### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND PLANNING IN PENNSYLVANIA:

# Including People with Disabilities in Emergency Management

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## Survey Highlights -

#### Key informant interviews with local, state and regional emergency professionals

- Personal relationships and relationships with service agencies that serve individuals with disabilities was seen as an important factor in facilitating conversation, outreach, and inclusion.
- Inclusive emergency planning was receiving more attention than it had in the past.
- Diversity of disability-related accommodations was seen to be a barrier.
- Knowledge level regarding inclusion of people with disabilities in emergency planning across Pennsylvania was described as uneven. Educational opportunities for emergency managers are limited.
- Logistic issues around accommodations and durable medical equipment (DME) is a barrier. Moving equipment from storage to a disaster site was identified as a potential challenge.

#### Survey participants representing individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and family members or caregivers

- Among the participants with ID/DD, 37% reported that they had experienced two or more disasters.
- The majority of participants reported two or more access and functional needs.
- Almost half of respondents did not believe that they would have the support they needed in an emergency.
- Individuals living on their own were less sure of their support network.
- Over half of the respondents want to be actively engaged in emergency planning and are more interested in training on personal emergency preparedness.

#### Among the individuals with ID/ DD who responded regarding their functional needs,

- The most common functional needs reported were taking medication (48%) and mobility issues (44%).
- Problems understanding information and sensitivity to light and sounds were also commonly reported. This indicates a need for emergency managers think critically not only about preparedness activities, but also messaging that will be effective for people with disabilities.
- 55.6% reported they thought they would have the support they would need in an
- 18.5% said they did not think they would have the support they would need.
- 25.9% reported that they didn't know if they would have the support they would need in an emergency.

#### Among the individuals with ID/ DD who responded regarding experience using an emergency plan during a disaster,

- 42.3% reported that they did not have a
- 34.6% reported that their plan worked "somewhat", and
- 23% reported that their plan worked well. This indicates that less than onethird of respondents were completely confident in their emergency plan.

Based upon survey findings and key informant interviews, the following factors were included in our trainings:

#### For emergency professionals

#### Overview of accommodations used to facilitate effective communication and engagement

### Strategies for inclusive planning addressing individuals with a range of access and functional

- Resources for identifying community access and functional needs
- Resources on how to develop an effective personal preparedness plan and support structure using the customized publication "My Emergency Readiness Plan-PA".

For individuals with disabilities and

Education on appropriate terminology used

Identification of typical emergency or disaster

family members or caregivers

during an emergency or disaster

scenarios specific to the region

- Strategies to engage people with disabilities directly rather than through agencies that provide services to people with disabilities
  - Overview of leadership skills necessary for participating in an advisory or planning committee



### Stories of Sharing Knowledge -

After completing the emergency preparedness training, several individuals with disabilities became more involved in their community's emergency planning.

- After attending her first training, Theresa D. continued to develop her skills and attended three more training events. She then reached out to her community leaders, highlighting the importance of personal preparedness, and including persons with a disability in emergency planning.
- George P. shared the information he learned and presented it to others in the community through the Center for Independent Living of South Central PA (Altoona). He secured funds to reprint the booklet "My Emergency Readiness Plan-PA" and distributed it. George held his first in-person training for individuals with disabilities at the Center in July 2015.
- Fred H. brought back what he learned to a Center for Independent Living and encouraged his supervisor to host a emergency preparedness training event. Fred led an in-person training for individuals with disabilities at the Disability Options Network (DON) in New Castle, PA and has plans for future trainings.
  - Daniel L. attended Competence and Confidence: Partners in Policymaking-Emergency Preparedness (C2P2-Eprep)in Philadelphia and shared information with emergency professionals in Delaware County (where he resides). Daniel, a person with a developmental disability, frequently visits with a local first aid squad and shares resources with them.

disabilities as part of the solution in emergency management not just "part of the problem."

This initiative ... considers people with

Background -

require special accommodations now routinely includes service providers

Consideration of the needs of people with disabilities in the context of

emergency planning is a relatively recent development in emergency

management. Planning for citizens "with functional needs" who may

and agencies with responsibility for people with disabilities. However,

individuals with disabilities and their families themselves are far less

The Institute on Disabilities and the College of Public Health (formerly

University conducted a study to assess and report on current barriers

and opportunities for the participation of people with disabilities and

levels. Information collected through interviews and surveys informed

emergency management in Pennsylvania. This initiative, funded by the

Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, considers people with

disabilities as part of the solution in emergency management—not just

individuals with disabilities and their families to further facilitate inclusive

their families in emergency planning at the local, county and state

the development of a training program for emergency planners and

the Center for Preparedness Research and Education (CPREP)) at Temple

frequently to be included.

"part of the problem."

The report "Whole Community Emergency Management Planning in PA" can be vie http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/eprep

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