

SPEAKER:

Hello everyone, welcome to the seminar today. Just so everybody knows, the chat will be muted until the end of the webinar when we are having our Q&A session. This webinar is going to be recorded and available in our webinar library, and they will be closed captioning provided. So I'm going to pass it over to Sue, she is the staff lead for our emergency preparedness here in AUCD. So I asked if everybody could new themselves as they join, and I'm going to pass it to you, Sue.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

I just wanted to say hi, I'm Sue Wolf-Fordham, and I am the AUCD staffer who is the liaison, I am thrilled we have such a robust group of people here today, we are going to be speaking with Doctor Carol Salas Pagan on a discussion about FEMA's national advisory Council and disability.

I would now like to introduce Doctor Laura Stough who is the chair, she will tell you more about our agenda today.

LAURA STOUGH:

Thank you Sue, and thank you Jordan and AUCD staff for their support of the emergency preparedness special interest group. I also want to thank Sue Wolf-Fordham who was serving as our liaison, Sue has a long-standing interest in disaster into disability issues, and has really invigorated our groups, so thank you Sue.

As Sue said, I am the chair of the emergency preparedness SIG, and I'm going to share my slide, here. I am a professor of educational psychology at Texas and him University, I also direct project REDD, which is research and education on disability and disaster at Howard Center on disability and development here at Texas A&M University.

I want to start overviewing our agenda, pretty straightforward today, but applied for our emergency preparedness special interest group which meets regularly at the annual Association for University centers on disability meeting. We host webinars such as this one, disseminate materials, and information, and we have over 150 AUCD network participants as well as members from emergency preparedness and the disability community.

We have a link on the screen, but also we will make that available in the chat that you can use to join this SIG. you're also looking to contact me or an AUCD staff member for assistance in joining, and I do hope the you join us, again you do not have to be an AUCD member, and I see some of my colleagues from emergency preparedness and emergency management from Texas, so hello, and thanks for joining us today.

Before I introduce our speaker enter presentation, I want to put our topic in context in light of research on the effects of people with disabilities experiencing disaster.

Research on individuals with disabilities in disaster has been increasing, especially since Hurricane

Katrina in 2005, but it's still very limited. The evidence base we have does confirm that people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by disaster. For example, what studies show is that people with disabilities have a higher mortality rate, particularly when the disaster includes the need to evacuate, or to take quick shelter in advance of a disaster.

If you think about this, it makes intuitive sense. If you have a mobility or sensory impairment, and you have to run, climb, or quickly evacuate on your own, rapid onset disasters are particularly dangerous. For example, in 2011 the East Japan earthquake, it created a tsunami in which people literally had to run for their lives.

People with disabilities also have higher property laws. A recent study on hurricane Harvey suggests this seems to be associated with a higher likelihood of living in a floodplain. In addition, people with disabilities for a variety of reasons to deliver and housing structures that are more vulnerable to disaster. 10 people with disabilities and other functional access needs may need additional supports, as I mentioned, to evacuate and shelter, and a lack of the supports may negatively impact, may negatively add to impact they have experienced from disasters.

So overall, following disasters, what we see is that people with disabilities often have more complex recovery support needs, and they require more intensive disaster case management than to others. As a result, people with disabilities, along with their household members, can take longer to recover from the effects of disaster.

So together, these factors that I show here suggest that people with disabilities are more likely to experience disaster, and then when they do experience disaster, they are hit harder.

So with that, I want to now introduce our speaker, it is such a pleasure, Doctor Carol Salas Pagan has been director of the University Research Center for excellence in education research and service on development of disabilities at the Puerto Rico UCED since November 2015. She also has served as associate director for that center. She is a doctor and clinical psychology, and a proud UCED training. She also graduated from our national leadership Institute.

She serves as secretary for the AUCD board of directors, and she is also President-elect, so we will have her leadership in the upcoming year.

She represents UCED in the multicultural counsel, and on the national diversity advisory Council for a IDD, and she is also an appointed member at the advocacy office board. Most pertinent to today's webinar she serves as an advisor in FEMA's national advisory committee, representing disability access and functional needs, we are also so proud to have her voice representing AUCD in the emergency preparedness SIG.

