

## FEMA Promising Practice Webinar July 9, 2015



## OVERNIGHT SHELTER EXPERIENCE PEOPLE WITH ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

### WHO WE ARE

Established in 1986, the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) has numerous years of experience in disaster preparedness training. ACI has trained over 250 individuals with disabilities on emergency preparedness. Through the Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund, ACI helped make homes accessible by providing durable medical equipment and funding towards lifts.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Participants will learn how to plan an overnight exercise with the disability community
- Participants will hear about the challenges encountered in the process and learn how to overcome them
- Participants will come away with the tools necessary to replicate this activity in their local community

3

**WHY SHOULD YOU ORGANIZE AN  
OVERNIGHT SHELTER EXERCISE IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY?**

4

- One in five people encountered during any disaster will have a disability.
- 56.7 million people, approximately 19 percent of the population, were reported as having a disability in 2010.
- First responders acknowledge the need to increase familiarity and the working understanding they require to successfully integrate all members of the community in all aspects of the work they do.

5

- The shelter exercise is an opportunity to fully engage all aspects of evacuation with community participants and gain needed capacity and competency, while also learning lessons and identifying gaps in the process.
- Working together and exercising capacity and resources ultimately saves lives.
- Many people with disabilities and access and functional needs can be accommodated during a disaster in a general population shelter versus a more costly and segregated medical shelter.

6

## WHAT DOES THE ADA SAY?

- State and Local governments must comply with Title II of the ADA in the emergency and disaster-related programs, services and activities. This includes emergency shelters.

7

## WHAT DOES THE ADA SAY? (CONT.)

- This requirement applies to programs, services and activities provided directly by state and local governments as well as those provided through third parties, such as the American Red Cross, private nonprofit organizations.

8

## WHAT DOES THE ADA SAY? (CONT.)

- Under Title II of the ADA, emergency programs, services, activities and facilities must be accessible to people with disabilities and generally may not use eligibility criteria that screen out or tend to screen out people with disabilities.

9

## THE ADA ALSO...

- Requires making reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures necessary to allow a person with a disability to receive services, partake in activities and use the facilities.
- State and local governments must take the necessary steps to ensure effective communication with people disabilities.

10

## THE ADA DOES NOT REQUIRE...

- State and local emergency management programs to take actions that would fundamentally alter the nature of the program, service or activity or impose an undue financial and administrative burdens.

11

## WHY WE DID THIS

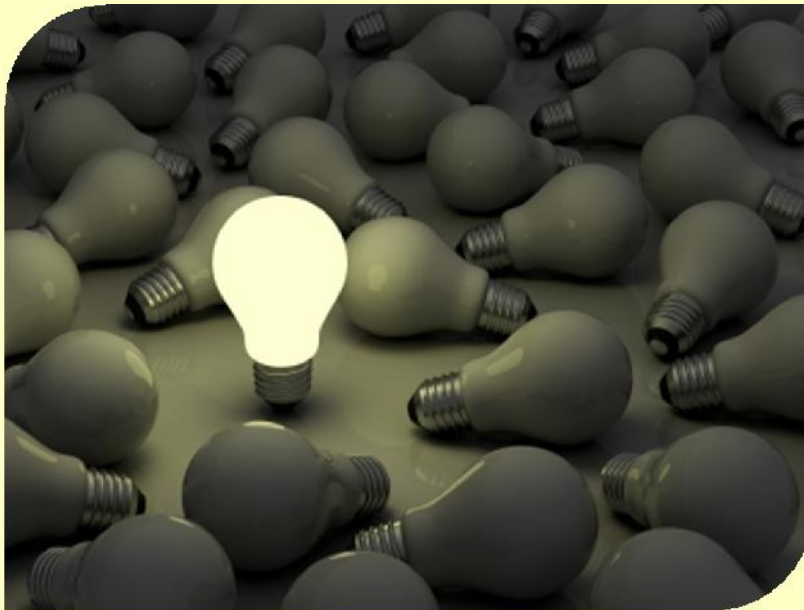
- During Sandy we called to action providing guidance and assistance to survivors with disabilities in our catchment area of Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties in NJ
- There was tremendous confusion and uncertainty on what to do, where to go and how to evacuate in the initial hours of the storm
- After the storm there was tremendous need for information sharing and resources.

