



**THE PARTNERSHIP**  
FOR INCLUSIVE DISASTER STRATEGIES

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# Dangers of False Expectations in Emergency Management

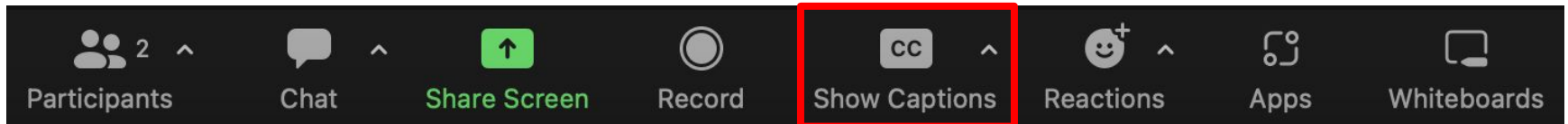
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# Accessibility for this Presentation

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- You will also receive an accessible slide deck of the presentation used today.
- To access the AI captions:
  - Click the button at the bottom of the screen with the “CC” icon to start captions.

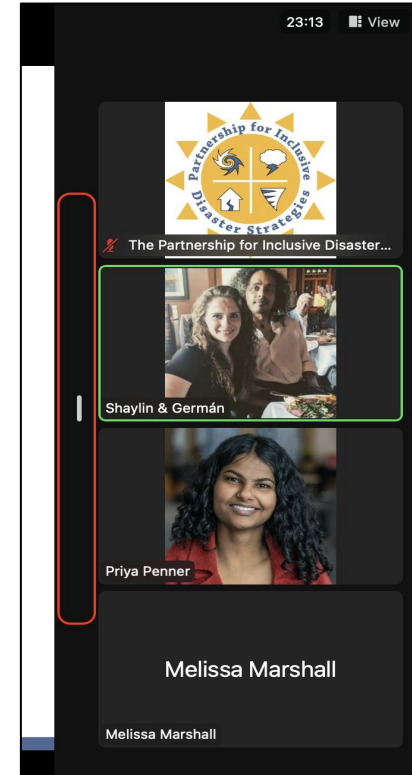


The image shows a dark grey Zoom meeting control bar at the bottom of the screen. It contains several icons and labels: 'Participants' with a group icon and the number '2', 'Chat' with a speech bubble icon, 'Share Screen' with a green square icon containing an upward arrow, 'Record' with a circle icon, 'Show Captions' with a grey square icon containing 'CC' (this button is highlighted with a red border), 'Reactions' with a smiley face icon, 'Apps' with a square icon containing a plus sign, and 'Whiteboards' with a whiteboard icon.



# Accessibility for this Presentation

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# Reminders for this Presentation

## To Participate:

- Asking/responding to questions via Zoom: Use the “raise your hand” button, type in chat, or unmute and talk at appropriate times.
- For technical assistance or to alert us to an issue, type in chat/raise hand.
  - Ex. “slow down please”
- If the chat is not accessible to you, please email your questions to [priya@disasterstrategies.org](mailto:priya@disasterstrategies.org).

# Reminders for this Presentation

## Friendly reminders:

- Please identify yourself before speaking.
  - Ex. “This is Priya, and...”
- Please avoid speaking while others are speaking.
- Please keep yourself on mute when not talking.
- Please define any acronyms you use.

# **Welcome and About Us**

# Who We Are: The Partnership

**The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies** is the only U.S. disability-led organization with a focused mission on equity for people with disabilities and people with access and functional needs throughout all planning, programs, services and procedures before, during and after disasters and emergencies.

## Your Disability & Disaster Hub

# Ground Rules

- Maintain confidentiality
- Ask questions
- Have fun!!!





# Today's Goals

## Building your understanding of:

- What you can and cannot expect from a registry
- What are some false expectations disabled people have in disasters
- How to stay safest in disasters and emergencies given the realities

# What do we mean by false expectations?

## Expectation (noun)

1: the act or state of expecting : ANTICIPATION  
in *expectation* of what would happen

In times of disaster, false expectations occur when we rely on information developed by others who fail to plan with us to understand and meet our needs.