With that I will turn it over to Doctor Salas Pagan, welcome, and be in Vinita.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Thank you, I'm glad to be here this morning with all of you. And I'm very glad that you had me

presenting today, and invited me to present a little bit about what has been going on at FEMA, and the work we are doing there. So I will start sharing my screen, I have a short presentation.

First of all, I want to start with what I will try to be presenting today. I want to first start with an overview of the NAC, because when I was first asked to consider joining, or submitting, because you have to submit an application, I didn't know what it was, I didn't know it existed, I didn't know the work they did. So I want to provide an overview this morning, I also want to share one of the responsibilities of the members of an NAC, I know if you wanted to enroll or be considered, the deadline was yesterday, but I'm pretty sure a lot of you would consider it, so I want to give you a heads up of the responsibility, and for future years that you have that information, and be aware that every year they will be recruiting, right?

So I also want to share how does the NAC work, and a little bit about the responsibilities and the work I've been doing there.

So first of all I want to share with the NAC is. It was established in 2006 – May 2007, and what it does is it oversees FEMA administration. With state local and tribal governments, and private sectors, and strategies for all. So it is subject to the advisory committee, and that matter what it provides and does is provide input to the administrator of FEMA, and consult also the administrative consults with NAC on what national preparedness goals, but of the national preparedness system, what is the incident management system, the National response framework, and other plans, programs, strategies, guidance, and risk assessment are to the strategic plan for FEMA agency.

So is a federal advisory committee it has to adhere to all the requirements of FACA of 1972. So through that alone Congress has ensured that committees provide advice that is relevant, objective, and open to the public, that we can act promptly to complete our work, that we comply with reasonable cost control and record-keeping requirements, and include a membership that is fairly balanced in terms of representation. To have a diverse group, right, that could provide input to all the plans of the agency, and help keep equity embedded in all those plans that the agency does.

So what we, in terms of the federal advisory act, but we do is we advised the administrator, we provide input into strategic and strategies, programs, plans, and policies, and also the administrator can come to us and consult with us on any manner, anything of the expertise that is represented in the NAC for advice.

So who is the NAC? We are 35 official members, most of the members are emergency responders, or emergency management from government and the private sectors. We serve a three-year term at the pleasure of the administrator, and we require expertise and representation as well as the number of members. See you can see me right there in the middle. (Laughs) This was taken last November. We were finally able to have an in person meeting, as you know we were also affected by the COVID restrictions, and even though we did our virtual meetings, doing work in person is more effective in this kind of work we do.

So in terms of the work we do, what does success look like for us? We are all about promoting better

outcome for disaster survivors, to have a high quality, and to do high quality recommendations that get to be implemented -- so for the past few years since it was created, and has been able to create more than 300 recommendations, often grouped in specific topics, they have been provided to different administrations in terms of response, and to work within the different programs and offices in FEMA.

So you can see my presentation, I have a chart that was provided by the NAC in the area that we've been able to provide recommendations directly to the minister to. Most of the recommendations in the past years have been in terms of protection and preparedness, also in responding in recovery, in other areas, and a small percentage in insurance and mitigation.

What are the member expectations? So if you're considering to be in future years a NAC member, or if you apply and get selected, the expectation is that you should be familiarized with the guiding documents that are required for the NAC, recommendations, and all these administrative documents that FEMA provides the members for us to read, and get familiar with.

You should actively participate, commit necessary subcommittee works, you are required to attend to in person committee meetings, usually the November meeting is held in DC, but the main meeting usually moves around different states, and is held in different emergency preparedness offices, so it depends. So this June we will be having our meeting in Idaho. So I hope to be there in June.

Also as a member you should express your viewpoint, or that of the group you represent, that's very important, especially for the disability and access inclusion share. Initial report changes in anything that's going to affect your membership in the NAC.

I wanted to include the roles and responsibilities of the members. So to contextualize the work that I have been doing as a disability -- first of all as a member, all members should serve as a source of independent expertise and advice on policy, program activities, carried out by the committee, or as a representative member, of a specific stakeholder group.

