SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS EXPOSES AFN GAPS

On June 22, 2022, nearly 60 stakeholders participated or observed in a historic Tabletop Exercise hosted by The Coalition on Inclusive Emergency in partnership with the National Exercise Program and other partners in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Headquarters and Region 10 officials in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington State. Most of the participants were from the Washington Department of Health (DOH), Emergency Management Division (EMD), Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS), other state and local agencies. Non-governmental organizations such as centers for independent living (CILs), American Red Cross (ARC), the Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET) and other partners. This historic event also drew observers from The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies (PIDS), and programs in different states.

The scenario for this Tabletop Exercise follows the same scenario used in Cascadia Rising 2022 (CR22) Tabletop Exercises that took place earlier in June. The exercise discussion picks up on the fourth day post-impact, as a sequel to the first Cascadia Rising 2016. In this National Level Exercise, the participants shared their responses in Critical Transportation and Mass Care (sheltering, feeding, and hydration). Several CIEP stakeholders participated in the Mass Care planning with the idea of injecting Access and Functional Needs (AFN) throughout the whole exercise. The original plan for CR22 was to develop a full-scale exercise and recruit local actors living with disabilities among the “survivors” of the 9.2 magnitude earthquake and the ensuing tsunamis on the Pacific Coast that caused significant damage to the infrastructure. Halfway through the planning process, EMD made the difficult decision to reduce the scope of the exercise and reduced CR22 to a Tabletop Exercise instead, citing numerous personnel changes and deployments for COVID and wildfire responses.

This decision to downsize dampened the potential opportunities for CIEP to present real-life demonstrations of the disproportionate impact of systemic barriers that affect our ability to recover from a disaster. Shortly after this decision, there was an announcement from FEMA’s National Exercise Directorate, offering technical support in designing exercises and evaluating emergency plans, including Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs) that spells out how an entity would continue to provide services after a disaster.
CIEP had written up a protocol on how this Coalition would stand up to support access and functional needs during a disaster. This worked well several times in the past few years for small localized disasters such as wild fires or flooding that may affect a small number of counties. Yet we continued to see gaps in accessing coordination calls by various community based volunteer organizations. We also wondered about the scalability of this plan in responding to catastrophic disasters such as the 9.2M Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and the ensuing tsunamis that could devastate the western half of the state and overwhelm the eastern half as refugees migrate eastward to seek disaster assistance services in areas unaffected by the quake.

The core capabilities examined in this CIEP Tabletop Exercise (TTX) covered planning, operational coordination, operational communications, and situational assessment. The first objective of the exercise were to discuss and assess the readiness and ability of CIEP stakeholders to support CIEP activation and participation in the Stand-Up Call. The second objective was to discuss and evaluate the ability to obtain situational awareness about disaster impacts in areas where CIEP stakeholders operate and any identified AFN shortfalls. The third and final objective was to discuss and evaluate the CIEP Stand-up Protocol Conference Call procedures and address identified gaps.

The discussions revolved around anticipated resource needs, decision points, and timelines during the TTX provided insights regarding preparedness, response, and support requirements following a CSZ earthquake and tsunami event. During the exercise, several topics emerged to include gaps in communications, damage to critical infrastructure, identification of best practices (or most effective procedures) and recommendations / solutions towards the aforementioned key issues.

The first key issue identified involved communication shortfalls and, more specifically, the availability of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and the need to develop more robust plans to address ASL shortfalls. Key challenges identified included, but were not limited to:

- Continuing assessments regarding interpreter readiness and accessibility to establish priorities and place ASL interpreters and other communication resources where they are needed.
- Managing expectations and developing realistic timeframes for ASL interpreters and other AFN resources that might not be readily available following a CSZ event.
- Ascertaining an accurate number of individuals with disabilities who may need AFN services without running afoul of HIPAA and other privacy laws.
Ascertaining an accurate number of individuals who are deaf and to determine how many of those people use ASL interpreters or other auxiliary communication services.

The second key issue identified during the exercise involved damage to critical infrastructure after a CSZ earthquake and tsunami event. Key discussion points identified included:

- Acknowledgement that communications technology and infrastructure throughout the region would be severely damaged and can degrade CIEP’s ability to reach out to stakeholders in a timely manner.
- A seismic event of this magnitude will directly affect transportation.

