



APRIL Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Committee Position Paper

Introduction

Emergency preparedness, response, and recovery are critical to all communities, and it is especially important for people with disabilities in rural areas. At APRIL, we strive to advance the equity of people with disabilities in rural communities through advocacy, collaboration, shared experience, leadership development, education, and training. In the face of disasters and emergencies, we believe that people with disabilities, like all other community members, must have the right and opportunity to live, work, play, and love in the communities of their choice.

Emergency Preparedness

Preparedness for disasters and emergencies is a shared responsibility. This means that everyone, including individuals, communities, and government agencies, need to be involved and collaborate. As an organization committed to fostering inclusive communities, we advocate for emergency preparedness plans that take into account the unique needs and subject matter expertise of people with disabilities.

We urge communities and emergency planners to involve people with disabilities and disability organizations in planning processes. Not only can individuals with disabilities and disability groups provide valuable insights, but our involvement also ensures that emergency plans are inclusive and respectful of diversity. We also emphasize the importance of accessible and inclusive resources for people with disabilities.

Emergency Response

In the event of a disaster or emergency, effective response is crucial. Again, we elevate the importance of inclusivity and respect for diversity. Emergency responders must be trained to understand and address the specific needs of people with disabilities, including mobility, cognitive, communication barriers.

Accessible communication is vital during emergency response. Alerts, warnings, and instructions should be provided in formats accessible to all, including people with visual, hearing, cognitive, or other disabilities. This means that information should be available in multiple formats, such as ASL, text, audio, visual, and easy-read versions, and should be disseminated through a variety of channels.



Emergency Recovery

Finally, in the aftermath of an emergency, people with disabilities must have access to the supports and resources needed to recover and rebuild. This includes accessible housing, healthcare, transportation, and other services. Recovery efforts should respect the rights of people with disabilities, including the right to live in the community and the right to self-determination.

We call on agencies and organizations with disaster or emergency roles to involve people with disabilities and disability organizations in planning and implementing recovery efforts. This will ensure that recovery plans are inclusive and respectful of the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

Conclusion

At APRIL, we are dedicated to advancing the rights of people with disabilities living in rural America. We believe that emergency preparedness, response, and recovery are crucial areas where the rights and needs of people with disabilities must be respected and addressed. By working together, we can create inclusive, resilient communities where every person with disabilities thrives.