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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to disseminate information and share resources to improve emergency planning and response for people with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs (DAFN). DAFN includes people with disabilities, along with older adults, children, people with limited or no English proficiency, individuals with health vulnerabilities, and others who may need particular assistance or additional support during an emergency.

This report includes the resources shared at the 2017 DAFN Symposium, an annual event held for the sixth time in 2017, that brings together community leaders, service providers and members of the public to discuss emergency planning for people with disabilities.

The report also includes updates about improvements in emergency planning for the DAFN community within New York City.

Finally, each section provides ways that New Yorkers, particularly those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, can prepare themselves, their families and communities for all types of emergencies.

The diversity of the topics covered in this report demonstrates crucial ways that people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs factor into emergency planning and response in New York City.
2017 Disability Access and Functional Needs Symposium

The 2017 NYC Disability and Access and Functional Needs Symposium\(^1\) was held on December 9th at the NYU Kimmel Center, and was attended by over 80 community leaders, service providers, and interested members of the public. The symposium’s panels, which featured over 20 panelists, facilitated discussions about emergency planning for people with disabilities in New York City:

The 2017 Hurricane Response Panel included representatives from the Dallas Office of Emergency Management, NYC Emergency Management and the NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities who discussed how Dallas, Texas and New York City responded to an influx of people evacuating from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. This discussion focused on providing accommodations for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs relocating after emergencies.

\(^1\) http://on.nyc.gov/dafn
The Sheltering and Evacuation Panel discussed how the decision is made to shelter in place or evacuate during emergencies. Representatives of NYC Fire Department (FDNY), NYC Emergency Management, and the American Red Cross in Greater New York explained what accommodations are available for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs who evacuate or shelter in place.

The Making Emergency Notifications Accessible Panel provided updates on new technology such as text-to-911 and the Notify NYC App and discussed how technology, in conjunction with community-based strategies, could reach the most people during emergencies. Staff from the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management and the Peter Cardella Senior Center in Queens provided examples of community-based approaches to communication.

The Healthcare Facility Emergency Planning Panel explained how healthcare facilities in New York City make site-specific emergency plans for both events with advance notice, and sudden, no-notice events. Representatives from New York State Department of Health and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene explained how hospitals prepare, and NYU Langone Health provided an example of how its system prepares. A representative of the NYC Police Department (NYPD) discussed how organizations plan for active shooter situations.

The Accessible Volunteering Panel presented accessible ways to get involved in your community, including volunteering with Greater New York American Red Cross and the Community Emergency Response Team Program (CERT), and using the NYC Emergency Planning Toolkit. Panelists demonstrated why volunteers with disabilities are essential to making preparedness and response efforts more accessible.
Service Centers

What To Know

The City of New York opens service centers when needed following emergencies that affect a significant number of people, such as large fires, coastal storms or terrorist attacks. The goal of a service center is to provide access to important economic, social and mental health services to people impacted by a disaster. Services are provided by government agencies, non-profit organizations and other partners and can range from cash or housing assistance to access to food benefits or assistance with school enrollment. The City of New York’s service centers strive to provide a variety of accommodations to clients so that they can access services after an emergency.

DAFN Preparedness Updates

The City of New York’s service centers are accessible and offer the following DAFN accommodations:

- Basic medical durable equipment such as walkers, crutches or wheelchairs.
- Trained DAFN coordinators tasked with accompanying people with disabilities and others with access or functional needs through the center.
- An updated intake form that allows service center staff to assess accommodation needs of clients.
- Foreign language and American Sign Language interpretation services.
- Personal amplification devices for people who are hard of hearing.
- Screen reading software as well as the option to receive documents via email for clients who are Blind or have low vision.

All New York City Agencies are now required to appoint a disability service facilitator to serve as a liaison between City government and New Yorkers with disabilities. For a full list of disability service facilitators, please visit the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities' nyc.gov/dsf.