12

## THERE WAS A NEED FOR...

- Transportation
- Ensuring the safety and well being individuals
- Information Sharing/Resources
- Access to electricity

13



14

## WE HAVE AN IDEA

- Establish evidence-based policies, programs, and practices across the life cycle of disasters
- Create a model with people with disabilities and emergency managers/responders which is observable, actionable and replicable.

15



16



## PLANNING, PLANNING, PLANNING

The planning started up, we had to identify who the local partners were and then bring them all together.

17

## WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

- People with Disabilities
- Local disability organizations
- Office of Emergency Management
- The American Red Cross
- You may want to approach your FEMA Disability Integration Specialist

18

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

- Allow the time you need to address all concerns
- Leave any preconceived notions at the door
- A successful overnight exercise relies on careful planning, delegation and organization.
- We allowed five months of planning and coordination
- Answer all questions

19



20

## WHY?

- We wanted the disability community to experience a general population shelter in a non-threatening time.
- We anticipated two things; either participants would come away with a sense the shelter was not as bad as they thought or they would be proactive in creating their own evacuation plan or a plan to shelter in place.

21

## WHAT?

- What are the goals and objectives?
- What are your strengths?
- What are you weaknesses?
- What is the timeline?

22

## WHO?

- Who is your audience?
- Who are the organizations you want to participate?
- Who takes the lead?
- Who takes the responsibility for:
  - Insurance
    - Dollars
    - Man/woman power
    - Infrastructure

23

## WHEN?

- When is the best time to hold the exercise?

## WHERE?

- Where will the exercise be held?
- Where will your planning meetings be held?
- Where do you find your participants both from the disability community and the emergency management community?

24

## HOW?

- How do you get buy in?
- How do you create operational cohesion?
- How do you assign roles?
- How do you coordinate activities?
- How do you make this a priority for all involved?
- How do you keep momentum?
- How do you validate results?
- How do you inform others about the project and make it replicable?

25

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Everyone made it through the night!!
- The exit interview revealed a number of things including the sense that evacuation to the shelter was not as bad as the participants had anticipated and suggestions on easy improvements that would result in a smoother sheltering experience.
- Network building fosters communication, coordination, cooperation and collaboration with and among disability communities' advocates, service organizations, and emergency managers.

26

## LESSONS LEARNED (CONT.)

- The county has bolstered their resources to include accessible cots as well as a number of bariatric cots.
- The county has also designed and purchased accessible buses with a twelve wheelchair capacity and each with two lifts.
- We were able to exercise the buses and provide transportation to and from a designated pick up place.

27

## JUST DO IT!

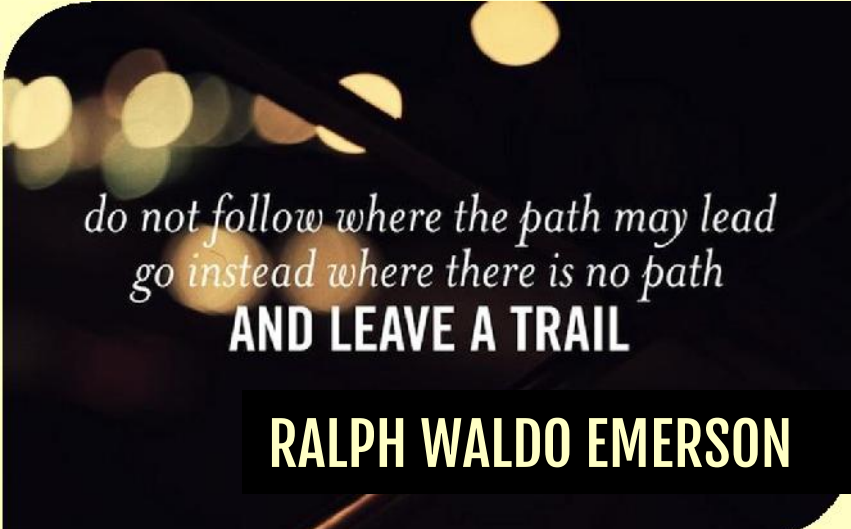
Recruiting, contracting, and including qualified representatives of organizations from diverse access and functional needs populations to participate in emergency planning efforts as staff, advisors, trainers, contractors, and consultants.

28

## OUR ADVICE TO YOU

- People with disabilities and functional and access needs need to be part of the planning process.
- It should not take a disaster to bring about efforts to plan and work together inclusively to prepare for positive community outcomes.

29



*do not follow where the path may lead  
go instead where there is no path*

**AND LEAVE A TRAIL**

**RALPH WALDO EMERSON**

30



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31

**QUESTIONS???**

32