Webinar: Understanding the Role of the Independent Living (IL) Network Before, During, and After a Disaster

- **Presenters:** Ed Ahern, Jim House, Sarah Lauderville, Beth Meyer, Germán Parodi, and Shaylin Sluzalis

Acronyms Used During Presentation and in Materials:

- AAA: Area Agency on Aging
- ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act
- ARPA: American Rescue Plan Act
- AFN: Access and Functional Needs
- DAFN: Disability, Access and Functional Needs
- CARES Act: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
- COOP: Continuity of Operations Planning
- CMIST: Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support, Safety, and Self-Determination, and Transportation
- CIL/ILC: Center for Independent Living or Independent Living Center
- EM: Emergency Management
- FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency
- RDIS: Regional Disability Integration Specialist
- SPIL: State Plan on Independent Living

Questions and Responses from Live Webinar:

Note: Questions and responses may have been edited to correct spelling or grammatical errors or if additional clarity was needed.

Question: Do you have any suggestions on how to strengthen partnerships with organizations experiencing high levels of retirements (i.e., fire and police departments)?

Answer:

- Using IL advocacy skills, develop a relationship with the mayor's office; ultimately, the responsibility falls under their authority. Reach out to them with this concern, and if you get closed doors, consider making it an issue topic with city council members.

- Contact your FEMA Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS)
  - 10 Federal regions RDIS email list https://disasterstrategies.org/fema-regional-disability-integration-specialists/

Question: What assessment tools should we use when we partner with our local emergency managers to assess accessible shelter facilities?

Answer:

- Here are some examples:
  - ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters https://archive.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap7shelterchk.htm
  - These are the legal requirements; you may want to consider additional needs, such as alternative power sources.
  - Here are some additional resources from disability and disaster subject matter expert June Kailes
  - (JH) Pierce County Emergency Management in Washington has the Functional Assessment Service Team (FAST) that does ADA assessments in shelters and screen survivors for unmet AFN issues. More information from Pierce County can be found at https://www.piercecountywa.gov/995/Functional-Assessment-Service-Teams-FAST

Question: How are ILCs paying for staff time for disaster-related work, especially during response and recovery?

Answer:

- Review the ACL/OILP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Existing funds through core services
- Throughout the pandemic, some CILs used CARES Act, ARPA, and other Congressionally approved funding
- Other grant opportunities, i.e. foundations, corporations
- Fundraising

Question: Do you have some samples of SPILs with EM/disaster-relevant materials written that we can review?

Answer:

- **Florida Goal #4:** Disaster Preparedness/Response/Recovery Resulting in Systemic Change. People with disabilities will have equal access to the

community resources as a result of disasters, natural (hurricane or pandemic), human-made disaster (terrorism, civil unrest, or a mass shooting) or technological (chemical releases, power outages, or mass cybersecurity breach).

- **Vermont Goal #1**: Expansion of Independent Living in Vermont
    - o The IL partners also consider emergency preparedness for people with disabilities to be of utmost importance and have started to educate citizens with disabilities and organizations on developing preparedness plans and informing intake processes.
- **Washington Goal #1:**
    - o Washingtonians with disabilities receive community integration and community-based living support to become more independent in their community of choice through Independent Living.
        - ▪ Objective 1.1 - emergency preparedness
        - ▪ Objective 1.2 - Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Preparedness (CIEP)
    - o *(Response from Jim House)* In Washington, we are drafting our SPIL plans to include more emergency preparedness with our WASILC, and we draw from California, Colorado in addition to Florida and Vermont thanks to my co-panelists. Here is our (Washington) current SPIL and happy to share our new plans as they are developed.
- **South Carolina Goal #2:** South Carolinians with disabilities are prepared for emergencies (natural disasters and pandemics).

Question: What AFN trainings would you recommend ILCs start teaching DAFN members about?

Answer:

- Contact your FEMA Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS) or your FEMA Regional Office to ask for recommendations.
- PIDS can help with the following:
    - o Disability rights in disasters
    - o Getting ready/prepared for disasters
    - o How the CIL can help before, during, and after disasters
- *(Response from Jim House)* California and Colorado have frequent AFN/CMIST training workshops.

