

The Independence Center's Emergency Preparation Kits

In early 2015 The Independence Center (The IC) received a grant from the Daniels Fund to assemble a certain number of kits that would be distributed to Red Cross Shelters and interested parties from around the state. Along with the kits, a video production was developed to demonstrate to Red Cross employees/volunteers ways to make emergency shelters more user friendly for people with disabilities.

The program is almost complete and there have been some great successes and some great surprises. We have assembled 18 kits and have made strong connections with the American Red Cross staff who serve the Wyoming/Colorado area. They have been very receptive to both the training and the video as well as wanting as many of the kits as can be produced. We are very grateful for the partnerships that have been forged between municipal emergency planning personnel, Independent Living Center staff, and the Red Cross. We hope the work we've done will also assist other Centers for Independent Living (CIL) in the extensive work needed to help make the next disaster safer for people with disabilities. The definition of a disaster we are using is one of the following has occurred:

1. People have been evacuated by local officials, and/or
2. The Governor has declared a state of emergency, and/or
3. The Governor has asked for the President to declare an area a disaster site.

There are some resources we have developed that may be of help to you in your work to strengthen these important relationships.

1. We have worked with emergency planners as well as consumers to develop the inventory of items that are the most important to be included in a kit. We would like to give each CIL a **manual** that outlines the equipment list we developed. The cost for a complete kit is approximately \$1,300.
2. There are also additional services and equipment available that you should be aware of. **A fund of \$10,000** has been developed to pay for Certified Deaf Interpreters, ASL Interpreters and CART services for areas experiencing a disaster. It will be maintained for three years until December 31, 2018. The Colorado Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will coordinate these services when needed to the extent funds are still available. There are also Personal Audio loops available at several staging areas serviced by the Red Cross that can be deployed to any place in the state where needed.
3. **A video production** of making a shelter accessible is located on our website and youtube page. You are welcome to use this video in any capacity you find useful. It can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApYdwOPWDy8>

Please let us know if you think we might be able to help you in brainstorming ideas or sharing our experience with you on how we are working to make Emergency Planning more accessible to all. Contact Sadie Martinez at smartinez@the-ic.org

FREE SERVICES FOR THE DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING

If you are using this kit during an emergency situation and you are helping to support people who are either deaf or hard-of-hearing please read the following.

During a disaster, communication is one of the most important keys to maintaining safety and to being able to understand and process the disaster. Many people who are deaf speak American Sign Language as their first language. It can be very hard or even impossible to understand written English. If you have a person in your care who is deaf please contact the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for assistance on how to proceed. There are services available through a grant received from the Daniels Fund to give you access to the American Sign Language Interpreters you need who are trained to interpret during an emergency situation.

Similarly, if you have one or more people who are hard of hearing there are additional aids available that are not contained in this kit. The American Red Cross Coordinators have access to personal audio loops which can help several people who wear hearing aids to significantly be able to improve their hearing in a noisy, crowded situation. These audio loops are stored in Red Cross staging areas.

Another service for the deaf and hard of hearing are CART services for major announcements, press conferences and complicated spoken instructions/updates. CART services use the expertise of a trained professional to turn spoken language into typed text that is projected onto a large screen as the speaker is speaking, there is no time delay.

Until set aside funds are expended, all of these services are without cost to you or your municipality. Please contact either your **Red Cross Emergency Coordinator** to request these services or contact the **Colorado Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** directly at:

(720) 457-3679 (VP/voice)

(303) 866-4824 (voice)

Email.ccdhh@state.co.us

