



ADVOCATE • EDUCATE • COLLABORATE

## White Paper: Building a Case for an D/AFN Coordinator at Emergency Management Division

### Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A D/AFN COORDINATOR NEEDED IN WASHINGTON STATE .....	1
Defining D/AFN for Emergency Planning and Response.....	2
D/AFN COORDINATOR ROLE WITHIN ICS.....	3
HISTORY .....	5
CIEP DISASTER RESPONSE WITH DOH AND EMD.....	6
CONCLUSION.....	7

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A D/AFN COORDINATOR NEEDED IN WASHINGTON STATE**

The Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) through the efforts of its Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP) program has recognized the need to develop further, a more inclusive statewide emergency preparedness plan for Washington's community of people with disabilities and other access and functional needs (D/AFN).

Specifically, WASILC and CIEP ask that the Emergency Management Division (EMD) designate a Disability Integration / Access and Functional Needs Coordinator position that reports directly to the Emergency Management Director.

The position is needed to fulfill the following roles and responsibilities:<sup>1 2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> June Isaacson Kailes, Disability Policy Consultant: [Disaster and Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities and Activity Limitations \(jik.com\)](http://Disaster and Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities and Activity Limitations (jik.com))

<sup>2</sup> North Carolina Emergency Management Disability Integration Specialist Position Playbook – January 2019

- Has the authority, responsibility, and resources to integrate the diverse needs of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs in all phases of emergency management (preparedness, planning, response, recovery, and mitigation processes)
- Serve in a permanent position in Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as a technical specialist available to advise the entire EOC (versus limited to one emergency support function (ESF) focus, individual sections, group, or unit) including training
- Serves as the jurisdiction-wide point of contact and coordinator for access and functional needs integration
- Participates in planning teams that include impacting, developing, training, implementing, testing, monitoring, and revising processes, procedures, protocols, policies, and training which affects planning, sheltering, communications, transportation and evacuation and recovery
- Serve as a Subject Matter Expert available to advise all EMD positions on inclusive practices for serving adults and children with disabilities and others with access and functional needs to meet EMD Incident Management Team mission and obligations
- Provide situational awareness, recommendations, and support requests regarding physical, programmatic, and effective communication access for all Washingtonians
- Coordinate with the Public Information Officer and Joint Information Center to ensure information is accessible and actionable
- Serves as the liaison to WA EMD programs and state/ community partners supporting people with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs such as CIEP.

## **Defining D/AFN for Emergency Planning and Response<sup>3</sup>**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) defines an individual with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.”<sup>4</sup>

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 1.3 million adults in Washington live with a disability. This is equal to 22% or 1 in five adults in our state.<sup>5</sup>

Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Office of Disability Integration and Coordination expands the ADA definition as follows:

The term “access and functional needs” means those actions, services, accommodations, and programmatic, architectural, and communication modifications that a covered entity must undertake or provide to afford individuals with disabilities a full and equal opportunity to use and

---

<sup>3</sup> [Disabilities-and-Access-and-Functional-Emergency-Operations-Center-Toolkit.pdf \(crcog.org\)](http://www.crcog.org/Disabilities-and-Access-and-Functional-Emergency-Operations-Center-Toolkit.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. 2009. *A guide to disability rights law*. Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm>

<sup>5</sup> [WA Disability and Health State Profile FINAL \(cdc.gov\)](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/wadisabilityprofile.html)

enjoy programs, services, activities, goods, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations in the most integrated setting, in light of the exigent circumstances of the emergency and the legal obligation to undertake advance planning and prepare to meet the disability-related needs of individuals who have disabilities as defined by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, P.L. 110-325, and those associated with them.<sup>6</sup>

These definitions demonstrate a shift to the use of a functional model when approaching these issues rather than relying solely on a medical model. Rather than identifying vulnerability based on someone's demographic profile (e.g., being elderly) or diagnosis (e.g., being diabetic), emphasis is put on areas of functional capabilities and needs of a person to maintain health and well-being leading up to, during, and after an emergency.