You should attend meetings of the full committee in their entirety, you should notify your DFO of any changes that affect the ability to participate in any meetings, and on your subcommittee work, you should read a lot and read materials before meetings, and you are required to be very vocal and to participate in the discussions and the voting that goes on in those meetings.

You should be making recommendations to provide the administrator with effective advice and counsel, to share your expertise, you should read and understand provisions related to government ethics and confidentiality, you should maintain a confidential information, so the discussions that we have in the meetings, and should complete necessary paperwork to elect to participate in the NAC, and obviously if you become a member FEMA does cover all your travel costs, but there is of course administered of paperwork that you need to submit an order to be able to be reimbursed for those costs.

So in terms of restrictions, there are restrictions for us members, so in my capacity as a member, if I take advantage of my position, I should disclose public information, or use of personal gain, for the

gain of a private company, I should not speak, I cannot speak on behalf of the NAC, FEMA, the permit of homeland security, so I will be speaking as disability advocate and as a territorial advocate coming from Puerto Rico, I cannot make any expressions on behalf of the NAC or FEMA or the department of homeland security. I can provide information on recommendations that are publicly available, I cannot petition Congress for or against particular legislation or encourage others to do so, and I cannot testify before Congress. So those are the restrictions that you are compromised with as you become an official appointee to the NAC.

So in terms of the FEMA national advisory Council, the disability access and functional needs chair, I wanted to first try to bring into context what the work for the past three years has looked like for me. When I got appointed in 2019, this was the strategic plan that FEMA had in place, and I was working with, as you can see it was the 2018/2822 strategic line. If that strategic plan for FEMA focused on three areas, building a culture of preparedness, on readying the nation for catastrophic disasters, introducing the complexity of FEMA.

So at that moment when I was appointed, the NAC functions differently from what we are functional enough. So when I got appointed in 2019, on that strategic plan, the usual form before it was that the administrator of FEMA directed NAC to consider specific issues and challenges in defining charges that supported the agency's strategic goals and objectives.

So we were given specific charges to give our recommendations for. So by the time I got appointed as a NAC member in 2019, we were working on the charges that you could see or read in the slide. We were asked to give recommendations on the 20/40 vision for FEMA. So we were asked to give recommendations to the administration on what should be the future vision of emergency management and FEMA in 2040. How should FEMA and its nonfederal partners address and Outlook of disaster and increased federal economy? We were also asked to give specific recommendations to the administrator on building local capacity, on what were the best ways to build capacity in response, and mitigation and local state and territory levels.

So we had our meetings, then COVID had. We were paused for a few months as we all experienced in all our work areas, but at the end we were able to work on the recommendations of the charges. So at that time, as disability access and functional needs chair, I was assigned to the equity subcommittee. So my work was concentrated on participating in the equity subcommittee, and we were able through COVID and by virtual meetings we were able to work on a very strong and specific definition of what access means, what equity means, and what inclusion meant for the agency and for everybody, specifically for people with disabilities during a disaster and after a disaster.

So our equity subcommittee makes recommendations for the 2021 national Council report, and you could access that report and go through those recommendations and the link provided in the slide that I will put at the end of my presentation, so you can read and go through the 2021 report of the NAC.

So we were very specific about having a definition, an equity and access definition that could be embedded in all the work FEMA does.

Within the strategic plan changed for FEMA, so no females working under a strategy plan, and under new administrator, the current administrator for FEMA is Diane as well, so this is the strategic plan that FEMA is guiding her work. You can also find a copy of this strategic plan in the link provided in the slide but I will also put at the end of the presentation.

So just to give you heads up, the main goals of the current FEMA plan is to instill equity as a foundation of emergency management, to lead whole of community and climate resilience, and to promote and sustain a ready FEMA and prepared to nation.

So I like to believe, and we have been told to the equity group that part of this goal comes from the recommendations, and are part of recommendations that we were able to insist FEMA should consider on 2021 recommendations we did.

So we like to take pride, or I like to take pride, that because of the work this group did, it's part of the strategic plan of FEMA, that they are part of the strategic planning to ensure equity as a foundation for emergency management.

