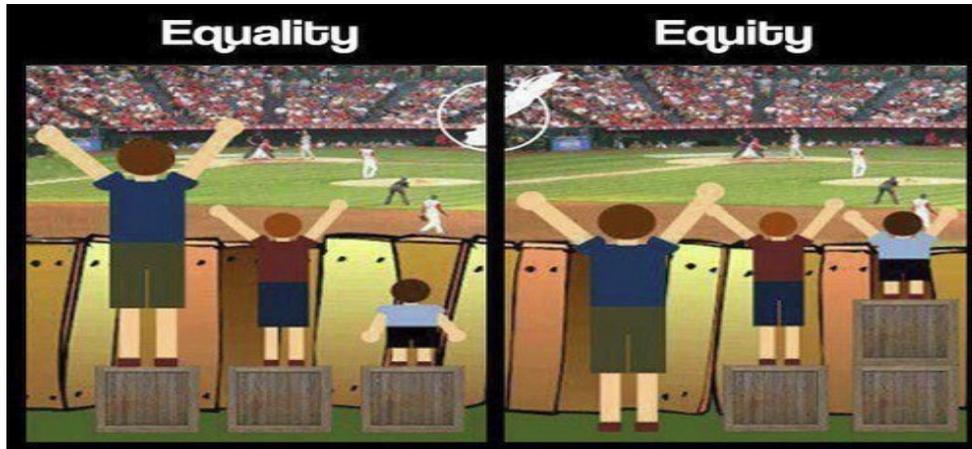


NEW MEXICO GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITY



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Planning for and responding to emergencies and disasters are vital and demanding assignments for any state. No level of planning, coordination and collaboration can completely ensure a seamless execution and the prevention and removal of all human suffering.

People with Disabilities have distinctive challenges in responding to emergencies. Encountering an often inaccessible world, many individuals with disabilities are forced to adapt either through additional equipment, advance planning efforts or clever problem solving skills. A disaster or emergency changes those parameters and can leave someone without the accommodation they would otherwise have, possibly creating an unsafe scenario.

TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: (ADA)

Prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the provision of services, programs or activities by public entities. The law is intended to ensure that People with Disabilities have meaningful access to government provided programs, services and activities and is designed to eliminate "outright intentional exclusion, the discriminatory effects of architectural, transportation, and communication barriers, overprotective rules and policies, and failure to make modifications to existing facilities and practices . . ."

42 U.S.C. § 12101(a)(5).

BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMERGENCY EVACUATION INCLUSIVE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Include People with Disabilities, individuals with mental illness and seniors in an ongoing and meaningful manner in disaster preparedness planning, not just in the development of initial plans.
- Train all responders, ideally before an emergency. This should include all State Building Evacuation Coordinators and Floor Wardens on procedures for evacuating People with Disabilities, ADA compliance, disability awareness and individual preparedness.
- Create a universally designed response plan that addresses the needs of the entire population.
- Adopt policies to ensure that evacuation plans enable People with Disabilities to safely self-evacuate or to be evacuated by others.
- Include People with Disabilities in all emergency drills and practices.
- Practice procedures for evacuating People with Disabilities frequently.
- Train First responders and emergency personnel on the provision of auxiliary aids and services to ensure effective communication, with primary consideration of the accommodation to be given to People with Disabilities.
- Provide ways to inform people who are deaf or hard of hearing of an impending disaster if you use emergency warning systems such as sirens or other audible alerts.
- Adopt procedures to ensure that People with Disabilities who use service animals are not separated from their service animal during an emergency.

Additional Resources

<http://www.ada.gov/emergencyprepguide.htm>

“Substantial emergencies occur in New Mexico every year where New Mexicans are significantly affected and suffer, disputing common perceptions that belittles the importance of emergency preparedness.” This statement was from the 2014 House Memorial 87 Taskforce Committee Report presented to the Health and Human Services Disabilities Concerns Subcommittee during the 51st Legislature Session.

Note: The full Taskforce Committee Report can be viewed at the website listed below.



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