

Spring 2022



# CIEP ALERT

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## CONFERENCE COVID HIBERNATION ENDS

For the first time in three years, 2022 brought back in-person gatherings. After two years of isolation and Zoom screens, the Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP) participated in two conferences. While they were in-person events—the trend is towards hybrid conferences where some groups meet online additionally to meeting face-to-face. These hybrid meetings are aimed at providing access and inclusion at public forums for those who are unable to travel to a meeting site.



2019 was just like any other year. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed many systemic gaps in different areas of emergency planning, and led to several simultaneous disasters that needed our response while maintaining COVID protocols brought forth by our partners in the Washington Department of Health ([DOH](#)). During concurrent disasters, local American Red Cross Disability Integration Teams alert us when encountering Access and Functional Needs (AFN) gaps while serving people in shelters who had lost their durable medical equipment, or even their homes in wildfires. CIEP connected those with resources with those needing temporary and/or long-term solutions. One shelter lacked an ADA shower and Todd Holloway immediately called on his network for an accessible unit. Ivan Tudela and the Pierce County Functional Assessment Service Team ([FAST](#)) conducted ADA assessments at quarantine sites for DOH and other public venues used in the COVID testing and vaccination response throughout the state. With our support, DOH launched its community COVID-19 education web page in ASL and over 30 other languages.

The first event in 2022 was the annual Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference ([PIEPC](#)) that met in Lynnwood in April. When they last met in 2019, CIEP hosted a panel discussion on AFN successes and shortfalls. This year there were many more workshops on whole community planning surrounding different aspects of AFN. One of the best moments came during the conference keynote speech as Robert Ezelle, Director of the Emergency Management Division ([EMD](#)) under the Washington Military Department announced that the state legislation approved this year's budget request which includes new funds for an AFN Specialist with services, as well as a Tribal Liaison to address significant gaps in the state emergency plans.

Deborah Witmer and Autumn Harris from the City of Seattle's Department of Human Services, Vulnerable Populations shared their Whole Community planning success story by creating the COVID 19 Testing Site Disability Access Plan. This plan was later adapted for vaccination sites

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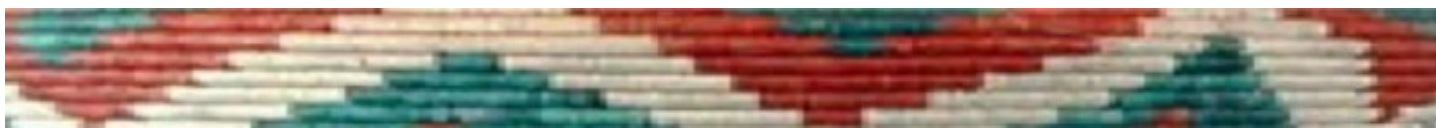
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hosted by the City of Seattle. Deborah and Autumn interviewed Angela Theriault, who is the Executive Director of the DeafBlind Service Center ([DBSC](#)). This successful collaboration ensured that the City of Seattle's public COVID testing and vaccination procedures were fully accessible and safe for residents who are deafblind, including those who need face-to-face tactile ASL interpreters and other accommodations. As the sole nongovernment community based organization that provides communication and mobility support for an estimated 20-25 thousand people who live with BOTH hearing and vision disabilities in Washington State. DBSC receives its funding from the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing ([ODHH](#)) in the Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA) with Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS).

CIEP once again hosted an AFN panel with Danielle Bailey from FEMA Region 10 as the moderator. Deborah Witmer, Ivan Tudela, Todd Holloway, and Jim House engaged in an interactive discussion on lessons learned from the COVID pandemic along with concurrent disasters, and on developing regional AFN resources in communities throughout the state. Several disability advocates from the Central Washington Disability Resources ([CWDR](#)), a Center for Independent Living in Ellensburg, Joshua Hackney, Sawyer Stearns and Mayra Colazo all contributed to the discussion reflecting on their responses during multiple wildfires that ravaged northern Central Washington. Lewis Lujan also came as a representative of EMD, a major sponsor of PIEPC.



