

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE DISASTER STRATEGIES



Gaps and Bridges Between the Disability Community and Public Health

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Since February 28, 2020, more than 980 consecutive daily calls were held with Disability, public health, and emergency management leaders to identify systematic problems and develop solutions.

People with disabilities are 2-4 times more likely than our non-disabled counterparts to die or be injured during disasters. We saw that disabled people were once again forgotten during the COVID-19 pandemic and response.

The Partnership stood up our Daily COVID-19 Disability Rights calls to serve as a daily focal point to orient new and current partners during the COVID-19 pandemic, concurrent disasters, and international crises as the nation transitions through the different stages and surges of pandemic

Our Disability & Disaster Hotline supports people with disability, older adults, and people with access and functional needs directly impacted by COVID-19 and concurrent disasters

Disability & Disaster Hotline:

Call/Text: +1 (800) 626-4959

Email: hotline@disasterstrategies.org

The Partnership aimed to create a central space for Disability CBOs that took on the responsibility to support equity for people with disability from the onset of the pandemic, as well as directly support the disabled people most impacted.

We created this space by:

1. Facilitating daily, weekly, and regular meetings since February 28, 2020, to coordinate situational awareness and disability considerations into policy, planning and response at all levels of public health and government; and
2. Creating accessible and effective information on SARS-CoV-2 progression as a novel virus

Through our Daily COVID-19 Disability Rights Calls, we:

1. Became a trustworthy information hub for specialized technical assistance
2. Curated a list of COVID-19 resources for CBOs and people with disability
3. Produced periodic reports of our daily, weekly, and regular meetings
4. Ensured that Disability CBOs recognized as essential workers serving hundreds of thousands of people with disability throughout the country

Since the pandemic started, The Disability & Disaster Hotline supported over a thousand callers who are the intersections of marginalized identities.

The Daily Calls met throughout the extreme PPE shortages; lack of federal response; development of discriminatory crisis care guidelines; the disproportionate and alarming death toll of disabled people in nursing facilities; rollout of the first and second iteration of and

Global, national, state and local Disability-led organizations; federal and local agencies; and national non-governmental organizations join and benefit from the centuries of combined shared knowledge and subject matter expertise in Disability matters.

The Disability & Disaster Hotline responded to and the Daily Calls occurred during the concurrent disasters of: the West coast wildfires and extreme heat event; Texas winter storm Uri of 2021, 2020 hurricane season, hurricanes Eta and Ida of 2021, hurricanes Fiona and Ian of 2022, MT flooding, and every disaster in between.

"The beauty of this opportunity [to attend the Daily COVID-19 Disability Rights calls] is that no concerns or questions are off the table so, it has been the broadest resource for pandemic action in the disability rights and Independent Living Movement space. We have often resolved issues in real time and, expanded the reach that local organizations have to achieve short and long-term goals!"

Regular Daily Call attendee

Conclusion and Policy Implications:

- Met with DHS CRCL, CMS, CDC, and FEMA to understand calls to action
- Successful education leading to Congressional and Federal government funding to Disability-led organizations to support in the pandemic response
- Successful policy change recognizing CILs as eligible recipient of FEMA PA reimbursement for emergency relocation from congregate settings to non-congregate temporary sheltering: "FEMA Addendum: Delivering Personal Assistance Services in Congregate and Non-Congregate Sheltering"

Abstract:

People with disabilities are at increased risk for severe impacts of influenza. Still, the COVID-19 pandemic response was inequitable for people with disabilities.

Government emergency operations plans for influenza pandemics included myopic strategies to reach nursing homes and similar settings where it was incorrectly assumed, all people with disabilities reside. Therefore the COVID-19 response did not reach all settings where people with disability work, play, and live—including multiply-marginalized, disabled people.

Planned activities also relied on administrators of skilled nursing and congregate facilities to be active partners in the response, despite a history of mismanaged funds, creating an antitrust environment amongst their staff, and neglect in care and services as well as in implementing infectious disease prevention and control programs.

Community-based Disability led organizations took on the responsibility to support equity for people with disability in skilled nursing and similar institutions by advocating for recognition of disability led organizations as essential service providers and establishing an emergency relocation program within the FEMA response.

Such organizations also supported people with disability with

1. accessible and effective information on SARS-CoV-2 as the science progressed at a high pace;
2. locate accessible vaccine sites and at-home programs; and
3. mutual aid. Global, national, state and local Disability-led organizations coordinated through existing meetings and established additional daily, weekly, and regular meetings to coordinate situational awareness and disability considerations into policy, planning and response at all levels of public health and government. We will present on key legislative actions, policy decisions, exemplar practices and concerns.



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<https://disasterstrategies.org>

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