area who would not be affected by the same emergency, and who can help if needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure everyone knows how you plan to evacuate you home, school or workplace and where you will go in case of an emergency.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure that someone in your personal support network has an extra key to your home and knows where you keep your emergencies supplies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teach your support network how to use all of your lifesaving equipment or medicine in case of an emergency. If you use a wheelchair, oxygen or other medical equipment, show friends or family how to use these devices so they can

CHECKLIST: PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

	move you or help you evacuate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice your plan with your personal support network.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you undergo routine treatments at an outpatient facility or hospital, or if you receive regular services at home such as home health care, meals, oxygen, or door-to-door transportation, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans. Work with them to identify back-up service providers within your area and the areas where you might go if you evacuate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with local transportation and services to plan ahead for accessible transportation in case you need to evacuate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you have a vehicle, make a plan in advance identifying who will drive the vehicle and be sure to fill up your gas tank early to avoid any fuel shortages.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity to operate, talk to your health care provider about a back-up plan for its use during a power outage. Contact your local power company and inform them that you require emergency assistance in the event of a sustained power outage. Many companies maintain a list of customers who require electricity for medical necessity and they may be able to provide a back-up power supply if needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to your employer and colleagues about the assistance you might need in an emergency. This is particularly important if you need to be lifted or carried.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk about any communication difficulties, physical limitations, equipment instructions and medical procedures that might arise during an emergency.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Always participate in exercises, trainings and emergency drills offered by your employer or your community.

After developing your emergency plan, develop an emergency kit that contains the items you may need if a disaster strikes. Information about the basics of your emergency kit can be

found at www.gearupgetready.org under “Get Ready.” In addition to these items, consider what equipment and medicine you may need if an emergency were to happen. Keep backups of these items in your kit, along with important medical information that can help you access additional medicine or supplies in an emergency. Additional supplies that you may need in your kit include prescription medication, eye glasses, contact lens solution, hearing aid batteries, or assistive devices for feeding. A list of potential considerations is presented below.

CHECKLIST: ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR KIT

<input type="checkbox"/>	Copies of medical prescriptions, doctors’ orders and the style and serial numbers of the assistive devices you use
<input type="checkbox"/>	At least a one week supply of any medication or medical supplies you use regularly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and/or support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, physician contact information, list of your allergies and health history
<input type="checkbox"/>	A list of the local non-profits or community-based organizations that know you or assist people with access and functional needs similar to yours
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extra eyeglasses, backup supplies for any visual aids you use
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extra batteries for hearing aids, extra hearing aids if you have them
<input type="checkbox"/>	Battery chargers for motorized wheelchairs, or other battery-operated medical/assistive technology devices
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supplies for your service animal
<input type="checkbox"/>	A laminated personal communication board if you might need assistance with being understood or understanding others
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you use a motorized wheelchair, a lightweight manual chair for emergencies



More information on these items can be found in the American Red Cross Guide “Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs” at http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240199_A4497.pdf.

Finally, some local offices of emergency management maintain registries for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Some registries are only used to collect planning information; others may be used to offer assistance in emergencies. If you add your name and information to a registry, be sure you understand what you can expect. A registry is never a substitute for personal preparedness and should be used to supplement your emergency preparedness planning. Contact your local office of emergency management to inquire about a registry in your community. Tell them of your individual needs or those of a family member and find out what assistance or services can be provided to help you stay safe. To contact your local office of emergency management, visit www.gearupgetready.org and find your County contact under the “Contact Us” page.

In addition to your personal preparedness, consider getting involved in neighborhood and community emergency preparedness activities. Assist emergency planners and others in considering the preparedness needs of the whole community, including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Assist local emergency officials in learning how to integrate access and functional needs into preparedness and response activities and trainings. Communities are stronger and more resilient when everyone joins the team. People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs often have experience in adapting and problem solving that can be very useful skills in emergencies. Additional information about planning for the whole community can be found at in “A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways to Action” at: <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/23781?id=4941>.

Guidelines for Assisting and Supporting Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

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Disability is not about a specific group of people. Disability is about a specific time in the life of each and every one of us. For some, it may be temporary, for others it may last much longer. As a society, we have mistakenly adopted a mindset that divides us into two groups, “able-bodied” and “disabled.” The fact is that we all will be part of the disabled community for some time in our lives. If we act from the perspective of what we would want when, rather than if, we become disabled, we truly will be able to make great progress for all people.