Take Action:

To learn more about the types of services available for the DAFN community after a coastal storm, see the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities website here: nyc.gov/hurricane-disability
NYC Hurricane Service Center

In October, 2017, the City of New York opened an accessible hurricane evacuation service center in East Harlem to help people who relocated from Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands following the devastating effects of hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

The NYC Hurricane Service Center provided accessible services to over 2,500 visitors.
Evacuations and Sheltering

What To Know
You and your family should have a plan in place to either shelter in place for several days or evacuate your home immediately in case of an emergency.

How do you know whether to evacuate or to shelter-in-place during a fire?

Fire is the most common emergency in New York City. Knowing whether you live in a fireproof or non-fireproof building may save your life. If your building has a fire escape, it is not fireproof. If you live in a non-fireproof building, you must evacuate immediately in case of a fire. It is crucial to know where the exits are and to have a predetermined meeting place.

If you live in a fireproof building, and there is no smoke or fire in your apartment, it is best to shelter in place.

For more information on fireproof buildings, please visit FDNYsmart.org.

The American Red Cross Home Fire Campaign provides free installation of smoke alarms with batteries that work for 10 years. To request an alarm, or volunteer to install them, see its website.2

For people who are Deaf or have hearing loss, FDNY can install a fire alarm that vibrates. For more information about requesting a vibrating smoke alarm from FDNY, email ReadyNY@oem.nyc.gov.

Evacuation and Sheltering

Evacuation orders can be issued for any hazard that makes it unsafe for people to remain in a particular area of the city. The American Red Cross in Greater New York runs smaller shelter operations in response to fires or weather-related emergencies, while the City may activate its large shelter system in response to a coastal storm. The City’s shelter system consists of 60 evacuation centers, 450 shelters and eight special medical needs shelters.

During a coastal storm or hurricane, the Mayor may issue an evacuation order for those living in hurricane evacuation zones. Find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone by visiting the Hurricane Evacuation Zone Finder at NYC.gov/knowyourzone or calling 311 (212-639-9675 for Video Relay Service, or TTY: 212-504-4115).

2 http://www.redcross.org/local/new-york/greater-new-york/home-fire-safety
If you are not in an evacuation zone that has been ordered to evacuate, it is best to shelter in place during a coastal storm.

If the City issues an evacuation order, those residents in affected evacuation zones should evacuate as directed. Allow additional travel time, and consider what help you may need to evacuate. People with disabilities and others with access or functional needs who have no other options to evacuate safely can request transportation assistance by calling 311 (212-639-9675 for Video Relay Service, or TTY: 212-504-4115). Depending on your need, you will either be taken to:

- An accessible evacuation center in an accessible vehicle
- A hospital outside of the evacuation zone via ambulance

You will not be able to request transportation to a specific address. Evacuate early if you rely on elevators to get out of your building. Elevators may be out of service and may not be available at all times.

When an evacuation order is issued, you are encouraged to stay with families and friends outside the evacuation zones. Alternatively, if no other options are available, you can visit an evacuation center where trained staff will refer you to the appropriate shelter usually located in public schools.
The City will provide the following accommodations in its accessible evacuation centers and shelters:

- Accessible signage
- Medical equipment
- Charging stations for electrical equipment
- Interpretations services upon request
- Assistive communication devices
- Durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs, canes, or crutches
- Refrigeration for medications
- Quiet rooms
- Communications boards
- DAFN staff trained to assist people with disabilities with any needed accommodations

### Getting Resources

After large emergencies, the Post-Emergency Canvassing Operation (PECO), led by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), is at the ready to rapidly canvass impacted neighborhoods after a disaster to survey residents, in particular people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, for critical needs such as food, water, evacuation transportation, or medical care.

### Evacuation and Sheltering

There is at least one special medical needs shelter in each borough offering additional medical support for people with medical conditions that do not require hospitalization but do require care not available at general shelters. Special medical needs shelters provide the same level of accessibility as regular shelters.

Pets and service animals in shelters: Pets are allowed in all coastal storm evacuation centers and shelters. Service animals can stay with their owners, and documentation is not needed for them. Shelters have dedicated rooms for pets and their supplies. It is important to make a plan for your pet or service animal, including making them a go bag that includes supplies, by using the [My Pet’s Emergency Plan](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/guides-resources.page#pets_plan).³

Identification and legal status: Evacuation centers and shelters are available to everyone affected by an emergency regardless of immigration status or ability to provide identification.

