

AMERICORPS AND DISABILITY INCLUSION In Emergency Situations

MSU Corps

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DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

From Wikipedia –

- An **EMERGENCY** is a situation which poses an *immediate risk* to health, life, property or environment.

Most emergencies require urgent intervention to prevent a worsening of the situation, although in some situations, mitigation may not be possible and agencies may only be able to offer a “band aid” approach to care during the aftermath.

- A **DISASTER** is the impact of a natural or human-made hazard that negatively affects society or environment.

Today, disasters are seen as the consequence of inappropriately managed risk. These risks are the product of hazards and vulnerability. A disaster can be defined as any tragic event that involves at least one victim of circumstance, such as an accident, fire, terrorist attack, or explosion.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Whether you are responding to an emergency caused by natural forces such as a fire, flood or tornado, or one caused by a terrorist attack, you will likely encounter persons with some type of disability or injury who will require assistance.



DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

What does “disability” mean?

- Any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a history of such an impairment, or is perceived or “regarded as” having such an impairment, even when the impairment does not exist.
- Any hidden impairment that is not noticeable in a person’s speech, behavior or mobility such as learning disabilities, diabetes, epilepsy, organ disorders or asthma.



DISABILITY INCLUSION

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Some disabilities, such as those involving physical impairments may be obvious.



Other disabilities, such as mental illness, are more difficult to detect.



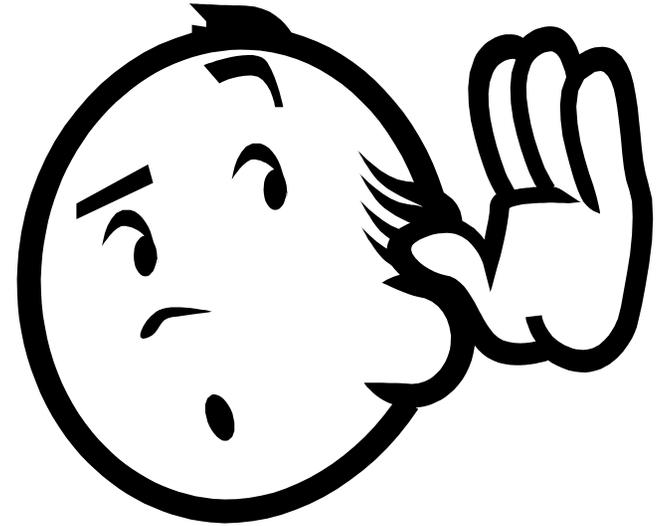
In many cases, you can't tell just by looking at the person whether they have a disability.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Person First Language

Person first language is an alternative way to talk about disabilities that places the focus on the person and not the disability.



To use person first language, simply say the person's name or pronoun, follow it with the appropriate verb, and then state the name of the disability.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Say this	Instead of this	Because
???	The handicapped	???
???	The disabled	???
???	Wheelchair bound, or confined to a wheelchair	???

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Say this	Instead of this	Because
Persons with disabilities	The handicapped	Handicapped is derived from “cap in hand” and implies that someone is dependent on society.
Persons with disabilities	The disabled	One is a person before one is disabled.
Uses a wheelchair, or wheelchair user.	Wheelchair bound, or confined to a wheelchair	A Wheelchair is not confining — it allows movement from one place to Another.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Say this	Instead of this	Because
???	Birth Defect	???
???	Crippled	???
???	Mongoloid	???

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Say this	Instead of this	Because
Congenital Disability	Birth Defect	Persons with disabilities are not defective.
Has a Disability	Crippled	Crippled comes from Old English “to creep” and is also used as an adjective meaning inferior.
Persons with Down Syndrome	Mongoloid	Mongoloid is a racist term referring to someone from Mongolia.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Say this	Instead of this	Because
???	Mental, crazy, psycho, insane, nut case	???
???	Normal, healthy, whole	???
???	Deaf and dumb, Deaf-mute	???

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Say this	Instead of this	Because
Person with mental illness	Mental, crazy, psycho, insane, nut case	These are offensive and negative stereotypes
Non Disabled	Normal, Healthy, Whole	People with disabilities may also be normal, healthy, and whole.
Person who is Deaf or a Person who Does Not Speak	Deaf and Dumb, Deaf-Mute	Simply because someone is deaf does not mean they cannot speak, and they are not dumb.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

The following information
was taken in part from a flip chart entitled

Tips for First Responders

This flip chart is available for purchase.

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DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

What types of disabilities are there?

People Who Are Elderly – Seniors

People With Service Animals

People With Mobility Impairments

People Who Are Mentally Ill

People who are Visually Impaired or Blind

Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing

People With Cognitive Disabilities

Other categories include – medically dependent, medically compromised, children, non-English or Limited English Proficiency, homeless and shelter dependent, undocumented persons and any combination of these.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Seniors

Always ask the person how you can best assist them.