*After the CIEP AFN Panel at the PIEPC conference on Thursday April 7, the panelists and other CIEP stakeholders met with advocates from CWDR in Ellensburg. Kneeling in front from left to right are Alivia Richards, Danielle Bailey, Deborah Witmer, and Sawyer Stearns. Standing in the rear from left to right are Jim House, Ivan Tudela, Joshua Hackney, Todd Holloway, Dan Witkowski, Lewis Lujan, and Mayra Colazo. Photo Credit: Itzel Sandoval*



The second event was the **2022 Tribal Public Health Emergency Preparedness Conference** that was held at the Tulalip Resort Casino in May. This conference was hosted by the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (**NPAIHB**) with funding from **DOH** and its



**NPAIHB**

*Indian Leadership for Indian Health*

counterparts in Idaho (Department of Health & Welfare, Division of Public Health) and Oregon (Health Authority, Public Health Division). The mission of NPAIHB is to eliminate health disparities and improve the quality of life of American Indians and Alaska Natives by supporting Northwest Tribes in their delivery of culturally appropriate, high quality healthcare.

At this three-day conference, workshops covered public health and emergency preparedness issues affecting Native American communities such as the COVID response, wildfire and smoke response, Tribal sovereignty rights, and the application of their Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) and priorities, even if they conflict with US federal and state mandates. In one workshop, **The Power of Partnerships—How Building Relationships Improved Distribution of Vaccines and Therapeutics to Tribes During the COVID-19 Pandemic**, there were many panelists made up of Tribal, state and local public health officials. Prior to 2012, there was little to no planning for the distribution of medical countermeasures to Tribes during public health emergencies. During the 2009-2010 H1N1 Avian Flu pandemic, catastrophic failures resulted in some Washington Tribes not receiving their jurisdictions' allocation of vaccines and antivirals. At Tribal leaders' direction, the American Indian Health Commission for Washington State (**AIHC**) established cross-jurisdictional collaboration meetings, engaging the Tribes, local health jurisdictions and DOH staff to build strategic relationships for public health emergency preparedness and response. These meetings built friendships, increased understanding about each jurisdiction's capabilities and challenges; produced policy guidance for Tribes, state and local health jurisdictions, and the federal government; and ultimately resulted in very different outcomes for Tribal communities in Washington, compared to the H1N1 pandemic.

A question was raised asking about strategies that benefit people with access and function needs, which led to replies from two local health jurisdictions and one state level coordinator. Their quotes have been lightly edited for clarity from the captioning transcript provided.



The first response was from Lianne Martinez at the **Clark County Public Health Emergency Preparedness**. "Vancouver is home to the **Washington School for the Deaf** and the **Washington State School for the Blind** so we have partnerships with them. During the H1N1 outbreak, we would help the schools run plans in their clinics. Their students fly in to school on Monday and fly home on Friday so they're all over the state of Washington. They would be vaccinated and get medications distributed out to their families. Then they would open up to the communities, either the deaf community or the blind community, because they have the resources and were trusted sources. We provided them with the needed

equipment and supplies to plan and run a distribution pod. Our agreement is that we get medication to their people first and we open it up for the rest of the people in that area. So they got their distribution methods because they have many meetings on their campuses and stuff for folks who need that accessibility, they had Braille and sign language interpreters that we did not have in our jurisdiction. So we have those memorandums of understanding (MOU's) in place with both communities and it has proved to be very helpful during COVID."





The next to reply was Sue Poyner from the [Thurston County Public Health & Social Services, Emergency Preparedness](#) “From the perspective of a local health jurisdiction, we have seen numerous gaps, and I'm really anxious for the after action reports because moving forward with whether we create Functional Assessment Service Teams ([FAST](#)) and address English language proficiencies, we have some work to do. And I'm going to be working with you as a Coalition stakeholder to make clear that there are definitely pieces where equity across the board was really hard to achieve. And in most cases, I think it is because we didn't have working relationships with key community members where we could reach out and take a look at that. So I don't have any examples other than to say that I recognized gaps and that is going to be a priority for us locally going forward.”

The final response came from Erika Estrada, who is the Community Preparedness and Recovery Coordinator in the [Office of Emergency Preparedness, Resilience, and Response](#) at DOH “At the state level, we were building a lot of our equity strategies in a time as we were responding, so some of them were late and some of them have showed the gaps and don't have all the details needed. But we developed a series of



eight strategies with the input for equity around COVID-19 vaccine distribution with input. We also did extensive work with other stakeholders to set up a vaccine collaborative, We were hearing from them already, but wanted to complement that with true community input and engagement. So, starting in January 2020, we stood up a vaccine implementation collaborative with all different kinds of partners who were community based organizations, individuals, partners working with a whole array of groups who had inequities and that group is over 600 strong and still meeting. It showed a lot of the gaps and I think yesterday somebody was talking about can we leave the tools for our grandchildren and others about how can we do this from the beginning? As clinics went on, I mean speaking about the disability community and others we put out strategies for asking those offering vaccines about things they needed to be doing, materials in different languages, translation cards. And so I think there's some of those things that we were developing in time and really hopefully in our after action solidify and find out what was missing and add action strategies as we move ahead.”

