

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning

Current Issues in Emergency
Management

10/6/2009

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning

- WHO
- WHY
- WHEN
- The HOWEVERS

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning

WHO

- Individuals with disabilities
 - Not ALL individuals with disabilities are subject matter experts on EM planning
 - **BUT** they are usually experts on their disability
- Disability related organizations
 - Centers for Independent Living
 - Deaf Services Bureaus
 - Florida School for Deaf and Blind
 - Blind Councils
 - Other disability related organizations in your area

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning

WHY

- Quite simply, for:
 - Their expertise
 - Their insight
 - Their experience
- Change the perspective **from**: they are victims who need to be rescued **to** they are contributors and collaborators who can add value to emergency planning
- **Planning for and not with people with disabilities reflects an old paradigm “a lot about us without us.”**

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning

WHEN

- In all phases of EM planning
 - Infrastructure
 - Informational materials
- In training
 - Staff (disability etiquette)
 - Shelter certification
- In exercises
 - No better hands-on experience for first-responders than using people with real disabilities as role players

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning HOWEVER

- Remember – people with disabilities, even more than other segments of the population and not a homogeneous group. Differences exist even within a particular disability group. So,

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning HOWEVER

- Use caution when selecting representatives of the disability community. Establish criteria for their participation. Co-workers, friends or acquaintances with a disability are not necessarily qualified
- **Establish:**
 - • Goals and objectives of the group;
 - • Qualities of the representatives you are looking for;
 - • Projected time commitments needed from participants (projected number of meetings, length of meetings, preparation time, over what number of months, years), and
 - • Policies regarding expense reimbursement.
- Create an application for disability specific organizations to nominate primary participants and back-up individuals whom they would like to represent their organizations and constituents.
 - • The applicant organizations should document:
 - The qualifications of the representatives they are nominating.
 - How these representatives will communicate with the constituencies they represent.

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning HOWEVER

- When asked to include perspectives from the disability communities on a project, board, committee, workshop, etc., organizations sometimes get less than adequate representation. This is because selecting representatives can be a haphazard and random process where planners do not take time to think through the type of representation desired. It is common for people responsible for recruiting representatives from the disability communities to automatically think of and choose a co-worker, colleague, neighbor, friend, or acquaintance that happens to have a disability or activity limitation. These individuals may or may not be qualified representatives.

Including People with Disabilities in EM Planning HOWEVER

Announcing, Selection and Recruiting Process

- By establishing selection criteria for the type and diversity of representation you are seeking from qualified people, you can create more targeted recruiting. A sound way to start is to:
- Create a description of the:
 - • Goals and objectives of the group;
 - • Qualities of the representatives you are looking for;
 - • Projected time commitments needed from participants (projected number of meetings, length of meetings, preparation time, over what number of months, years), and
 - • Policies regarding expense reimbursement and honorariums.
- Create an application for disability specific organizations to nominate representatives, as well as, back up individuals whom they would like to represent their organizations and constituents.
 - • The applicant organizations should document:
 - The qualifications of the two representatives they are nominating.
 - How these representatives will communicate with the constituencies they represent.