

Including Emergency Preparedness in Disability Organizations

The Independence Center's Perspective – Colorado Springs

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Background: Waldo Canyon Fire 2012

Community members contacted The Independence Center to discuss accessibility barriers encountered during the fire.

Challenges and findings included:

- Ineffective and lack of multifaceted communication during emergency broadcasts
- Accessibility in shelters
- Transportation and mobility
- **Lack of individual and family preparedness**



Advocacy efforts after Waldo Canyon Fire

- Engaged Local Emergency Services about accessibility gaps identified in forum
- Developed Emergency Preparedness Workbook for People with Disabilities as well as created training to assist in Emergency Preparedness
- Held numerous community information sharing events
- Engaged local broadcast stations about FCC regulations
- Presented at several EM/EP conferences across the region
- Began internal ILC planning to pilot Emergency Preparedness Coordinator position

Systems Change During Black Forest Fire (2013)

- Sign language interpreters were visibly present during news briefings
- Live captioning was provided and current
- Shelters were fully accessible and staff knew what to do if someone with a disability needed to utilize the shelter



What is the point?

Without an ILC engaging, the need may have not been recognized.

Why does an Independent Living Center have an Emergency Preparedness Program?

1. Historically persons with disabilities and others with access and functional needs are greatly impacted by emergencies and disasters
2. Government led emergency planning efforts are limited in resources and require committed community partners with expertise
3. Centers for independent living/disability organizations know their consumers and disability resources in their communities
4. People with disabilities generally know an ILC is a information and support channel
5. In a world of increasing complexity, organizations have a stake and obligation to prepare for disasters

Centers for Independent Living (CILs)?

➤ Core services

1. Peer support
2. Information and referral
3. Individual and systems advocacy
4. Independent living skills training
5. Community Transition Services

➤ *Funding Opportunities?*

➤ *Reality check: Fixing this problem will require funding*

➤ Through innovative practices CILs can fund other programs such as emergency preparedness initiatives

The IC's Emergency Preparedness Program

Integration into Emergency Management Community

- Understand the capacity and role of the local office of emergency management
- Gain stakeholders trust and serve as a community resource
- Analyze areas the disability community can provide solutions
- Actively participate in community emergency management functions
- Establish diverse working groups focusing on identifying gaps and negotiating systems change

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Build Community Advisory Group (CAG)

- Build a manageable cohesive team who live with disabilities (CAG)
- Train CAG on baseline FEMA independent study courses
- Integrate CAG with emergency planners & stakeholders
- Build preparedness training material together and position CAG to conduct PWD preparedness trainings

The IC's Emergency Preparedness Program

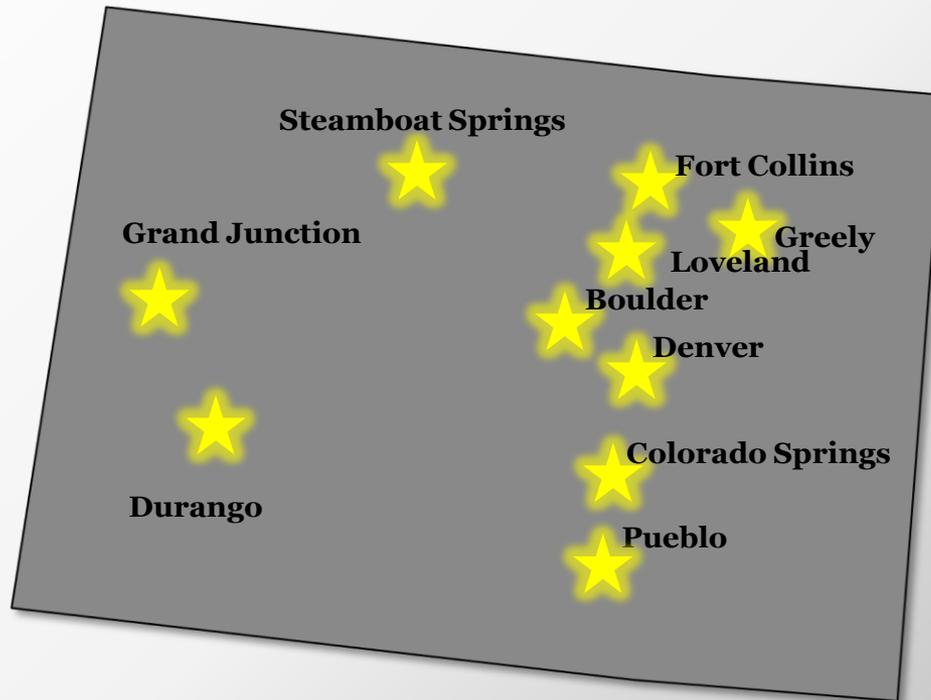
Conduct Preparedness Trainings for People with Disabilities

- Utilize CILs and other disability organizations to market trainings
- Integrate CAG into training development
- Seek exercise planning/training opportunities
- Build relationships with American Red Cross & Community Emergency Response programs for cross training opportunities

CILs & Cohesive Preparedness Coordination

The Way Ahead

- CILs assign center level coordinators
- CIL coordinators develop collective resource plans & operating procedures
- CIL preparedness coordinators work with all OEMs to bridge disability networks and resources



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