

# **ADA National Network Learning Session: FEMA Perspective on Emergency Management, COVID-19 and People with Disabilities**

An overview of FEMA's roles and responsibilities in the midst of COVID-19



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## Meet Our Presenters

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### FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC):

- Charlotte Lewis – Acting Program and Policy Branch Chief
- Roxann Crawford – Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS) Region IX
- Ed Ahern – Policy Analyst (Individual Assistance Specialty)
- Jessica Gottesman – Data Analyst
- Candice Alder – Policy Analyst (Public Assistance Specialty)



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## Presentation Summary

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- FEMA Whole-of-America COVID-19 Response
- COVID-19 Impacts on Persons with Disabilities
- FEMA Office of Disability Integration & Coordination (ODIC) COVID-19 Response
- ODIC Engagement with Disability Stakeholders
- Resources



# FEMA Whole of America COVID-19 Response

## *Federal Response & Support of State, Local, Tribal & Territorial Governments*

Charlotte Lewis – Acting Program and Policy Branch Chief

## FEMA Mission

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- Helping people before, during, and after disasters.



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# Nationwide Disaster Declaration

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- On March 13, 2020, the President declared a nationwide emergency
- Unique Whole-of-America response
- As of Aug. 7, FEMA and HHS (combined) obligated \$153.5 billion in support of COVID-19 efforts
  - 50 states, five territories, and a number of tribes (directly or via sub-application) are included in these declarations
  - Obligated funds are in support of food/shelters, commodities, temporary medical facilities, PPE, Public Assistance preventive measures, staffing, and crisis counseling
  - New approaches due to uniqueness of response



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## PPE, Testing, and Medical Supplies

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- PPE includes:
  - N95 respirators
  - Surgical masks/gowns/coveralls/gloves
  - Face shields
- FEMA/HHS initially supported states by providing directly sourced testing equipment, with intention of transitioning management to the state level
- Medical supplies/PPE were shipped to nursing facilities nationwide to supplement supplies needed for COVID-19 response



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# COVID-19 Impacts on Persons with Disabilities

## *Federal Response & Support of State, Local, Tribal & Territorial Governments*

Jessica Gottesman – Data Analyst

## Disability and Risk Factors

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- Disability alone may not be related to higher risk of COVID-19
- Some people with disabilities and older adults might be at a higher risk of infection or severe illness due to underlying medical conditions
- Persons with intellectual disabilities have died from COVID at a rate two or more times higher
- 8 out of 10 U.S. COVID-19 related deaths are adults 65 years and older
- Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) data demonstrates roughly 40% of COVID deaths took place in nursing homes
- One of the biggest concerns for families with disabilities during the lockdowns has been food security



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## Access to Equities During Response

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- Issues regarding equitable access
  - Communication access (including language access)
  - Care standards
  - Shortage of support personnel in medical facilities
  - Use of facemasks
- Health & Human Services (HHS) Office of Civil Rights Bulletin
- FEMA, HHS and others worked together to simplify the Public Assistance program for food distribution



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# FEMA Office of Disability Integration & Coordination COVID-19 Response

Charlotte Lewis – Acting Program and Policy Branch Chief

Roxanne Crawford – Regional Disability Integration Specialist

Candice Alder – Policy Analyst

Ed Ahern – Policy Analyst

## ODIC Mission

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- Helping people with disabilities before, during and after disasters.



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## ODIC's Role in HQ During COVID-19

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- Per Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act
  - Provide technical assistance and advisory service to FEMA leadership
  - Staff the Disability Integration desk in the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)
  - Collaborate with FEMA programs, federal agency partners, and national disability stakeholder organizations to identify, monitor and address concerns during COVID-19 response



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## Collaboration and Coordination Across FEMA

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- Collaboration and coordination with key program areas across the FEMA enterprise include:
  - All ten (10) Regional Disability Integration Specialists (RDIS)
  - National Response Coordination Center (execution of ODIC mission)
  - Individual Assistance, including interaction with [ESF-3](#) (Public Works), [ESF-6](#) (Mass Care) and [ESF-8](#) (Public Health) (Disability Integration)
  - Public Assistance (Category B: Emergency Protective Measures)
  - Office of External Affairs, including [ESF-15](#), accessible communication for people with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
  - Office of Equal Rights (civil rights of people with disabilities)