-- National Fire Protection Association

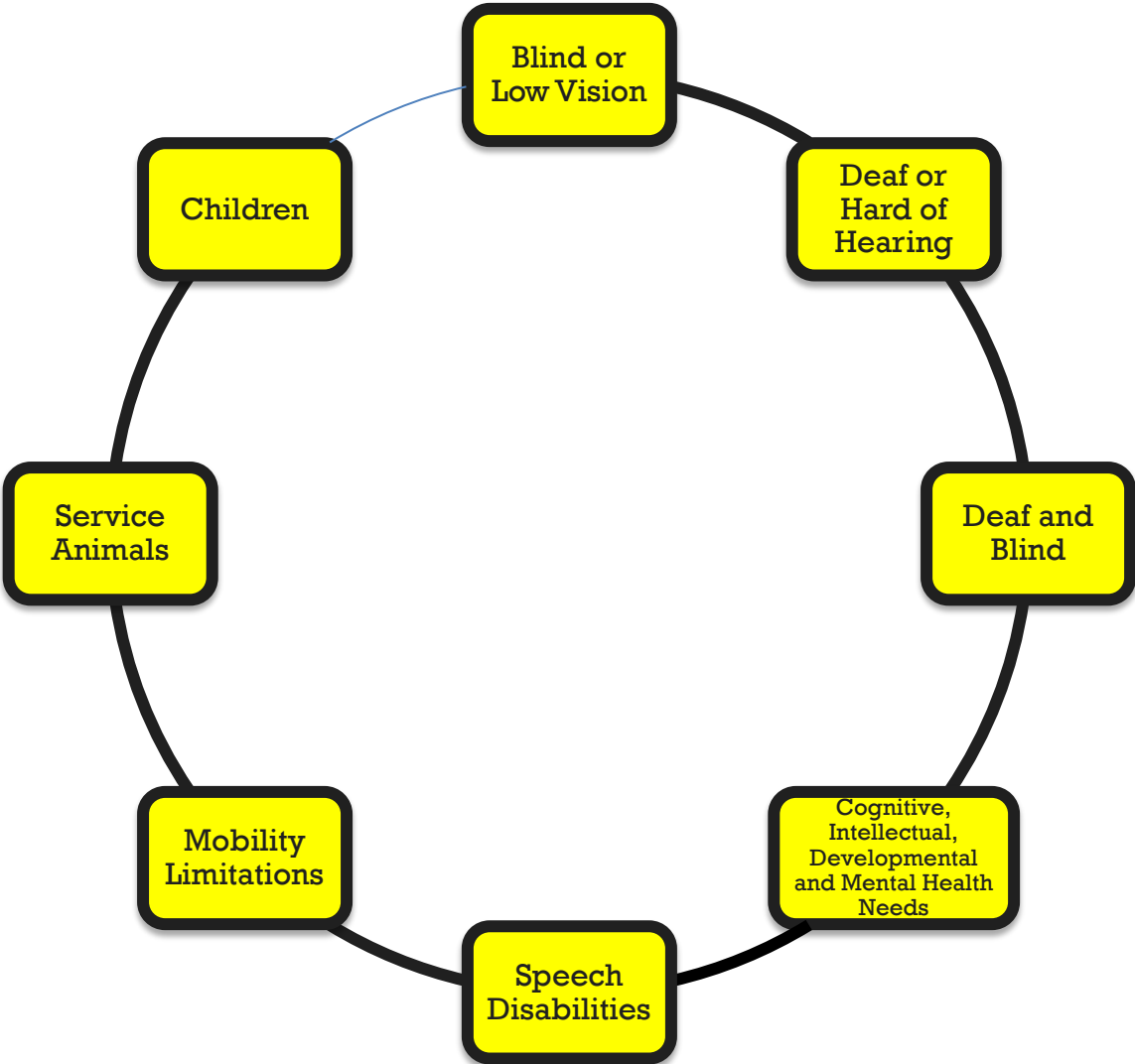
In an emergency, people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may be afraid to leave their home and valuables. They may worry about being separated from their family or losing their pets. They may be afraid of losing their independence, getting hurt, not getting the help they need, or being unable to communicate with or understand emergency personnel.