# Example of False Expectations

**Expectation:** Disaster-related programs and services comply with legal obligations

- Not to discriminate
- To provide effective communication
- To be physically accessible

**Reality: They often do not.**

# **“Special Needs” Registries, Shelters, and Planning**

# Registries

**False Expectation:** Registries make sure that disabled people are rescued

**Reality:** In the middle of a major disaster, no one is coming to rescue you!

Registries don't work because:

- People with disabilities are not always at home when a disaster strikes.
- Up-to-date registries are nearly impossible to maintain.
- In a disaster, emergency personnel are overwhelmed.

# Power Restoration

**False Expectation:** Signing up with the power company registry ensures priority restoration.

**Reality:** Power companies can't prioritize restoring power to people with disabilities because

- It is impossible to identify, track, and prioritize power restoration for every disabled person.
- Power restoration is prioritized for essential community services such as hospitals, fire departments, and police stations.

# The Partnership's Position and Florida Law

- The Partnership does not support the:
  - concept of “special” registries for disabled people in disasters, or
  - outdated term “special needs.”
- Florida has a law that requires “special needs” registries.
  - Florida is the only state that mandates a “special” registry for disabled people in disasters.

# Florida “Special Needs” Registry

“... During an emergency, the government and other agencies may not be able to meet your needs. You should be prepared to take care of yourself and loved ones for a minimum of 72 hours. Those individuals with a special need are encouraged to identify an emergency support network and to build a disaster supply kit.

**Registering on this website is not a guarantee that emergency officials will be able to assist you in an emergency.”**



# Florida “Special Needs” Shelters

## Eligibility for Special Needs Shelters

- “People with special medical needs.
- People whose care exceeds the basic first aid provided at general population shelters.
- People with impairments or disabilities who are medically stable and do not require medical care.
- People with disabilities are not required to go to a Special Needs Shelter. Some people with disabilities can be safely accommodated in a general population shelter.”

# Florida “Special Needs” Registries and Shelters

Theoretically, the purposes of “special needs” registry and shelters is to provide:

- Access to transportation to shelters
- Guaranteed power, although some were without power at least some of the time during Hurricane Ian
- Additional medical services that general population shelters may not have

# “Special Needs” Registries and Shelters...

- Promote segregated services.
- Contradicts ADA requirements.
- Increase institutionalization.
- **Provide an advocacy opportunity.**

# “Special Needs” Shelters

**False Expectation:** A “special needs” shelter will best meet my needs.

## **Reality in Florida:**

- “Special needs” shelters are run by public health and independent contractors.
- They often follow the medical model of disability, treating disabled people as patients.
- Usually only 1 person is permitted to accompany.

# “Special Needs” Shelters

**False Expectation:** A “special needs” shelter will best meet my needs.

**Reality:** “Special Needs” shelters segregate disabled people.

Segregation robs us of:

- Self-determination
- Dignity of risk
- Right to receive services in an integrated setting most appropriate to our needs

# “Special Needs” Shelters

**False Expectation:** A “special needs” shelter will best meet my needs.

## **Reality:**

- “Special needs” shelters limit access to disaster programs and services by reducing disabled people’s visibility to others.
- “Special needs” shelters promote the myth that disabled people need “special care,” and encourages shelter staff to recommend institutionalization.

# STORY

A person had to sit and sleep in their mobility device for 10 days at a “special needs” shelter, which led to severe edema in their legs.

The Partnership was able to assist in the delivery of an appropriate bed for them, provided by the American Red Cross.

# Planning for Contacts

**False expectation:** A non-local contact will keep you safe if connectivity has failed.

**Reality:** When connectivity fails in disaster affected area, you may not be able to reach others and they may not be able to reach you.

Some or all services may fail, leaving you without access to:

- Cell or landline phone calls
- Internet/Email
- Texts



# **Mass Care and Other Disaster Services**

# Integrated and “Special Needs” Shelters

**False Expectation:** Shelters are always physically accessible.

## **Reality:**

- Although shelters are required to be accessible under the ADA and section 504 when federal funding is involved, they often are not.
- Schools are frequently used as shelters. The presumption is that these buildings are accessible, when they often are not.

