

SOME DISABILITIES LOOK LIKE THIS



OTHERS LOOK LIKE THIS



NOT ALL DISABILITIES ARE VISIBLE

Access and Functional Needs

(This is not meant to be an exhaustive list rather, a synopsis of what may be expected)

Access and functional needs (AFN) in emergency management refers to the planning and preparation for individuals who may need additional assistance during disasters or emergencies due to various factors, including disabilities, chronic conditions, language barriers, age, socioeconomic status, and more. This approach focuses on addressing the functional needs of individuals rather than solely on their specific diagnoses or labels.

Key aspects of Access and Functional Needs in Emergency Management:

- **Inclusive Planning:**

AFN requires incorporating the needs of diverse populations into all phases of emergency management, from preparedness to recovery. Work with emergency management agencies to ensure that emergency plans at all levels (local, state, federal) consider the specific needs of people with AFN, is critical. This includes evacuation plans, shelter plans, and communication strategies. Developing and delivering educational materials and presentations about emergency preparedness for people with AFN is of the utmost importance. Collaboration with disability organizations, community centers, and other relevant groups to reach individuals with AFN and promote preparedness, is a key task.

- **Function-Based Needs:**

Instead of focusing on specific disabilities, AFN emphasizes the functional limitations individuals may experience during emergencies, such as mobility, communication, or access to medication. The identification and documentation of the specific needs of individuals with AFN within the community is key. This may involve conducting surveys, focus groups, and partnering with disability organizations. You may participate in and help organize tabletop exercises to test and refine emergency plans, specifically focusing on the needs of people with AFN.

- **Universal Design:**

AFN principles promote the use of universal design and accessible solutions that benefit everyone, rather than solely relying on accommodations for specific groups. Documenting resources available to support individuals with AFN during emergencies, such as accessible transportation, accessible shelters, and specialized medical equipment is a primary task.

The KCR COAD's AFN also includes the recent incorporation of the SPICE (Seniors Positive Impact in Community Emergencies) Project. This seeks to improve disaster preparedness for community dwelling older adults in Missouri. It is very important to focus on the older adult population who may have access and functional needs which are increased during disasters. Also, and as important, the older adults are a source of resilience for our communities due to past lived experiences and utilization of these unique individuals during a disaster will strengthen our response during a difficult disaster. This involves coordinating community partners, assisting in programming, disaster evaluations, post-disaster recovery plans, conducting preparedness seminars, and more.

If you are interested in joining this committee and/or would like more information, please reach out to the Interim Chair, Dr. Jennifer L'Heureux at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov. Meetings are the second Friday of each month at 9 a.m. on Webex. Please reach out for more information!