This approach reduces generalization and stigmatization of population groups and provides emergency managers with clear and actionable information. Using a functions-based perspective clearly delineates areas where preparedness intervention can reduce disaster vulnerability and risk to the whole community. For emergency management professionals and first responders, this is a paradigm shift in mindset, not just process. Recognizing and moving to institutionalize this concept not only supports the public but also results in a more efficient planning process and a more effective response operation.

The use of the term “others with access and functional needs” refers to people who may have needs leading up to, during, and after an emergency event in the five functional areas emphasized in Federal guidance for all-hazards planning. These areas are as follows:<sup>7 8</sup>

- Communications
- Maintaining Health
- Independence
- Safety, Support Services, and Self-Determination
- Transportation

## D/AFN COORDINATOR ROLE WITHIN ICS

While there may be several options for integrating the D/AFN Coordinator into a jurisdiction’s Incident Command System (ICS), each with various implications for the role and authority of the position. WASILC/CIEP recommends that the D/AFN Coordinator be placed as its own entity that reports directly to Unified Command. This provides the coordinator with a high-level view of the entire organization and a direct line of communication to Unified Command to address

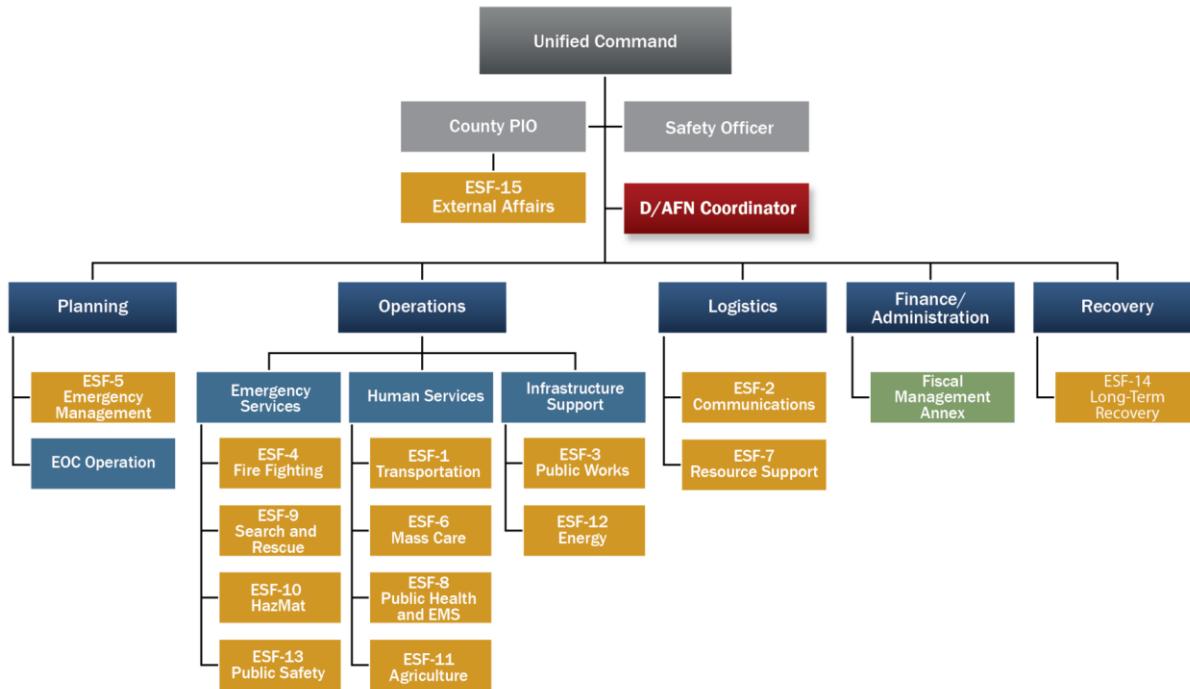
<sup>6</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency. 2011. *Planning for the whole community: Integrating and coordinating the access and functional needs of children and adults with disabilities in preparedness, response recovery and mitigation*. Accessed July 5, 2015. [https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odic/all\\_hands\\_0411.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odic/all_hands_0411.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency. IS-0368 - Including People With Disabilities and Others With Access and Functional Needs in Disaster Operations. Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://emilms.fema.gov/IS0368/DIS01summary.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Goldfarb, B. Madeleine. *Planning for Emergencies Including the Disability Community: Spatial Mapping Project*. Noah’s Ark Institute and BrightMinds Institute for Autism. Accessed July 6, 2015. [http://www.noahsarkinstitute.org/Mapping\\_Project\\_Booklet\\_Final.pdf](http://www.noahsarkinstitute.org/Mapping_Project_Booklet_Final.pdf)