- Some elderly persons may respond more slowly to a crisis and may not fully understand the extent of the emergency. Repeat questions and answers if necessary. Be patient! Taking time to listen carefully or to explain again may take less time than dealing with a confused person who may be less willing to cooperate.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Seniors

- Reassure the person that they will receive medical assistance without fear of being placed in a nursing home.
- Older people may fear being removed from their homes – be sympathetic and understanding and explain that this is temporary.
- Before moving an elderly person, assess their ability to see and hear; adapt rescue techniques for sensory impairments.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Seniors

- Persons with a hearing loss may appear disoriented and confused when all that is really “wrong” is that they can’t hear you. Determine if the person has a hearing aid. If they do, is it available and working? If it isn’t, can you get a new battery to make it work?
- If the person has a vision loss, identify yourself and explain why you are there. Let the person hold your arm and then guide them to safety.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Seniors

- If possible, gather all medications before evacuating. Ask the person what medications they are taking and where their medications are stored. Most people keep all their medications in one location in their homes.
- If the person has dementia, turn off emergency lights and sirens if possible. Identify yourself and explain why you are there. Speak slowly, using short words in a calming voice. Ask yes or no questions: repeat them if necessary. Maintain eye contact.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People with Service Animals

Always ask the person how you can best assist them.

Traditionally, the term “service animal” referred to seeing-eye dogs. However, today there are many other types of service animals.

- Remember – a service animal is not a pet.
- Do not touch or give the animal food or treats without the permission of the owner.
- When a dog is wearing its harness, it is on duty. In the event you are asked to take the dog while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the harness.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People with Service Animals

- Plan to evacuate the animal with the owner. Do not separate them!
- Service animals are not registered and there is no proof that the animal is a service animal. However, if the animal is out of control or presents a threat to the individual or others, remove it from the site.
- A person is not required to give you proof of a disability that requires a service animal.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People with Service Animals

- The animal need not be specially trained as a service animal. People with psychiatric and emotional disabilities may have a companion animal.
- A service animal must be in a harness or on a leash, but need not be muzzled. When a service animal is in harness it is working; do not address the animal, you may distract it from its duties.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People with Mobility Impairments

Always ask the person how you can best assist them.

- Every person and every disability is unique – even though it may be important to evacuate the location where the person is, respect their independence to the extent possible. Don't make assumptions about the person's abilities.
- Ask if they have limitations or problems that may affect their safety.
- Some people may need assistance getting out of bed or out of a chair, but CAN then proceed without assistance.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People with Mobility Impairments

Crutches, Canes or Other Mobility Devices

- A person using a mobility device may be able to negotiate stairs independently. Do not interfere with the person's movement unless asked to do so, or the nature of the emergency is such that absolute speed is the primary concern. If this is the case, tell the person what you'll need to do and why.
- If the stairs are crowded, act as a buffer and run interference for the person.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People with Mobility Impairments

Evacuating Wheelchair Users

- If a conversation will take more than a few minutes, sit down to speak at eye level.
- Wheelchair users are trained in special techniques to transfer from one chair to another. Depending on their upper body strength, they may be able to do much of the work themselves.
- Ask before you assume you need to help, or what that help should be.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People Who Are Mentally Ill

Always ask the person how you can best assist them.

- You may not be able to tell if a person is mentally ill until you have begun the evacuation procedure.
- In an emergency, the person may become confused. Speak slowly and in a normal speaking tone.
- If the person becomes agitated, help them find a quiet corner away from the confusion.
- Keep your communication simple, clear and brief.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People Who Are Mentally Ill

- If the person becomes agitated, help them find a quiet corner away from the confusion.
- If they are confused, don't give multiple commands – ask or state one thing at a time.
- Be empathetic – show that you have heard them and care about what they have told you. Be reassuring.
- If the person is delusional, don't argue with them or try to “talk them out of it”. Just let them know you are there to help them.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People Who Are Mentally Ill

- Ask if there is any medication they should take with them.
- Try to avoid interrupting a person who might be disoriented or rambling – just let them know that you have to go quickly.
- Don't talk down to them, yell or shout.
- Have a forward leaning body position – this shows interest and concern.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Visually Impaired

Always ask the person how you can best assist them.

- You may not be able to tell if a person is mentally ill until you have begun the evacuation procedure.
- In an emergency, the person may become confused. Speak slowly and in a normal speaking tone.
- If the person becomes agitated, help them find a quiet corner away from the confusion.
- Keep your communication simple, clear and brief.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Visually Impaired

- There is a difference between visual impairment and blindness. Some people who are “legally blind” have some sight, while others are totally blind.
- Announce your presence, speak out, and then enter the area.
- Speak naturally and directly to the individual.
- Do not shout.
- Don't be afraid to use words like “see,” “look,” or “blind.”