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## Disability Integration Advisor (DIAD) Role During COVID-19

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- Bring in “ground intel” and trends about accessibility, locally and nationally, and relay essential/relevant information (from disability stakeholders) and workarounds to field leadership and general staff
- Collaborate with FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons
- Inform and advise Public Assistance Category B support
- Provide technical assistance, accessibility assessment, and information and referral related to accessible transportation and communication



## Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS) Role During COVID-19

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- Monitor developments in COVID testing, and testing priorities, that allow for improved disability access
- Monitor disability stakeholder concerns relating to restrictions being lifted in the states
- Monitor PPE flow and shortfalls as it relates to in-home care services – to ensure persons with disabilities can remain in their residences, and to mitigate additional burdens on long term care facilities

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## Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS) Role During COVID-19

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*(Continued)*

- Engage disability stakeholders in local, state, and national COVID recovery and economic stabilization efforts
- Provide input to initial crisis counseling application and coordinate disability stakeholder involvement
- Submit requests for information regarding accessibility in mission assignment actions
- Engage and support state-level counterparts with technical assistance for state and local inclusion strategies



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## Regional Disability Integration Specialists (RDIS) Best Practices & Successes

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- Collaborate with state, tribal, territorial and federal partners
- Amplify tools and information developed by state disability advisory groups, in coordination with Disability Integration Advisors and regional networks



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## Public Assistance Grants to State, Local, Tribal & Territorial Governments and Private Non-Profits

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- FEMA Financial Support:
  - State, local, tribal and territorial government entities and certain private non-profit organizations can apply for Public Assistance (PA) reimbursements for emergency protective measures taken during the pandemic
  - ODIC is actively engaged with Public Assistance



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## Emergency Protective Measures (Category B)

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- Emergency Protective Measures are immediate actions necessary to protect public health and safety
- Measures to protect life, public health and safety are generally the responsibility of the state, local, tribal and territorial governments



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## Private Non-Profit Support

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- Private non-profits can be considered sub-applicants to receive support through their state, local, tribal and territorial emergency management office
- FEMA does not provide funding directly to a private or nonprofit organization
- States contract or enter into an agreement with the contractors carrying out the work



## Individual Assistance Support

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- Supports inclusive programming across Individual Assistance (IA)
- Is increasing opportunities for training around disability for IA staff
- Subject matter expertise is reflected in new and revised IA policies
  - Assisted IA/Mass Care in making sure the needs of survivors with disabilities are being included in revised sheltering and feeding operations



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## Congregate & Non-Congregate Shelters

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- FEMA has been making extensive efforts not only to continue normal disaster preparations, but to also prepare for those disasters while the COVID-19 response continues
- FEMA has been preparing for the 2020 hurricane season (and other subsequent disasters) in the midst of the pandemic
- Concurrent emergency declarations
- ODIC is serving on several working groups within FEMA



## Access to Effective Communication

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- Disability community reported gaps to communication access within emergency press briefings, testing sites, and medical treatment
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided resources in American Sign Language
- FEMA's Office of External Affairs supported CDC on the content and development/distribution of ASL informational videos
- ODIC created a Fact Sheet on Emergency Protective Measures for Emergency Broadcasts so state, local, tribal and territorial governments can understand how they can potentially utilize FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) funding for emergency communications



## FEMA Office of Equal Rights

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- FEMA's Office of Equal Rights issued "[Ensuring Civil Rights During the COVID-19 Response](#)"



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# ODIC Engagement Disability Stakeholders

Jessica Gottesman – Data Analyst

## Monthly Stakeholder Engagement Call

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- ODIC hosts a monthly stakeholder engagement call
- To sign up email: [FEMA-Disability-Integration-Coordination@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Disability-Integration-Coordination@fema.dhs.gov)
- Ask to be added to the listserv



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Questions?



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