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NON-COMPETITIVE DIVISION

Addressing Invisible and Communication Disabilities in Disaster Through Research and Training

Increasing awareness of the whole community approach to comprehensive emergency management has resulted in increased knowledge regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs throughout the disaster life-cycle. This increase benefits marginalized populations through concerted efforts to inclusion. However, one population group remains unaddressed. People with invisible or non-apparent and communication disabilities are the largest demographic of people with disabilities, the most frequently unaddressed, and consequently the most disproportionately impacted per capita.

A three-pronged approach was applied to address this gap. Research was conducted nationally collecting lived experiences, and expectations from people with disabilities who had experienced emergencies and disasters, and from emergency responders in the same jurisdictions.

The analysis of this data led to the creation of topically targeted focus groups with participants with invisible and communication disabilities to identify effective strategies and recommended practices. The focus group outcomes drove the development of a 9-part training series.

This poster will describe the research, the training areas, and the training outcomes. A particular focus will be on the training topics, their relevance to emergency managers and their partners, and the achievable low-lift modifications that can make responding to this population accessible and inclusive.

Presentation Theme: Using post-disaster data to develop preparedness and just-in-time training skills necessary to effectively respond to the needs of people with non-apparent and communication disabilities and others with similar access and functional needs, and to improve disaster outcomes.

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