³ [http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/guides-resources.page#pets_plan](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/guides-resources.page#pets_plan)
DAFN Preparedness Updates in 2017

• In 2017 30 coastal storm shelters were fully retrofitted for accessibility.

• Over 300 City staff and volunteers have been trained to provide people in emergency shelters with proper accommodations.

• The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has finalized the Post Emergency Canvassing Operation (PECO), setting forth the City’s operations for identifying the critical unmet needs of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

• The Ready New York Program, NYC Emergency Management’s public education campaign, gave 63 presentations, and attended 31 community fairs, at organizations that represent the disability community. At these events, staff and volunteers distributed emergency preparedness materials to 6,000 people with disabilities. Ready New York presentations inform New Yorkers about accessible evacuation options, emergency sheltering, and making personalized plans.

• NYC Emergency Management procured additional materials for deployment to coastal storm shelters, including mobility aids, braille signs, personal amplifier kits, updated wayfinding kits, assistive hearing devices, and refrigerators for medication.

• NYC Emergency Management developed this emergency shelter training video to train shelter staff to provide accommodations at emergency shelters.

Take Action:

Learn what you can do to prepare for fires, and how to know what type of building you live in, visit FDNY’s Fire Safety Education Program.5

Learn how to make a plan, gather supplies, and be informed for evacuating or sheltering in place by using the Ready New York resources available at nyc.gov/readyny.

Watch the shelter orientation guide for information about staying in evacuation centers (presented in American Sign Language).

See the frequently asked questions about shelters available on NYC Emergency Management’s website here.7

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCl67K0eS5o
6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRNoWF2GQ40
7 http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/disabilities-access-functional-needs.page#faq
Accessible Emergency Notifications

What To Know

**New technology**, listed in the DAFN preparedness updates below, can help overcome barriers for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs to access timely emergency alerts, and to alert authorities about emergencies, particularly for those who are Deaf or have hearing loss.

**Community outreach** is an important form of sharing emergency information with the public as there are people in New York City who do not use computers and/or phones. Community groups such as civic organizations or senior centers can be a great forum to reach people.

**The Peter Cardella Senior Center** in Ridgewood, Queens is one of the largest senior centers in New York City and services 30-50 clients who are Deaf or have hearing loss. This center, which received NYC Emergency Management's 2017 Senior Center of the Year Award, demonstrates how community connections can reach people who prefer not to use technology.

“We really do rely on the old-fashioned way of getting information out, keeping everyone connected in the community and also to make sure that their family supports, friends, neighbors, are all working together to keep a check on them and to make sure they have a good support system.” –Barbara Toscano, Executive Director

**DAFN Preparedness Updates**

**The Notify NYC App:** This year, Notify NYC officially launched a mobile app for iOS and Android phones. The location servicing feature enables individuals to receive emergency notifications based on your location within New York City. Sign up today at nyc.gov/notifynyc.

**Text-to-911 will be launching in 2018.** This system will allow the Deaf community, people with hearing loss, people with speech disabilities and crime victims to alert authorities about an emergency using text messages. Text-to-911 will be able to pinpoint a user’s location like a 911 call, and available in English and Spanish. The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities will have an advocate to help address issues with the new system as a component of the Accessible NYC Initiative (nyc.gov/accessiblenyc).
The Accessible Communications Policy has been updated for use at the City’s evacuation centers, accessible shelters and service centers to properly accommodate the communication needs of people who are Blind, have low vision, Deaf, or have hearing loss.

The Advance Warning System (AWS), at advancewarningsystemnyc.org, which disseminates hazard and emergency information to agencies and organizations that serve people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, reaches over 7,900 subscribers representing over 1,900 separate organizations.

