



FAQ- Inclusive Emergency Management 101

Question 1: Does that Olmstead Decision protect the guy in Spokane who is jailed because he won't isolate?

Answer 1: Probably not. If a person with a disability is accused of committing a crime they can still go to jail. If you give us more information we may be able to answer this question more fully.

Question 2a: Can shelters ban emotional support animals?

Answer 2a: This is a really good question. In a 2020 document released by Housing Urban Development [HUD], HUD stated that emergency shelters are housing, which means the Fair Housing Act Amendments applies. Under the Fair Housing Act Amendments, assistance animals, which includes emotional support animals, are a reasonable accommodation.

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/HUDAsstAnimalNC1-28-2020.pdf>

Question 2b: What documents do you need for emotional support animals?

Answer 2b: Because this is a request for reasonable accommodation, the person must submit documentation of their disability and their need for an emotional support animal.

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/HUDAsstAnimalNC1-28-2020.pdf>

Question 3: What are some alternatives to door knocks?

Answer 3: An emergency evacuation light system is a good alternative. This is a strobe lighting system, similar to a visual fire alarm, which is designed to alert Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. However, be cautious as these lights could be trigger seizures for people who are seizure-prone. For people who are Deaf Blind, or spaces where Deaf or Hard of Hearing people sleep, bed-shakers can be used to wake them up and alert them to an emergency.

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Question 4: Disasters are hard for everyone. So what about people with disabilities? [I've heard stories of people being placed in shelters without adequate services or basic needs met. So, what about People with disabilities? The ideal is not always provided].

Answer 4: Yes, disasters are hard for everyone. Although people with disabilities have civil rights protections during disasters, sometimes these rights are violated. This is why CILs must be vigilant about educating themselves and participants about the rights of people with disabilities before, during, and after disasters - and what to do if their rights are violated.

Question 5: What declaration is the pandemic?

Answer 5: The Pandemic is declared as a Major Disaster, but first there was a Public Health Emergency declaration by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Jan 30 retroactive to Jan 27, 2020.

Then a National Emergency declaration by the President on March 13 that was retroactive to March 1, 2020

And every state and 4 territories requested and received a Major Disaster declaration by the President.

Question 6: Where can undocumented individuals get assistance?

Answer 6: Emergency services (such as evacuation and sheltering) should be provided, without documentation requirements or notifying ICE. If you see this take place, or even fear it could happen, let us know and we can connect with The Dept of Homeland Security, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to elevate a resolution for potential discrimination.



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Question 7: Are refugees (those seeking asylum) eligible for Individual Assistance? If not, what are options?

Answer 7: Individual Assistance requires a lot of documentation. Refugees are typically not eligible for individual assistance programs, but they will not be denied emergency evacuation and/or sheltering, and will be provided with other life sustaining services. Connect with local resources and find other options to refer refugees, such as nonprofit organizations and others that will not require documentation to provide services/assistance.

Question 8: After a person who uses a wheelchair is evacuated from a building on a different floor, what should happen with the person's chair or what happens to the person with the chair that doesn't go with them?

Answer 8: The standard policy is that evacuees can take one small suitcase. However, there is an obligation to make reasonable modifications when people with disabilities need to bring life saving and life sustaining equipment with them during evacuation.

- Note, this obligation is often ignored because first responders are not aware of it and have not drilled for it.
- The existence of this obligation- and how to best meet it- must be part of the planning process at the county level. Then it must be practiced during drills and exercises. This is one of the many reasons that CILS should be involved in planning and exercises in their communities.
- Additionally, there are times when bringing the equipment of a person with disabilities is not feasible and not considered a reasonable modification to policy and may not be required. (For example, bringing a power wheelchair during a rooftop rescue.)
- Each situation, building, and evacuation plans are different. Your equipment ought to be taken with you in an evacuation, but be prepared that oftentimes in a crisis it gets left behind.
- The best time to address this issue is during planning and exercises, thus it is critical that CILs are involved throughout the process.