Native Americans with disabilities are often integrated and respected in Tribal communities. I would like to conclude with an excellent quotation from a resource by the National Council on Disability, [Understanding Disabilities in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Toolkit Guide](#) Mark Azure, a deaf Cherokee from Oregon shares his feelings reconnecting with his boyhood Tribal culture as a man after growing up in a residential school.

As a child when I moved to a deaf school off tribal lands I couldn't participate in my cultural rituals such as powwows and ceremonies. My life was like a torn piece of paper. When I could reconnect these ceremonies and my ability to be first a Native American and then a deaf person, my life came together again. This is what I want—to help rebuild our culture so everyone can do this.

# ACCESS & FUNCTIONAL NEEDS RESOURCES

## WASILC Resource Library

[CIEP-WASILC Impact Statement on 911 Outage](#)

[CIEP After Action Report - 2020 Fire Season Recap](#)

[CIEP After Action Report - Pierce County Outdoor Warning System Upgrade Test](#)

**++NEW ++** [WA State AFN Acronym List for Interpreters and Captioners](#)

[WASILC Position Paper: AFN Coordinator at EMD](#)

[Back issues of CIEP ALERT and WASILC Newsletters](#)

## Online Resources

[WA Emergency Management Division—Access & Functional Needs](#)

[WA Emergency Management Division—Disaster Ready Washington](#)

[WA Emergency Management Division—Alert & Notification Warnings](#) listed by County

[WA State Local Emergency Management Agencies](#) listed by County

[WA State Local Health Jurisdictions \(LHJs\)](#) listed by City/County

[WA State Department of Ecology – Emergency Planning Committees](#) listed by County

[The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies](#)

[CDC Disability and Health Emergency Preparedness](#)

[COVID-19 Accessible Resources Home | Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation](#)

[Inclusive Emergency Lifelines | Wireless Inclusive RERC | Georgia Institute of Technology](#)

[Individuals with Disabilities | Ready.gov](#)

[Disaster Preparedness for Seniors-English.revised\\_7-09.pdf \(redcross.org\)](#)

[Must-Have Emergency Supplies for Babies and Young Children - WeHaveKids](#)

[Pet Disaster Preparedness | ASPCA](#)

[FEMA | PHE Functional Needs Support Services Guidance](#)

[HHS | TRACIE Topic Collection: Access and Functional Needs](#)

[Disabilities or Access and Functional Needs | DisasterAssistance.gov](#)

[CDC Access and Functional Needs Toolkit](#)

## WASILC Solidarity Statement

The Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) stands in solidarity with the Black Community and all Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. We fully support the Black Lives Matter movement and condemn systemic racism, oppression, and injustice. Achieving our mission requires us to educate and advocate for systemic changes for all people with disabilities, which includes the intersectionality of race and disability. We recommit to this vital work and will hold ourselves accountable to become better allies. We know we cannot elevate the disability community without elevating the BIPOC communities we serve.

### About CIEP

CIEP is a statewide advisory group that brings expertise into disaster planning based on access and functional needs (AFN) faced by people with disabilities in three areas: 1) Effective communications, 2) Programmatic Access, and 3) Physical Access. We welcome any suggestions for future issues of the quarterly **CIEP ALERT** newsletter. Past issues since 2018 are available at <https://www.wasilc.org/newsletter>.

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## COMING EVENTS

### CIEP Stakeholder Calls (Response to COVID-19 and other Disasters)

**WHEN:** Monthly on first Wednesday at 10:00-11:00 am.

**WHERE:** UPDATED [Zoom link](#) for 2022 through June of 2023. Email [Jim.House@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Jim.House@dshs.wa.gov) for details and Zoom link.



### Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) Quarterly Meetings

**WHEN:** Thursday, July 14, 2022 10am - 5pm

**WHERE:** [Zoom](#) — Email [WASILC@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:WASILC@dshs.wa.gov) for more information.

**Note:** Due to the status of WASILC's COVID-19 ongoing response, this Quarterly Meeting will be held virtually. The finalized meeting agenda will be announced soon.

All CIEP Stakeholder Calls and WASILC Quarterly Meetings are virtual until further notice and open to everyone. ASL interpreters and CART will be provided. For other reasonable accommodation requests, please email us as early as possible prior to the meeting to ensure availability.