Take Action:

Follow NYC Emergency Management on the following platforms for emergency alerts and preparedness information:

- Facebook.com/nycemergencymanagement
- Instagram.com/nycoem
- Twitter.com/nycoem
- LinkedIn

Subscribe to the Community Preparedness Newsletter at nycem.samaritan.com/citizencorps

Sign up for Notify NYC, the City’s official source for emergency information, nyc.gov/notifynyc. Anyone can sign up to receive alerts by email, phone calls, text messages or social media for up to five zip codes. Messages are available in 12 languages in addition to English, and American Sign Language videos with subtitles and voiceover. The Notify NYC App is available for iOS and Android phones.

Register with your electricity service provider as a Life Sustaining Equipment Customer if you rely on electric-powered medical equipment at home (e.g., respirators, dialysis machines, apnea monitors), allowing the providers to contact you in the event of an outage. You can learn more about this program at the NYC Emergency Management Utility Disruption Page.8

Organizations should register here to receive alerts from the Advance Warning System (AWS), at advancewarningsystemnyc.org which disseminates emergency information to agencies and organizations that serve people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs about hazards in New York City.

8 http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/utility-disruptions.page
Healthcare Facility Emergency Planning

What To Know

The emergency planning efforts of healthcare facilities are of special interest to people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Healthcare facility planning efforts incorporate the following steps:

Assess: Healthcare facilities are required to identify hazards and vulnerabilities specific to their organization in case of emergencies.

Develop a Plan: Healthcare facilities are required to update their emergency plans annually. During emergencies, staff and patients may have to evacuate or shelter in place. Healthcare facilities often experience a surge in patients after an emergency. To successfully plan for these challenges, healthcare facilities must make plans that include:

- Communication is a crucial component of a successful plan, including backup methods of communicating, and direct connections to first responders and emergency managers.

- Healthcare data is a central consideration in healthcare security and emergency response. City, state, and federal governments share public health datasets, and healthcare facilities should securely exchange medical records during evacuations.

Training and Exercise: Healthcare facilities train their employees about emergency plans, and should conduct yearly exercises to practice them, including trainings on interacting with people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

DAFN Preparedness Updates

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has new requirements for healthcare facilities who receive Medicare and Medicaid funding. These rules require 17 facility types, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, primary care facilities and dialysis centers, to develop emergency plans and to practice them annually.

The Emergency Radio Communication Program (ERCP), established by NYC Emergency Management and NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, provides participating hospitals, nursing homes and adult care facilities with emergency radios to communicate when other forms of communication are not working. The program has 96% participation among nursing homes and adult care facilities in New York City.

Take Action:

Make a personal emergency plan using the My Emergency Plan, at nyc.gov/myemergencyplan, that includes information about prescriptions, doctors, and health insurance. Caregivers of people with disabilities or others with access and functional needs should be included in their emergency plans.

Get prescription preparedness tips⁠¹⁰ from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Accessible Disaster Volunteering

What To Know

Volunteer programs and community initiatives that prepare for and respond to emergencies should incorporate people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Volunteers with disabilities provide an important perspective, including insight about how to make preparedness and response efforts more accessible.

Take Action:

Apply for the NYC Community Emergency Response Team Program (CERT): CERTs are groups of dedicated volunteers who help to prepare their neighbors and communities for disasters. You can apply to volunteer with the NYC CERT program at nycem.samaritan.com/cert

Apply to Volunteer with American Red Cross in Greater New York (ARC GNY): ARC GNY works to make its volunteer programs accessible by matching interests and abilities to volunteer opportunities. During emergencies in New York City, trained Red Cross volunteers assist in various capacities. For more information, and to apply to be a Red Cross volunteer, visit its volunteer page.11

11 http://www.redcross.org/local/new-york/greater-new-york/volunteer#step1
Make a Community Emergency Plan: The Community Emergency Planning toolkit is a step-by-step guide for communities to map their community and create a plan. It is crucial to include people with disabilities on planning teams to assure that plans are inclusive. Learn more about the NYC Community Emergency Planning Toolkit here.12

Henry Sang, a CERT member from Staten Island who is Deaf, volunteers to help his community. He teaches New Yorkers who are Deaf about emergency preparedness, and provides feedback to NYC Emergency Management as a member of the Disability Community Advisory Panel.

12 http://on.nyc.gov/toolkit
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