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Visually Impaired

- State the nature of the emergency and offer them your arm. As you walk, advise them of any obstacles.
- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Do not grab or attempt to guide them without first asking them.
- Let the person grasp your arm or shoulder lightly for guidance.
- They may choose to walk slightly behind you to gauge your body's reactions to obstacles.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Visually Impaired

- Be sure to mention stairs, doorways, narrow passages, ramps, etc.
- When guiding someone to a seat, place the person's hand on the back of the chair.
- If leading several individuals with visual impairments, ask them to guide the person behind them.
- Remember that you'll need to communicate any written information orally.
- When you have reached safety, orient the person to the location and ask if any further assistance is needed.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Visually Impaired

- If the person has a service animal, don't pet it unless the person says it is ok to do so. Service animals must be evacuated with the person.
- Refer to the section on People with Service Animals.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Deaf / Hard of Hearing

- There is a difference between hard of hearing and deaf. People who are hearing impaired vary in the extent of hearing loss they experience. Some are completely deaf, while others can hear almost normally with hearing aids on.
- Hearing aids do not guarantee that the person can hear and understand speech. They increase volume, not increase clarity.
- If possible, flick the lights when entering an area or room to get their attention.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Deaf / Hard of Hearing

- Establish eye contact with the individual, not with the interpreter, if one is present.
- Use facial expressions and hand gestures as visual cues.
- Check to see if you have been understood and repeat if necessary.
- Offer pencil and paper. Write slowly and let the individual read as you write.
- Written communication may be especially important if you are unable to understand the person's speech.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

People who are Deaf / Hard of Hearing

- Do not allow others to interrupt you while conveying the emergency information.
- Be patient – the person may have difficulty understanding the urgency of your message.
- Provide the person with a flashlight to signal their location in the event they are separated from the rescue team. This will facilitate lip-reading or signing in the dark.
- While written communication should work for many people, others may not understand English well enough to understand written instructions or may be illiterate.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Reasons We Do Not Interact with People with Disabilities:

- **FEAR** of doing or saying the wrong things.
- Being **NERVOUS** and **UNSURE** of how to communicate with the individual.
- **SELF CONSCIOUS** about being seen by others while interacting with a person with a disability.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

An inclusive environment:

1. Does not presume a person requires an accommodation, but creates conditions that are open and allow for effective communication about needs.
2. Creates conditions that give a qualified individual with a disability the confidence to request the needed accommodation(s) and carefully considers each request.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

An inclusive environment:

3. Engages in a dialogue with the individual requester to help determine the appropriate and effective accommodation(s).
4. Provides accommodations with the goal of truly enabling an individual to fully participate and contribute. It approaches the provision of accommodations as one of doing all it can do to ensure access and inclusion, rather than focusing on what “has to happen.”

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Examples of Types of Accommodations

1. Removing barriers to increase accessibility.
2. Restructuring a service position.
3. Modifying a service schedule.
4. Modifying policies or procedures.
5. Obtaining or modifying equipment or devices.
6. Reassigning a member to a vacant position.
7. Providing services, such as qualified readers, interpreters, or real-time captioning.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Two common instances when you will need to provide accommodations are:

1. For public events and meetings that your program may sponsor, including service activities.

Insure that you provide members of the public an opportunity and a means to request accommodations. A simple statement not only demonstrates your effort to create an inclusive environment, but responses to the statement give you time to make sure needed accommodations have been addressed.

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In Emergency Situations

Two common instances when you will need to provide accommodations are:

2. When a qualified individual with a disability in your current program specifically requests accommodations.

Once an individual requests an accommodation, the first step is to talk to the individual to find out what functional limitations exist that might hamper the fulfillment of essential functions. Discuss any existing barriers that might prevent or limit participation in the program or activity.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In Emergency Situations

Technical Assistance Accommodation Resources

1. **National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP)** of the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts/Boston is the organization funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to provide its grantees with training and technical assistance in the area of disability inclusion. NSIP can be reached at **1-888-491-0326** or by email at **NSIP@umb.edu**.

Technical Assistance Accommodation Resources

2. Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTAC):

are a federally funded resource that can assist you. They can be reached at

1-800-949-4232 or **www.adata.org**.

Technical Assistance Accommodation Resources

- 3. Job Accommodation Network (JAN)** is another excellent resource that is available to you at no cost. JAN can be reached at **1-800-526-7234** or **www.jan.wvu.edu**.

Technical Assistance Accommodation Resources

4. **Independent Living Centers (ILCs)** are federally funded and located across the country and can provide you with assistance. You may find closest ILC at **www.ilru.org**.

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People may ask for accommodations without using the word “accommodation.”

For example, a participant who uses a wheelchair informing his supervisor that the wheelchair does not fit under the desk in his office is a request for an accommodation. If unsure how to accommodate a need, seek assistance from reliable resources.

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IT'S THE LAW

Keep in mind that you are legally required to provide an effective accommodation, unless you can prove that doing so is an undue financial or administrative burden to your program.

END

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Disability inclusion

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