So with the strategic plan, under the leadership of administrative Creswell, we can focus on specific charges as what happens when I got appointed in 2019, now we are being asked to focus on the strategic plan, and to conduct regular subcommittee work through the climate adaptation group, to the readiness subcommittee group, and to work in these subcommittees mirroring the current strategic plan of FEMA.

So right now we will render advice regarding FEMA's initiative and strategic plan to those objectives through equity, climate adaptation, and readiness. Including work for subjects that are embedded in this code, so we are regularly scheduling subcommittee meetings to provide continuous feedback to FEMA and the administrator in their leadership liaison attending and inviting preparatory meetings, and to make recommendations expressed in our concerns, so now we are working in a different manner, we are not making specific charges, we were asked to work to help invasion, and we are working to help translate with that strategic plan is, what those goals are, how to make them a reality in FEMA.

So how does it work? I'm a very visual person in terms of explaining things, so this chart was provided by our leadership. So the NAC currently holds 35 members, I said before most are emergency managers, so right now we have four subcommittees, one subcommittees with climate and resiliency and climate change. We have a readiness subcommittee, and we have a workforce subcommittee. But we also have the long-lasting equity committee. We meet biweekly by phone to receive briefings and to develop drafts of the recommendations, then the whole NAC discusses and deliberates and votes on those recommendations, then we provide input to the administrator to the consensus of the recommendations.

So, in terms of what we are doing now this year, we will be conducting business through four subgroups, as I mentioned before. Climate, readiness, workforce, and equity. But as I say, because all the recommendations of all the work we did in 2019 in terms of equity, access, and inclusion, we are asked in order to bake equity into all parts of the process, we are asked to participate in other

subcommittees. So in terms of commitment, this is a commitment to double the number of meetings for me, because currently I'm representing the disability shares in the equity committee, but I was also asked to participate in the workforce development subcommittee of FEMA, of the NAC, so I'm attending both subcommittees, and working as an advocate in those two subcommittees.

So basically, us as equity members, we have a role in maintaining an aggregate equity focus and all the subcommittee's discussions, to bring back to the group issues of equity that may require cross collaboration between subcommittees and can make independent recommendations from the equity subcommittee to the full Council.

So now the NAC, I wanted to also inform you that we do public hearings. We have two meetings through the year, we have one in May and one in November. Senior leaders discuss the subcommittee reports, and all the members vote on the recommendations. For their space, for public comment. So at the end of the presentation I have the email you can address all your questions, but the next meeting we are having are going to be open for public comments will be on June 7-9 of 2022, then on November we still don't have a specific date.

So, important to highlight that each equity workgroup member should view their role on their assigned subcommittee as being both a champion, as well as a resident NAC expert on the topic of equity as it relates to work accomplished in previous years, as I've mentioned before. Members are required to attend subcommittee meetings, participate in conversations, draft recommendations, and ensure that everything that comes out as a report to the administrator be equity and inclusion, be baked into it.

So the goals, wanted to highlight the goals that we have right now is the equity group in the NAC. We decided that we want to continue to engage with FEMA equity leaders to understand initiatives, so in this matter we have been asking different officers from FEMA, leaders from different offices inside FEMA to come and present to us, like for example last meeting we had the data office come in and say what is the work they're doing, what other projects, what initiatives they have, and we were able to make recommendations to them in terms of equity and inclusion. So we also participate in all three subcommittees, as I mentioned equity members, we are intentionally injecting the concept of equity and all the other subcommittees, so I could tell you that our last meeting of the workforce group, we were asked to ask for speakers, and I specifically asked to have speakers from the disability integration office from FEMA to come talk to the subcommittee workgroup for them presenting one of the initiatives in terms of workforce development in other areas.

Also we are working on revisiting, refining, and improving table to 2021 recommendations, we want to go through that again to make sure the definitions are relevant, and that we are engaged with it.

So we are almost coming to the end of my presentation, as I just mentioned, as a disability and access and functional needs chair, I cannot leave behind but I live in Puerto Rico, and also represents not only the disability community, I also represent our community, our organization and other programs and disability community, but I also represent the voices of the territories. As you know, emergencies or experienced different in every state and territory. So what I've been doing is my work is been concentrated on advocacy, on championing the voices of all the people I represent, I've been trying to

be very vocal, which is sometimes difficult, but that's what I've been doing, I'm focusing on, and of course asking questions. Sometimes just being able to ask a question coming to the faces, and how you are promoting system changed by asking a question.