Best practices and recommendations were also discussed to address the identified communications gaps and impacts to infrastructure. Best practices and recommendations included:

- Ensuring CILs continuously reinforce emergency preparedness actions and ask current and new clients if they want assistance towards developing their own individualized emergency plan.

Tabletop Exercise participants as follows: Jim House (CIEP), Danielle Bailey (FEMA), June Isaacson Kailes (PIDS), Ivan Tudela (CEM), Jesse Gilpatrick (CFI), Katie Scott (DOH), Cindi Barker (Seattle Hubs), David Callis (FEMA), JoAnn Thierry (PIDS), Deb Witmer (CR22 Planner), Todd Holloway (CFI), Dean Sydnor (RARET), Sawyer Stearns (CWDR), Kim Conner (WASILC), Amanda Bogard (FEMA), Holly Delcambre (Seattle), Claire Woosley (DOH), Tammy Woodrich (NIVRP), Aubrie Swain (CFI), Nicole Johnson (KCOEM), James Christiansen (HSDC), Chris Notaras (CFI), and Keegan Fengler (WAFAC)
NEW FACES AT WASILC

REBEKAH MORAS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rebekah (Bek) Moras grew up in Alaska (western Yupi’k and south-central Dena’ina lands), identifies as a survivor, with “hidden” disabilities, and a family member of people with disabilities. Bek uses she/they pronouns, has a PhD in Disability Studies, and has worked professionally with survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault with disabilities since 2002. She is excited to be involved in independent living, policy, and systems change. Bek lives with their family in Olympia and loves accessibility, libraries, rivers, fish and berries.

REBECCA RODRIGUEZ
EXECUTIVE LEAD

Rebecca Rodriguez joined WASILC in June 2022 with the desire to hit the ground running to support the WASILC mission. She brings professional administrative experience but also personal experience supporting people with disabilities. Her younger sister acquired an injury at birth and they have spent every day since adapting, learning, and having adventures. Being a lifelong Washingtonian, she can be found in the beautiful outdoors, kayaking on the water with a “four-legged captain”, hiking, or getting muddy in her Jeep.

Continued from Page 3

- Providing first responders with some formalized training on basic emergency communication procedures to include non-technological communication methods, including emergency gestures for example to address short-term communication gaps with people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, neuro-divergent, and others who do not understand the English language.

- Finally, the Summary of Conclusions suggested an Improvement Plan to address gaps for each objective. Some recommended corrective actions for communications include: Identify and document gaps, develop primary and alternate means of communication, work with local amateur radio groups, and have first responders learn non-technological ways to exchange information with nonverbal individuals. Actions that maintain and enhance our situational awareness include having representatives of CILs and other qualified AFN community advocates be at state and local emergency operations centers working alongside with personnel from the American Red Cross as well as local health jurisdictions.
While this groundbreaking discourse brought attention to systemic barriers, it also suggested possible solutions. Thanks to our state-level partners at Department of Health and Emergency Management Division we are well on the way to resolving these problems. Furthermore, this document can also be cited and shared with our elected officials for possible funding and reforms. While many solutions are easy to implement, we see some long-term objectives that complement our ongoing efforts in Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) in Washington State.

### 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
- WA State AFN Acronym List for Interpreters and Captioners
- WASILC Position Paper: AFN Coordinator at EMD
- Back issues of CIEP ALERT and WASILC Newsletters

Statewide and National Online AFN 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
- Inclusive Emergency Lifelines | Wireless Inclusive RERC | Georgia Institute of Technology
- Individuals with Disabilities | Ready.gov

**NEW**
- American Red Cross Inclusivity Preparedness Resources
- FEMA | PHE Functional Needs Support Services Guidance
- HHS | TRACIE Topic Collection: Access and Functional Needs
- Disabilities or Access and Functional Needs | DisasterAssistance.gov
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.

Jim House, Disability Integration Manager
Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP)
a program of the Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC)

Email: Jim.House@dshs.wa.gov  Website: www.wasilc.org/coalition-on-inclusive-emergency-planning

COMING EVENTS

CIEP Stakeholder Calls (AFN Response to 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 for details and Zoom link.

Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) Quarterly Meetings
WHEN: Thursday, October 6, 2022 10am to 2:45pm
WHERE: Zoom — Email 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.