FEMA's 2010 Functional Needs Support Services (FNSS) Guidance outlines important preparedness principles that should be considered and incorporated into all plans for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

1. **Self-Determination** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs are the most knowledgeable about their own needs.
2. **No “One-Size-Fits-All”** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs do not all require the same assistance and do not all have the same needs.
3. **Equal Opportunity** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs must have the same opportunities to benefit from emergency programs, services, and activities as people without disabilities.
4. **Inclusion** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs have the right to participate in and receive the benefits of emergency programs, services, and activities provided by governments, private businesses, and nonprofit organizations.
5. **Integration** – Emergency programs, services, and activities typically must be provided in an integrated setting.
6. **Physical Access** – Emergency programs, services, and activities must be provided at locations that all people can access, including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs .
7. **Equal Access** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs must be able to access and benefit from emergency programs, services, and activities equal to the general population.
8. **Effective Communication** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs must be given information that is comparable in content and detail to that given to the general public, as well as accessible, understandable, and timely.
9. **Program Modifications** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs must have equal access to emergency programs and services, which may entail modifications to rules, policies, practices, and procedures.
10. **No Charge** – People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may not be charged to cover the costs of measures necessary to ensure equal access and nondiscriminatory treatment.

The purpose of this section is to offer general outlines and tips for working with and communicating to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs during emergencies.



It is important to remember that these are general guidelines only. The best course of action is always to speak to the individual directly and ask them if they need assistance and how you can best provide that assistance. Following these general guidelines and principles of integration, inclusion and nondiscrimination will go a long way toward helping your community safely and effectively serve residents with disabilities and others with access and functional needs during emergencies.

Blind or Low Vision

People who are blind or low vision may have some ability to see, perception of light, movement or shape. Some blind or low vision people may wear dark glasses; others may not. Some may use a white cane or a service animal. Others may use magnification devices, screen readers, Braille or large print. People who are blind or have low vision do not come in a one size fits all mold, and should be treated as individuals.

If you are helping to evacuate a person who is blind or has low vision from their home, chances are they are very well oriented to that space and will be able to evacuate with minimal assistance. This may change when the individual is brought to a shelter or another unfamiliar environment. However, with some way finding and orientation assistance, an individual who is blind should quickly regain their sense of independence once situated.

Tips and Strategies:

- Introduce yourself and ask what type of assistance the person needs. Speak directly to the person, not to a friend, family member or other person.
- Do not raise your voice or speak more loudly. Though some blind individuals are also deaf, most are not.
- Do not grab, push or pull a blind person or touch their service animal. Ask how they prefer to be assisted and follow their lead. Ask where they want you to stand, depending on what vision (if any) they have; they may want you to stand in a particular place.
- Keep the individual with their assistive devices or service animals. These are keys to their independence. Walk on the opposite side of their service animal or the side on which they carry their cane.
- Communicate any written information you are sharing orally with the individual.
- Explain your path as you go, i.e. “Step up,” “We’re turning left here,” “There’s a doorway,” etc. Describe obstacles in the path as you go.
- When guiding a blind individual to a seat, guide them to the chair and place their hand on the back of the seat. Do not push them down into the chair.
- Once at the shelter, ask what type of assistance the person may need with personal tasks, if any. Provide PA services if needed.

- Ask what type of communication the individual needs. Some blind individuals use Braille; others large print, and still others audio. Some depend on others to read to them. Though it is not always necessary to provide the specific accommodation an individual requests, when possible it is the best course of action to keep someone feeling comfortable and safe.
- Do not worry about saying things like “See you later.”

VISION DISABILITIES

- Over 10 million people have a vision disability – blind, low vision, or are deaf and blind.
- Some of these 10 million people use service animals; some use white canes; some read Braille; some with low vision can read a document with an 18- or 20-point, bold typeface.
- This means most of these 10 million people cannot see a map on television that shows them evacuation routes away from a fire, flood, or violence.
- Alerts and warnings must be received as audible or tactile information in multiple formats.

Source: FEMA

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Individuals who are deaf may or may not use sign language. Some may use speech and depend on lip reading and other methods to communicate. Others may have some residual hearing and depend on that along with adaptive methods like lip reading. Individuals who are hard of hearing may use hearing aids or other assistive listening systems.

Tips and Strategies:

- Get the individual's attention by tapping them on the shoulder.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Do not exaggerate your words or speak louder.
- Texting, using a tablet or laptop, or a notepad and pen can be effective ways to communicate.
- Interpreters and Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) are good options for public meetings and larger gatherings. Ideally, shelters will have interpreters on call, but depending on the resources in a given area, they may not always be available.
- Video relay service is also useful to use.