So I think here, I say as a member I cannot speak on behalf of the NAC but if you have questions or specifically, in the application, please direct your questions to the email. You can also go to the national advisory Council website. And unfortunately, the did lengthy application closed yesterday, but I hope, I mentioned before, a lot of our leadership in AUCD has been able to apply. If you were not able, and after this presentation you see is there a possibility for me, you can write to them, and I know through Laura, Sue, and the leadership at AUCD we will make sure to give a heads up when the next opening comes. So you could apply.

So within it's all for me, and it was great to be here with you today. So now I leave it to Laura, right?

LAURA STOUGH:

Thanks so much Carol, and thank you for your leadership on this issue. Now we want to open up the chat for discussion and question-and-answer. And while you here on the webinar are filling in your questions in the chat, I wanted to remind you of how to join the SIG hearing and resuming. And not only do we send you information about webinars, but things related to emergency management, and disability issues, functional needs, and taxes need issues, and you can also disseminate through our listserv, so it works both ways. So encouraged to do that.

Also, I had the pleasure of leading the SIG for the last eight years, but it's always great to have diversity, and have other thoughts, and new initiatives, so if you would like to be a cochair of the AUCD emergency preparedness SIG, please contact me, I would love to hear from you, and I would really welcome your interest.

So I would like to start out our Q&A, Carol, you've done so much to make this part of an integral value of the work in the strategic plan of FEMA moving forward. Now it sounds like your next step is implementing that. How you do that. So what I'm wondering is, where do you think the most work around this issue is right now for the NAC?

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Well, this is just a new strategic plan that in November was unveiled for us, and we were able to meet with the new administrator, and what she asked from us was to just ask what we needed, ask the questions, and help her implement the strategic plan, give recommendations on how would that translate in the different areas of the agency?

So we are starting to do that work, we had meetings, and we are getting that information, as I mentioned, we've been asking for speakers for the heads of the different areas of FEMA to come speak to us, and to hear what they're doing. And of course we have been able to do recommendations right on the spot, like staffing in the moment, and saying, have you considered this, have you considered these other options?

But we are taking notes, and after we do all these meetings and gather this information, then we will start working on specific recommendations that will be concluded in the next NAC report that is due December of this year.

So the answer to your question is, there's a lot of work, because being an advocate for inclusion and equity and access, you know that bureaucratic process, most of the time are not the most empathetic for equity and access and inclusion. So we are really aware that there's a lot of good recommendations we can do, but it takes a lot of time, there's a lot of work we need to be doing in the next month.

LAURA STOUGH:

And also so much of this work depends on good communication, and good communication takes time.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Yes, agree.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

Laura, this is Sue. Can everybody hear me, because I am now not hearing all of you?

LAURA STOUGH:

We can hear you, Sue, so go ahead.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

I wanted to read, there was a comment in the chat, great to see equity as part of the next strategic plan. I have a couple of questions, and Carol, thank you so much for this fabulous and informative presentation.

You mentioned that you were the chair for disability, access, and functional needs. Are there specific positions among the 35 that are kind of assigned? So did you apply specifically for receipt related to disability, and if so, how many of those seats are assigned?

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

So thank you for the question. They do include us as following, the Congress of how to construct the consul, it should be inclusive of different voices, so I do believe they do have different chairs, and actually among the 35 they have two disability and access and functional needs chairs, I am one of them, and the other is Jenna, she's from New Orleans, she's an emergency and public health emergency manager from New Orleans, and she's been a great sport.

Actually when you come into the NAC as a new member, they assigned you older members to guide you through the process, just to be your peer. And she's been a great sport, we have become friends.

So the answer to your question is, there are two disability, access, and functional needs chairs, they do have specific openings, and they do ask to fill up that chair. If you're interested in representing this community, this is Rachel Bly.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

Thank you. I see a raised hand, and I'm sorry I will not be pronouncing your name correctly. (unknown name), perhaps?