identified issues that pertain to people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs quickly and effectively. To implement this model, a Coordinator position needs to be in place and have support from the top of the organization.

### Independent Organizational Chart (Figure 1)



Because disasters disproportionately impact the disability community and other marginalized populations, EMD needs to build on its good work of inclusive disaster planning by creating a position for a D/AFN Coordinator that is familiar with both disabilities and Access and Functional Needs (AFN) in emergency management. Working with CIEP, this D/AFN Coordinator would be in a position to create a partnership of government and community-based leaders and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will provide input and resources. Using the nationally acclaimed model that was developed by The Independence Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, these SMEs would work with state and local agencies in all counties within Washington State. Through the development of local Disability Advisory Groups (DAGs), facilitated by emergency D/AFN coordinators in their own counties or regions, these groups would be able to develop more robust, Whole Community-based plans, inform and educate emergency responders on how to best reach and serve their local disability communities. A D/AFN Coordinator sustains current and builds additional core capabilities with the state EMD, its stakeholders and partners, and the general public. Effective emergency planning happens when AFN community members are at the table. It is **Nothing About Us Without Us!**

## HISTORY

A program of WASILC, CIEP is a statewide, cross-disability, advisory group that provides technical assistance on physical and programmatic accesses and effective communication strategies. CIEP works with state and local emergency management stakeholders to build disability accessibility and inclusion into all aspects of emergency management. The Coalition fosters working relationships among community advocates and emergency managers. Many stakeholders are local people from Centers for Independent Living and other community based nongovernmental disability organizations with expert advice for inclusive access and functional needs practices and technical training in all aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CIEP began in 2015 out of a need to organize the number of diverse disability organizations, agencies, advocates to identify gaps and address the needs of people with disabilities before, during, and after disasters. Hosted by WASILC, a conference was held in Yakima with funding from DOH and sponsored by EMD. Since then, CIEP has grown with generous support through a grant from DOH Emergency Preparedness and Response<sup>9</sup>, which has passed its sixth year. Participation in CIEP is open to all organizations and individuals interested in fostering the vision on disability inclusion in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery, by actively engaging in the work of the Coalition.

In November 2020, WASILC and the statewide network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) cohosted a conference, Planning Today for a Safer Tomorrow<sup>10</sup> with The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies (PIDS)<sup>11</sup>. During the final workshop at the conference, Access and Functional Needs Coordinators: Mapping Today for a Safer Tomorrow, we had a panel discussion. There was overwhelming support from participants interested in having a D/AFN coordinator in EMD. The presenters were made up of national EM SME's, state D/AFN coordinators, and Centers for Independent Living:

- **June Isaacson Kailes** National inclusive emergency planning advocate based in California
- **Patricia Yeager** CEO of the Independence Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado
- **Sadie Martinez** Access and Functional Needs Coordinator with the Colorado Department of Homeland Security
- **Sheri Badger** Disability Integration Specialist from North Carolina Emergency Management