# Effective Communication

**False Expectation:** Aids and services that are required for equally effective communication are always provided.

Aids and services can include sign language interpreters, video relay interpreting, accessible print, and electronic material.

**Reality:** These are not always provided.

# Modifications to Policies and Practices

**False expectation:** Shelter and program staff will understand and fulfill their obligation to make reasonable modifications to policies including:

- Admitting service animals
- Providing required diets
- Providing quiet areas

**Reality:** Staff are not always aware of these obligations and they are often not met.

**Questions?**

# Institutions

# Institutions

**False Expectation:** Institutionalization during disasters is temporary.

## Reality:

- It can be difficult to get out of institutions such as nursing facilities.
- Once institutionalized, it can be hard for loved ones to locate you.
- Institutions can try to convince you that you belong there.

# Institutions

**False Expectation:** Institutions are the safest option in a disaster.

## Reality:

- People get sick, sicker, and die earlier in nursing facilities.
- Aid (food, water, medication) may not reach everyone in nursing facilities.



# Institutions

**False Expectation:** Medicare and Medicaid coverage will increase the likelihood of remaining in the community during disasters.

**Reality:** Under 1135 waivers, people can be placed in nursing facilities from:

- Their homes,
- Emergency departments, and
- Hospital rooms.

# Institutions

**False expectation:** Nursing facilities are the only type of institution people with disabilities get sent to during disasters.

**Reality:** People with mental health conditions can be civilly committed to a psychiatric facility under the Baker Act.

# Recovery

# Recovery

**False expectation:** Recovery happens quickly and life will soon return to its pre-disaster state.

## Reality:

- Recovery is often a long and difficult process.
- Housing stock is scarce in all areas of the country, and accessible housing even more scarce.
- Life may never return to its exact pre-disaster state.

# Question for You

- Did you have false expectations during Hurricane Ian?
- What were they?
- How were the issues resolved?

**Questions?**

# Misconceptions and Facts

# FEMA Misconceptions

**Misconception:** FEMA by itself will return you to your pre-disaster state.

**Fact:** FEMA grants are meant to cover costs to return your home to a safe and sanitary living space or functional condition.

- Insurance must be used up first.
- Maximum grant \$42,500.
- FEMA awards are often far less than the maximum.



# Reasons for FEMA Denials

- **You had homeowners or renters insurance.**

Insurance must be used to the limit before FEMA will consider providing coverage.

- **Your home is safe to occupy.**

FEMA grants are meant to cover costs to return your home to a safe and sanitary living space or functional condition.

# Reasons for FEMA Denials

- **You decided to remain in your home while repairs were being made, so no rental assistance was awarded.**
- **You did not provide proof of occupancy.**
- **FEMA could not verify your identity.**

# FEMA Facts

## Overview of FEMA Individuals and Households Program

### Consists of two assistance programs:

- **Housing Assistance** to individuals and families who have damage to their homes as a result of a presidentially declared disaster
- **Other Needs Assistance** for other disaster-caused expenses
- Cap of \$42,500 for each program

# FEMA Housing Assistance

Housing Assistance grant of up to \$42,500 provides assistance for disaster-caused losses, access to life-sustaining services, and other factors, including:

- Lodging Expense Reimbursement
- Rental Assistance
- Home Repair
- Home Replacement

# FEMA Other Needs Assistance

Other Needs grant of up to \$42,500 provides assistance for services including:

- Funeral
- Medical
- Dental
- Child Care
- Critical Needs Assistance
- Clean-up and Removal Assistance

# Disability Needs Assistance

Assistance for specific disaster-damaged accessibility items is **not limited** by a financial maximum award. The eligible items are limited to:

- Access ramp;
- Grab bars;
- Paved paths (based on interim policy memo);
- Computer, if used as the sole means of communication for a household member;
- Raised toilet seat;
- Bed (hospital type);

# Disability Needs Assistance

- Washer (front-loading) if a member of the household uses a wheelchair or has a similar mobility limitation;
- Refrigerator (side-by-side) if a member of the household uses a wheelchair or has a similar mobility limitation;
- Walker;
- Wheelchair;
- Shower chair;
- Smoke alarm (specialty); and
- TTY/ TDY telephone.