SPEAKER:

That's fine, thank you. Good morning everyone, I'm from American Samoa, just most recently I had observed on the FEMA integrated alert subcommittee, and we had an opportunity to present to the NAC around the same time we had our AUCD meeting.

One thing that we had talked a lot about was more inclusive messaging, you know, warnings, and how to make the messages more accessible.

The reason why I had commented about equity, and great to see this in the strategic plan, is, you know, from the territories we always talk about the national flood insurance policy that is required, and as we understood the national flooding insurance policy more and more, basically if you are living in a flooding zone, and you receive financial assistance, and you are not up-to-date with your flooding insurance, you are not going to receive financial assistance in the next go around, this is always an ongoing conversation from the territories.

That's one, then two is from a state-level side, we had invited Linda, the director out of FEMA headquarters to the capacity building Institute after (unknown term) to meet with the territories, and they just realized at the meeting with us was that at the state territory level they do not have a full-time access and functional needs employee.

So take for example out of region nine, California, it's the only one that has a full-time access and functional needs person. Which means when there's no disaster, they can make sure that there is ongoing inclusive planning on identifying shelters, making sure communication information is accessible, making sure training is continuous with agencies that have to respond on the ground.

In the thought here is how can we get state into territories to hire full-time access and functional needs, or as you said, to build that capacity. So while we are trying to address those issues, this is stated, every territory in government, the mirror FEMA's framework. So I can make it FEMA to push states and territories to hire full-time access functional needs staff on the ground?

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Thank you. So first of all I just found out last Thursday that Linda, the head of the disability integration office, resigned, she is no longer at FEMA. So as of today I don't have information if they have appointed a new lead for the disability integration officer FEMA. I don't have that information, I don't know if they've appointed somebody, so that is something I would be trying to find out in our next meeting. Because as I mentioned through the presentation, and the equity group I asked to have a disability integration office lead to come and speak to the equity subcommittee group just to see where they're at, and what they're focusing on, and how are they helping make the strategic plan come true specifically for disability community in the territories.

So that's what I'm working and focusing on right now in the next meeting I will find that more information on our next meeting, that will be next Thursday, April 7.

So the other thing is also that I was talking before the presentation with Laura and Sue, and something we are going to work as the SIG in the liaising to the NAC we are going to have AUCD have a new memorandum of understanding with FEMA, and your question of how can we have FEMA help the territories in the state have a full-time person to work with disability access and functional needs, maybe we could discuss that on that meeting, and that could be a good idea how we have AUCD collaborate with FEMA.

I'm just talking here as I heard you, as I understand what you're saying, the disability office I know doesn't have an appointee, but I will find out sooner or later, and I think this is something that the CID group could help me try to promote inside the NAC as long as I can inside my position there to have them consider that, and also to be maybe part of a memorandum of understanding of our association within FEMA. To help achieve that.

I see another question in the chat.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

There's a question in the chat, do you have any advice on ways that we can broach the topic of inclusivity with others in the emergency management community who may be unfamiliar with it or may not see it as an important consideration.

I've put some in the chat about AUCD resources, but what's your take on that, Carol?

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

I would believe this is the new FEMA strategic plan, and focus on equity and inclusion, let's go through it, I could link to the strategic point in the chat before, so go to it, read it, and maybe have a meeting to discuss it. This is the new FEMA strategic plan, how can we be on board, how could we help FEMA achieve their goals, let's see what other recommendations and see if we can mirror on the state level what FEMA is saying we should be doing, so let's do that, let's take advantage that the first goals of the new administrator has is to embed equity in all FEMA's crosses. So I think that's a very concrete recommendation in terms of, let's go through the FEMA strategic plan, let's read it, let's discuss it, and let's see how we can mirror and help achieve those goals.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

Next question. Were there guidelines to address how to best support autistic individuals during times when people are required to shelter outside of their homes in an emergency?

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Laura, do you want to take that question? I know you have a lot of resources that you could mention specifically.

LAURA STOUGH:

Sure. What I do know is about research on people with autism and their families to have sheltered, and difficulties into barriers they have experienced.