---

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from <https://www.wasilc.org/coalition-on-inclusive-emergency-planning>

<sup>10</sup> [CIEP Alert Newsletter Fall 2020](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://disasterstrategies.org>

**Identified Gaps:**

- State funded trainings and exercises are not inclusive of people with disabilities
- A lack of inclusive community preparedness trainings that reach people with disabilities
- A lack of local emergency management districts who have adequate inclusive emergency plans in their CEMP
- Interpreter and Translator training/credentialing on Emergency Management language
- EMD sustain and enhance existing partnerships and create new connections between emergency management professionals and disability community experts

**Measures Taken:**

- State EOC including disability partners in the planning for Cascadia Rising 2022 exercises
- The City of Redmond Emergency Management and the Washington Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) to teach Accessible Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to deaf and hard of hearing state employees in Olympia
- D/AFN Coordinator could provide training, tools, and other resources
- CIEP working with EMD to include ASL in the LEP program for accessibility
- EMD to work in partnership with CIEP network and disability partners to ensure connections before, during, and after a disaster

CIEP encourages individual preparedness based on the capabilities and limitations that you believe will be available after the disaster. A D/AFN Coordinator would be able to collaborate with local jurisdictions to provide community-based outreach to the Whole Community.

## **CIEP DISASTER RESPONSE WITH DOH AND EMD**

- CIEP participated in DOH exercises and drills to ensure that AFN elements were addressed. We also enrolled in the WebEOC and were assigned to ESF-6 and ESF-8 workgroups.
- CIEP is also part of the Washington Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (WECCWG), an important group devoted to communications during emergencies.
- Following a statewide 9-1-1 outage, CIEP wrote an impact statement on how the lack of direct access to emergency services adversely affected people with sensory and cognitive disabilities.<sup>12</sup>
- CIEP was also a key advocate in the roll-out of Text-to-911 services that is now available in more than half of all counties within the state as an interim step toward the nationwide implementation of Next Generation 911.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> [CIEP-WASILC Impact Statement on 911 Outage](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Text-to-911 Launch in Pierce County 3/27/2019 The News Tribune](#)

- Washington had experienced several episodes of flooding, a tornado, and a few fires. Following news reports, CIEP reached out to its network to let its stakeholders know we were watching, ready, and available for AFN emergencies.

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout Washington State, CIEP pivoted and went from quarterly in person meetings to biweekly virtual meetings. Here are some of CIEP's response activities in 2020 and 2021:

- ASL interpreters at Governor Inslee's COVID news briefings
- COVID educational videos in ASL by DOH, Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), and other community based partners.
- ADA assessments of quarantine facilities, mass testing and vaccination sites.
- Address and mitigate implicit biases and systemic inequities towards people of color and other marginalized communities.
- Wildfire response to multiple requests from people who had lost their mobility equipment, and their homes. For details, refer to the After Action Report<sup>14</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The community connections in the CIEP network has often been cited as a best practice among disability advocates and emergency planners nationwide. We believe that having a commitment from the state through the hiring of an AFN specialist at EMD with a network of local AFN experts will not only bolster the awareness among the profession and the community to create accessible AFN policies, but also demonstrate a commitment to actively addressing inequity in disaster response and recovery activities among people with disabilities and other access and functional needs. A D/AFN Coordinator would provide expertise within EMD to inform policy, operational, planning, and preparedness activities and issues surrounding AFN. The coordinator would ensure that civil rights and ADA legal requirements are met in all of EMD's activities - especially emergency response - mitigating potential risk exposure for the State. A D/AFN coordinator is essential at the state level.

For more information please contact:

Kim Conner, Executive Director WASILC, [Kimberly.Conner@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Conner@dshs.wa.gov)

Jim House, Disability Integration Manager WASILC/CIEP, [Jim.House@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Jim.House@dshs.wa.gov)

---

<sup>14</sup> [CIEP After Action Report - 2020 Fire Season Recap](#)