


Emergency Information Form for Children With Special Needs

Last name:

 American College of
Emergency Physicians™

American Academy
of Pediatrics



Date form
completed
By Whom

Revised
Revised

Initials
Initials

Name:		Birth date:	Nickname:
Home Address:		Home/Work Phone:	
Parent/Guardian:	Emergency Contact Names & Relationship:		
Signature/Consent*:			
Primary Language:	Phone Number(s):		
Physicians:			
Primary care physician:		Emergency Phone:	
		Fax:	
Current Specialty physician: Specialty:		Emergency Phone:	
		Fax:	
Current Specialty physician: Specialty:		Emergency Phone:	
		Fax:	
Anticipated Primary ED:		Pharmacy:	
Anticipated Tertiary Care Center:			

Diagnoses/Past Procedures/Physical Exam:	
1.	Baseline physical findings:
2.	
3.	Baseline vital signs:
4.	
Synopsis:	
	Baseline neurological status:

Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs

by Carl T. Cameron, Ph.D. Inclusion Incorporated

When a hurricane recently hit the southeast coast of the United States, emergency evacuation transportation was dispatched for residents of a coastal community. When the bus arrived, the driver found a group of individuals with physical disabilities who needed a life equipped bus in order to board. As a result, the operator left the group at the side of the road, to wait for "suitable transportation". Fortunately, this case was not life threatening - but it highlights an important message for Local Emergency Planning Committees: it is essential to ensure that your emergency response plan considers persons with disabilities and other special needs. It is apparent that in almost all communities, the consideration of persons with "special needs" has not been included in the ongoing discussions of how to shelter and evacuate in the event of emergencies, particularly emergencies that involve chemical accidents and other man made environmental threats.

During the recent attack on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, it was painfully obvious that most organizations are ill prepared to provide the needed support for employees and other users of their facilities. Stories are continuing to emerge of how people with disabilities attempted to evacuate from the buildings. In some cases, the extraordinary acts of heroism have been described in attempts to assist people with disabilities, and in other cases no options were available.

Who are people with "special needs"?

People with special needs include a wide variety of individuals who are identified by a variety of names - people with disabilities such as individuals who use wheel chairs, people who are blind or visually impaired, people who are deaf or severely hard of hearing, people with severe emotional impairments, people with severe intellectual impairments, people with medically related needs such as diabetics, individuals with seizure disorders, and many others that require unique assistance. Individuals with disabilities are defined as persons who have physical or mental impairment that limit major life activities, have an ongoing or chronic condition, or even if they don't have such a condition, are regarded by the community as being disabled. And this doesn't necessarily include the ever-enlarging group of senior citizens who have a greater number of special needs including Alzheimer's and related memory disorders.

In addition, in recent years have we started to consider the special needs of large number of individuals who do not speak or understand English, When you start to consider the number of people who may have special needs, it may at first seem overwhelming to try and include these individuals in your emergency planning.

The purpose of this article is to identify the issues related to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the emergency planning process; to identify the information and support needs of individuals with disabilities and to discuss options for inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the planning process.

What are the requirements to serve people with disabilities?

Many emergency planners are quite familiar with the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) that sets up notification procedures for the public and trains local emergency response and medical workers to respond to chemical emergencies. The other major Federal legislation that impacts on services to individuals with disabilities is the

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities, exclusion from services or activities available to the general public and requires equal access. Both these Federal laws need to be taken into consideration when developing emergency planning. The ADA provides for a series of steps that can be activities that can be taken by individuals with disabilities who feel they have been discriminated against because of their disabilities and have not been provided access to services - including services of the LEPC/SERC. A person with a disability may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), which is followed by an investigation, mediation, litigation or a DOJ or individual suit. The result is a compliance agreement, and possible fines and penalties, which may be assessed.

While currently there are no direct rulings on SERC/LEPC activities, there have been a series of specific requirements for how for 911 and telephone emergency services are provided to people with disabilities.

What can the SERCI LEPC do?

There are a few things that SERC/ LEPC's can do in order to ensure that individuals with disabilities are included in the planning process. Most of these suggestions are simple and easy to integrate into the existing planning.

Suggestion #1: Include people with disabilities in the planning process

There are literally hundreds of organizations in the United States that are comprised of people with disabilities who are advocates for themselves and their organization. Almost any of the organizations like the Centers for Independent Living, the Mayor's or Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities, the National Parent Network on Disabilities, the National Organization on Disabilities, would be able to assist you in locating appropriate individuals to participate in your planning process. The National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC) has a web site (www.naric.com) and a toll free number (800.346.2742) that can provide a wide range of contacts.