# Appealing FEMA Decisions

You must file your appeal in writing to FEMA. In a signed and dated letter, you must explain the reason(s) for your appeal. Your appeal letter should also include:

- Applicant's full name.
- Applicant's FEMA Application number and Disaster number.
- Address of the Applicant's pre-disaster primary residence.
- Applicant's current phone number and address.



# Appealing FEMA Decisions

If someone other than you or a co-applicant is writing your letter, that person must sign the appeal letter, and you must provide FEMA with a signed statement authorizing that person to act on your behalf.

# American Red Cross: Overview

American Red Cross' relationship with government:

- Has authority given by the federal government, but it is not a government entity - it has a charter.
- When state/territory, county, or city/town government requests shelter support, it shares responsibility for mass care with FEMA.
  - Mass care is a function of emergency services which provides shelter, feeding, emergency first aid, distribution of emergency supplies, and reunification of family members.

# Additional Red Cross Disaster Services

- Health maintenance services
  - General first aid,
  - Replacement of medication,
  - Blood pressure/blood sugar monitoring, and
  - Reconnecting with pharmacy and healthcare services
- Mental health services
- Emergency funds

# Additional Red Cross Disaster Services

- Bereavement visits, which may include assistance with funeral costs
- Ongoing recovery services:
  - Identification of transitional or permanent housing
  - Reconnecting with community services

# Questions for You

- Did you or someone you know apply for FEMA assistance after Hurricane Ian?
- Were your expectations met?
- If not, what was your experience?

# More Questions for You

- Did you call the Red Cross during Hurricane Ian?
- What services did they provide?
- Was there any service we've covered that was NOT provided?

**Questions?**

# What Does Work



# Reset: Realistic Expectations

**Once we recognize false expectations and fully accept realities, we can act proactively by planning for disasters and extreme weather.**

# What Does Work

## Planning, such as:

- Creating robust plans
- Practicing plans
- Utilizing personal networks

## Combined with:

- Involvement in inclusive planning, and
- Ongoing advocacy for legally-compliant, disability-inclusive planning and implementation during notification, response, and recovery.

# Personal Preparedness Limitations

**False Expectation:** Personal preparedness alone will keep me safe in disasters.

## Reality:

- Personal preparedness is critical, but it must be accompanied by systemic planning by local, county, state or territory, and federal government.

# Personal Preparedness Limitations

- Government planning should assume people with disabilities have not done personal planning.
- It's not individuals' obligation to prepare - it's the government's responsibility to plan with and for the community to keep community members safe and respond to disasters.

# What Should Advocates Expect?

- Local and state government plans will focus on restoring the economy.
- Inclusive disaster planning will be inadequate or non-existent.
- Government and Red Cross programs will center on homeowners and businesses with the most/worst damage.

# Given the realities, what can we do?

## Continue to:

- Advocate
- Organize
- Hold your government accountable
- Reject segregation

**Remember: Nothing About Us Without Us!**

# Questions for You

- What issues did you advocate for with your government (local, state, tribal, federal) and private sector during Hurricane Ian?
- Have they been resolved? If not, what is your advocacy strategy for transforming lessons observed in Hurricane Ian to lessons learned?

**Questions?**



# Resources

[FEMA Individual Assistance Program and Policy Guide \(2021\)](#)

[FEMA Individuals and Households Program](#)

[American Red Cross Disaster Relief Services](#)

[Beyond Registries: Better Solutions For People With Disabilities](#), June Isaacson Kailes, September 2023

[Redirecting Emergency Registries: Community Driven Solutions](#)



# Resources

[New Census Data Shows U.S. Fails Disabled People After Disasters](#)

[Preserving Our Freedom: Ending Institutionalization of People with Disabilities During and After Disasters](#)



# Schedule for Public Trainings

- ✓ 9/27: Disability Rights in Disasters
- ✓ 10/18: Personal Disaster Prep for Disabled People
- ✓ 11/8: Dangers of False Expectations
- 11/29: Addressing Institutionalized Racism in Emergency Management**
- 12/7: Disability Bias in Emergency Management



**THE PARTNERSHIP**  
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# Thank you!

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