As you know, people with autism are very sensitive to loud noises and changes in routine, and what is an emergency, it usually involves loud noises and changes in routine. So disasters, especially disasters that involve evacuation and sheltering in new places are particularly difficult for these populations.

What I see through the AUCD network is a number of projects that have been done particular to this issue, and Joan, I don't know if you are a member of the AUCD network, but you can do a search through the nearest database --

SPEAKER:

It's me. Yeah. The reason I bring this up -- I do this work. I know Laura well. The reason why I bring this up is there's a large-scale engagement for people with disabilities through FEMA that needs to be done, and it will take months, perhaps years to actually get there. But this is a simple thing, guidelines when shelters are created, when FEMA creates shelters that give people guidelines and guidance as to how to, even how to establish a quite space, as Laura said, may be reduced lighting, reduced noise in consideration of people who are not neuro-typical.

We have seen this in North Carolina when the evacuations occurred during the hurricane, autistic individuals suffered terribly in shelters because of these environments that Laura just described. So while AUCD does have resources, I think FEMA is required, should have resources, and pushing FEMA to do it, I'm part of UCED, we can do what we can do, but we don't oversee the shelters.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

I had an emergency preparedness meeting here in Puerto Rico and I know FEMA does, we invited (unknown term) and DHS, and FEMA, they were able to present, and they do have a guideline for publishing accessible and admissible shelters. I think I do have it, I need to look for it, but I think I have it in Spanish, but I will find that out and I will give it to Laura so she can post in the group, but they do.

SPEAKER:

And what we can do that is in our local communities and territories, we can share that information so that it's readily available. Because sometimes people know what to do, but no one knows where to get the information.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

I think she presented in Spanish, but I will look it up, I will find it, I will give it to Laura so she can post in the mailing list, I will do that.

SPEAKER:

And it's good to see you, Laura.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

I've just put into the chat what you may be thinking of, Carol. It's in the chat.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Is that the English version?

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

Yes, this is the English version.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

Thank you, Sue.

SUE WOLF-FORDHAM:

The other thing I wanted to add is I know that in Florida the State Department of public health for some people who could benefit from them, which may include some people with autism. And I want to say Delaware, I think it's Delaware, has done an even bigger version of that, and so what I could do is I believe I have a presentation from Delaware, and when we revised the SIG webpage, which I'm in the process of doing, I'll just add that.

LAURA STOUGH:

And I just looked at the link, the guidance that Sue put in the chat, and at first I was thinking, this is from 2010, and I feel like we've learned a lot about the needs of people with disabilities, particularly people with autism the last 10 years, but they do have a section in there about a quiet area, so let's take a look at that and see what's there. But it does seem to me, 2010, this is due for an update, right? So much of what we know has come out in the last 10 years about needs during sheltering.

(Multiple speakers)

SPEAKER:

We can work with autistic individuals to revise those guidelines. I think would be good to get first-person experiences to actually advises and provide counsel about what works and what doesn't work.

DR CAROL SALAS PAGAN:

And I think they could be a very specific objective of the modes that we can draft, that's a very specific target we could include, revise these guidelines.

And I see Joan mentioned something very important about people with all of the experience, and when I was in November the in person meeting, I talked to the leadership of the NAC and I said I think we should try to focus on having people with lift experience represent the disability chairs also, so he said can you help me and I said of course, and put him in contact with John, and I know Laura has done a great job recruiting members, but I think it's also important that people with lived experience can apply to be part of the NAC, I think it would be good for the members and also for FEMA and the group for disability.

LAURA STOUGH:

That such a great point, Carol, and we know that we learned so much when we listens to people with disabilities about what they need. So as Susanna is saying, more equitable approaches as having those real stories.

So we are at the end of our hour, I think you all for attending, in looking through who's here, we have everyone from Puerto Rico, to Samoa, representing eight different time zones, I think it's 4 AM where you are at, so thanks for being here, thank you all of you for being here, and especially thank you so much Carol for being our speaker, and sharing your experiences, and we would just love to continue as you move on learning more from you, and the work that you are doing with the NAC.

So thank you everyone, great seeing you!

[Live Captioning by Ai-Media]