Question: How to advocate and be involved in the triage process where people with disabilities may not be getting the assistance and priority?

Answer:

- Develop a relationship with your county emergency management agency. It's not something that can always happen given the nature of sudden need of shelters, and potential levels of security.
  - Bring your knowledge of the disability community needs, offer to support them to meet the community needs and meet compliance.

Question: Shouldn't ILCs be involved in every emergency or disaster to ensure that laws and rights are taken into consideration and followed? People with disabilities or Access and Functional needs have had their rights violated for many years. What can we (ILCs) do to change this when there is no event or declaration?'

Answer:

- Yes, Centers for Independent Living should be involved in every disaster or emergency that impacts your local community to the extent they are able. IL Core Services have application in disaster. If your community is frequently impacted by a variety of disasters, CIL staff may look to develop ways to provide Core Services in a disaster or emergency environment. Individual and Systems Advocacy core services are especially important.
- Partnership with other Administration on Disabilities (AoD) programs such as the Protection & Advocacy network and the Developmental Disabilities Councils can unify a stronger voice.
- Resources
  - Disability Rights in Disasters
  - How to File a Civil Rights Complaint
  - ILRU Resources on Emergency Preparedness and Recovery

  - *(Response from Jim House)* ILCs are strongly encouraged to develop relationships with local emergency management and local health jurisdictions to share best practices and solutions to unmet AFN needs.

Question: As an advocate who works directly with these folks in my county, I struggle with emergency managers placing the onus of preparedness for the disability, access, and functional needs community back on consumers/ individuals. I also struggle with these folks taking what I say seriously. Do you have any thoughts on what to say/do when emergency managers do these things?

Answer:

- Unfortunately, the concept of placing the onus of preparedness is not unique to the disability, access, and functional needs community. This is a systemic issue and mindset that emergency managers have about individual preparedness.
- With the increase in disasters, early warning systems, transportation options, shelter options and services, and disaster related services need to be inclusive. Emergency managers need to plan for the needs of the whole community, which includes people with disabilities who account for 27% of the population. Not planning with disability-led organizations like CILs for the 1 in 4 persons in the US, is planning for our expected losses.
- Direct them to the FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101 which directs emergency managers to include all stakeholders of the community, and that includes individuals with disabilities.

Question: As an advocate who works directly with these folks in my county, I struggle with emergency managers placing the onus of preparedness for the disability, access, and functional needs community back on consumers/ individuals. I also struggle with these folks taking what I say seriously. Do you have any thoughts on what to say/do when emergency managers do these things?

Answer:

- *(Response from The Partnership)* We find this can be a struggle, but as disasters will continue and our community is disproportionately impacted it is important to integrate ourselves into emergency management tables and invite them to ours. When there are struggles in developing relationships, we at The Partnership can help build some bridges, and your FEMA Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS) can also help; you can find their contact here: https://disasterstrategies.org/fema-regional-disability-integration-specialists/. And feel free to email us anytime, we're here to support! directors@disasterstrategies.org.

Question: Is any tool available for conducting a self-assessment regarding disaster preparedness? Are there any sample scenarios available for conducting a simulated response to various types of natural disasters?

Answer:

- *(Response from The Partnership)* Here's a document to help you with scenarios and we at the Partnership also support CILs and SILCs with continuity of operation analysis and development, and support with developing tailored exercises. /https://www.jik.com/pubs/Checklistrapid.pdf

Question: Can the Partnership contract with CILs to do Continuity of Operations Planning (COOPs) and other planning to include inclusive exercises, drills, and tabletops?

Answer:

- *(Response from The Partnership) Yes! We have a proven collaborative record of supporting CILs and SILCs across the country to increase their resilience in this area and more!*

Additional Resources:

ACL FAQ: Understanding the Role of the Independent Living Network Before, During, and After a Disaster

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies

Defining Functional Needs – Updating CMIST By June Isaacson Kailes Disability Policy Consultant:

Emergency Support Functions (ESF):