Once you have identified individuals with disabilities, make sure that your meeting facilities are accessible, and that special needs are accounted for like sign language interpreters, special transportation, accessible restrooms, and locations for individuals to use personal assistive computer equipment. Now it's obvious that it is not reasonable to try and provide accessibility for all contingencies, so it is very important to ask the participant(s) what support they will need from the committee. In most cases, an individual with a disability already has their special need supports in place, and you may not need to make any accommodations, or it may be as simple as removing a chair or relocating a table so a person who uses a wheelchair can participate.

It is a good idea to select representatives who may be able to represent the interests of more than one disability area, as there are many organizations that focus on disabilities in general, not specifically on one disabling condition.

Suggestion #2: Include disability specific procedures

For most communities, the local and state emergency plans have been completed, so it is probably most likely that the main action is to review the existing plan and how it addresses the special needs of people with disabilities and other special populations. This review should include members of the committee with disabilities to secure input from

individuals with disabilities as to what accommodations are necessary and what is the most direct and effective way to ensure appropriate services. It would be extremely beneficial to draft a set of proposed changes and disseminate them to a broader audience of individuals with disabilities in your community for their comments. People with disabilities live with accessibility issues every day, and have developed some easy and cost effective ways of making sure they have access. You shouldn't have any trouble finding these individuals through your committee members with disabilities or local organizations.

Suggestion #3: Train response personnel

Probably the one thing that can make a huge difference is the training of response personnel on how to assist individuals with disabilities during emergencies. A few simple rules will make everyone feel more at ease (both response personnel and individuals with disabilities) if there ever is a need to utilize emergency procedures. When providing this training, it is extremely valuable to use individuals with disabilities as trainers, as they can really provide concrete, practical knowledge. Individuals with disabilities don't always agree on the right way to provide accessibility services, so be prepared for some debate, but usually there is an easy, appropriate solution that provides the best accommodation.

There are very few materials available to use for information and training purposes, but the Red Cross (1998) has developed some materials on natural disaster sheltering and evacuation, and the Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs (Inclusion Incorporated, 1999) offer assistance in training personnel for dealing with a wide variety of special needs including transporting, lifting or carrying, assistance animals, communication, dealing with highly emotional people and appropriate use of language.

Suggestion #4: Provide pro-active information

Like everyone else, getting information prior to an emergency offers one of the most cost effective and useful alternatives for ensuring the safety of the community. The major problem is that almost all information is limited to print materials or broadcast on the radio or TV. It is most important to remember that people with special needs can't always, hear the radio or TV, see printed materials, or understand them if they can see them. Materials need to be prepared in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, audio tapes, or in formats now available for people to use them on their home computer with an assistive device like a text to speech device. You should be able to secure assistance of existing disability organizations and their inhouse publications and materials to distribute even more effectively -- because they know where people with disabilities live- Share the materials you developed with other LEPC's.

Suggestion #5: Create a special needs listing

Finally, involve disability organizations in developing a listing of individuals with special needs in your community, including people who live independently, live with their family, In group homes, assisted living, and others types of alternative living arrangements. When you start looking around, there are a lot more people with disabilities living in your community than you think. And guess what, because people with disabilities tend to have less income, you will find a higher concentration in lower income housing areas - typically the same areas as industry, chemical plants and other hazardous facilities.

Work with local disability organizations in identifying where individuals with disabilities live - and have families, caregivers, friends or advocates identify the most critical needs including the necessary communication options. This could easily be included in an existing locator database or developed using commercially developed software for relatively low cost.

Resources

American Red Cross, Disaster preparedness for people with disabilities, Disaster Services, American Red Cross, Washington, DC, 1998

<http://www.redcross.org/disaster/safety> (series of tips for persons with disabilities and special health care needs to improve emergency preparedness for earthquakes)

National Council on Independent Living, 1916 Wilson Blvd., Suite 209 Arlington, VA 22201, (703) 525-3406, TTY: (703) 525-4153, Fax: (703) 525-3409, e-mail: ncil@ncil.org

Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs, 1999, Inclusion Incorporated, 1436 Independence Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20003-1536, 202.546.4464, 202.546.4465(f), e-mail: inclusion@inclusioninc.com

About the Author

Dr. Cad T Cameron, is President of Inclusion Incorporated in Washington, DC, and the founder of the National Center on Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities. He is a nationally known education professional in the area of employment and community living for people with disabilities. He has been recognized as a program developer, researcher, teacher, author and presenter throughout the United States. Dr. Cameron is well known as a media and training expert, including as a producer of satellite video teleconferences, videotape training and interactive video productions. He currently is developing education and training materials focused on persons with special needs, such as community living and employment for persons with disabilities, violence prevention, and substance abuse. For more information, contact Dr. Cameron at ctcameron@inclusioninc.com or 202.546.4464 x201.