HEARING DISABILITIES

- Over 30 million people have a hearing disability – they may be deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf/blind. Some do not speak; some use American Sign Language or other sign language; some of them wear hearing aids; some do not.
- One tenth of the U.S. population does not receive information audibly from the television, does not receive information from a radio, and may not be able to engage in two-way communication in person or over the telephone without an interpreter or assistive communication device.

Source: FEMA

Deaf and Blind

Some individuals who are blind may also be deaf. Though this is relatively rare, you should be prepared to assist individuals who have these dual disabilities or needs.

Tips and Strategies:

- If there is a family member, friend or caregiver present, enlist their aid in communicating with the individual.

- Other methods can be to print on the palm of the person's hand slowly and clearly with your index finger, spelling in block letters.
- If you are helping to evacuate someone who is deaf and blind or trying to communicate with them that there is an emergency and they need to come with you, use your finger to draw an "x" on the person's back.
- A tactile sign interpreter should be made available at the shelter.

Cognitive, Intellectual, Developmental, and Mental Health Needs

Cognitive, intellectual, developmental, and mental health needs cover a range of limitations including autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injuries, dementias, developmental delays, Downs's syndrome and others. Strokes can cause cognitive disability as can brain cancers and other conditions.

If you are helping to evacuate someone who has a disability/need in these categories, speaking slowly, clearly and in simple sentences is best. Ask to clarify if they've understood you and repeat or rephrase as needed. People with dementia or brain injuries might exhibit anger or frustration, so patience is crucial.

Using pictures or pointing to objects to illustrate your points can be an effective communication tool.

Tips and Strategies:

- Do not talk down, yell, shout or get angry.
- Demonstrate what you are trying to say in addition to telling the person.
- Let the person speak for themselves, and ask for clarification if you do not understand them.
- Reduce distraction and noise as much as possible.
- Speak calmly and confidently, and create a sense of safety for the individual.
- Headphones and music can sometimes be soothing.

COGNITIVE, INTELLECTUAL, DEVELOPMENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

- 16.1 million people have a cognitive, intellectual or mental health disability (over 7% of the population)
- They need early and timely, accurate and accessible information utilizing plain language.
- There are many strategies that planners, first responders and shelter operators can adopt to assist these individuals to maintain their usual level of functioning in an emergency.

Source: FEMA

Speech Disabilities and Needs

People with speech disabilities and needs, (which may or may not be caused by cerebral palsy, stroke, cognitive issues, hearing loss, or other conditions) may have difficulty understanding what is said and communicating with first responders, shelter staff and others.

It is important not to treat the person as if they are a child simply because they have a communication difficulty. Some people who have cerebral palsy or who have had a stroke that affected their speech, for example, can be quite difficult to understand. It is important to exhibit patience and good listening skills. Plus, it is imperative to get comfortable with asking that individual to repeat themselves if they haven't understood something. Chances are good that a person with a speech disability has to repeat themselves for many people in many situations and isn't likely to be offended if you ask them to do it for you.

It is also important to note that some people with speech disabilities use augmentative communication devices like computerized speaking devices and the like. If you are evacuating someone who uses such a device, you must ensure that the device travels with the person.

Tips and Strategies:

- Speak slowly and clearly, but in an age appropriate manner.

- Do not talk down to the individual.
- Establish what method they use to communicate, be patient, repeat as needed.
- Asking questions that require only a yes or no can facilitate better communication.
- Listen carefully and attentively.
- Do not pretend to understand if you do not.
- Use alternatives if what you're doing isn't working. Pen and paper, gestures, tablets, and other methods all can be effective.

SPEECH DISABILITIES

- Approximately 2 million people have a speech disability that interferes with two-way communication with another person.
- Some of these 2 million people do speak, but with hard to understand speech. Some do not or will not speak at all; some use communication boards; some use Speech-to Speech relay services.
- Approximately 500,000 people do not have speech that is understood by others.

Source: FEMA

Mobility Limitations

There are a wide range of mobility limitations and reasons for them. Some individuals use manual or power wheelchairs because of spinal cord injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, cerebral palsy, spina bifida or other conditions. Still others might use a scooter, walker, crutches, a prosthetic or a cane because of a stroke, amputation, hip or knee disability, etc.

The first rule to remember is not to separate the person from their assistive device, whatever it is. Find a way to bring it along with you if you are evacuating the person. It is also important to ask the individual how they want to be assisted. Some people will want to be pushed, carried or helped in some way, and others will not. Work with the individual to determine what will work



best. Under no circumstances should you pick someone up without asking them first and discussing the best way for them to be lifted.

Talk to the person about how to properly and safely stow their equipment while traveling, evacuating and/or at the shelter.

Tips and Strategies:

- Respect the individual's personal space. Do not lean on or touch their assistive device or mobility equipment.
- Do not push a person in a wheelchair or scooter without asking.
- If you're going to have a conversation with someone in a wheelchair or scooter, if it is possible to sit and be at eye level, do so. It isn't necessary, however, to kneel on the floor or ground.
- Do not grab a person who is using a cane, crutches or walker. To do so could throw them off balance and cause them to fall.
- Start by asking how you can assist the individual and follow their lead.
- Some individuals with mobility limitations have dexterity issues and may need assistance. But the rule is always to ask first; that person will tell you how to help.

Service Animals

A service animal is an animal individually trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability or functional need, such as guiding a person who is blind, performing tasks for people with mobility limitations, alerting people who are deaf or hard of hearing to sounds, protecting people at risk of seizures or other medical conditions, and the like. The Americans with Disabilities Act definition has been changed to only allow dogs and miniature horses to be considered service animals. Other federal, state and local laws retain broader definitions.

There is often confusion about the difference between a pet and a service animal during an emergency. People have been refused entry to shelters because of having a service animal with them, and have been separated from their service animal when evacuating or sheltering. While some wear identifying harnesses or vests, this is not required, nor is an individual with a disability required to carry any kind of certification allowing them to use the service animal.



While this can make it difficult to determine whether an animal is a pet or a service animal, there are two questions that can be asked: 1) Is this service animal required because of a disability? and 2) What tasks does the animal perform for you? If an individual has a service animal, that animal must be accommodated in a general population shelter along with its owner. Areas for the care, feeding, toileting and exercise of the animal should be identified and communicated to the owner. Sources for food, water and supplies for service animal should be identified in advance, particularly since the individual with a disability may not have evacuated with those items.

Tips and Strategies:

- Do not separate an individual from their service animal.
- Do not ask to see certification.
- Provide sufficient space in the shelter for the individual and their animal.
- Allow the service animal anywhere the individual can go.

Children

Children and unaccompanied minors may need assistance following an emergency. Disasters can be traumatic for adults – the same goes for children if they do not know what to do or are separated from their family.

In an emergency, children will look to adults for help. How adults react, particularly trusted adults, can help give them security and overcome the sense of alarm or discomfort. Children may also have disabilities and other functional needs, so keep in mind additional tips and strategies for helping and working with those populations.

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN
Introduce yourself at the child’s height level so that height and stature is less intimidating.
Have a conversation during which you speak clearly and take the time to get to know the child.
Keep questions or instructions short and simple.

Use facial expressions and gestures. Point to any objects as you speak about them.
Use pictures or objects to illustrate your words.
Demonstrate what you mean. Showing a child can be more effective than telling.
Be reassuring.
Rephrase or restate if the child does not understand. Sometimes it is only one word that is causing the confusion.
Let the child know you are there to help.
Accompany the child to the safe location instead of giving only verbal directions.



Resources, Tools, and Templates

There is an abundance of resources available to help you prepared for emergencies. In addition to the resources previously listed, please view the sites below for additional information.

- <http://gearupgetready.org/>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/will-you-know-where-to-go/>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/what-will-you-need/>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/GuGrToolkit/index.html>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/fplan-pdf-english.pdf>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/econtacts-pdf-english.pdf>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ekit-pdf-english.pdf>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/download-center/>
- <http://gearupgetready.org/contact-us/>
- http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/FEMA_Disabilities_R-6_web_june2012.pdf
- <http://www.ready.gov/caring-animals>
- <http://www.ready.gov/>
- <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4941>
- http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odic/fnss_guidance.pdf
- <http://www.fema.gov/office-disability-integration-coordination/office-disability-integration-coordination/office-1>
- <https://www.disability.gov/>

Acronyms

Acronyms	
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AFN	Access and Functional Needs
CART	Communication Access Real-time Translation
CERT	Community Emergency Response Teams
CMS	Consumable Medical Supplies
CSA	Combined Statistical Area
DME	Durable Medical Equipment
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FNSS	Functional Need Support Services
GUGR	Gear Up Get Ready
ICE	In Case of Emergency
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PAS	Personal Assistance Services
RCPGP	Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program
RCPT	Regional Catastrophic Planning Team