



Exploring Climate Solutions Webinar Series

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Special series:

Equity and Environmental Justice in Climate Solutions



Addressing the Needs of Persons with Disabilities in Climate Planning

Marissa Rivera & Stephen Byers, Esq.

Disability Rights Connecticut

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Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Understand accessibility issues in public and private settings
- Be aware of Disability Civil Rights Laws
- Be aware of current issue areas impacting people with Disabilities

Civil Rights

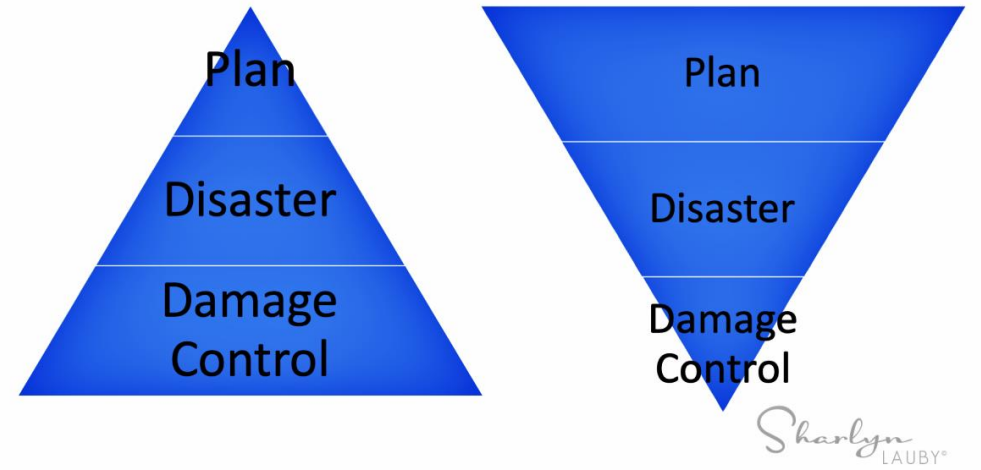
The regulations outlined in law for accessibility requirements are the Civil Rights that people with disabilities are entitled to.

When these regulations are not followed and inaccessibility occurs, that's equitable to denying a person's civil right to have full physical access to enjoy society.

Right now many violations for accessibility still occur, therefore even after the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many people with disabilities don't feel like their civil rights are being respected and are continuing to fight even after 30 years.

Ounce of Prevention is a Pound of Cure

- In the disability world, accessibility starts at the planning stage.
- Once housing and other buildings are established, it's even harder to get appropriate accommodations.
- Be proactive, architects, city planners, contractors, need to be reminded of the civil rights for people with Disabilities, which includes accessibility.



ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)

Covers:

- Dwellings
- Routes
- Surfaces
- Ramps
- Stairs
- Windows
- Doors
- Bathrooms
- Alarms
- Toilet Rooms
- Etc.



About the U.S. Access Board

The Access Board is an independent federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities through leadership in accessible design and the development of accessibility guidelines and standards. Created in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the Board is now a leading source of information on accessible design. The Board develops and maintains design criteria for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, medical diagnostic equipment, and information technology. It also provides technical assistance and training on these requirements and on accessible design and continues to enforce accessibility standards that cover federally funded facilities.



“Metro to retrofit 7000-series Railcars to Prevent Visually Impaired Riders from Falling Between Them”



- After thoughts about accessibility measures can be deadly.
 - A blind man approached a new metro car and assumed the opening was an open door. Without the chains as a barrier, he fell through.
 - Luckily he was rescued.
- July 2016

2017 Hurricanes – FEMA Report

- No plans or specialized assistance to obtain “food, water, medicine, and oxygen”
- Inaccessible restrooms, having to “relieve themselves in common spaces of the shelter”
- Hospitals deciding who to provide care to, “leaving some individuals without treatment”
- Needed publically accessible charging stations “to power respirators or continuous positive airway pressure machines”
- No information accessible to the Deaf community
- Unavailable public transportation, therefore no access to medical care or food
- Emergency managers “were insensitive to their needs and disability-related accommodation requests”

Why is Electricity Essential for People with Disabilities?

- Breathing machines (respirators, ventilators).
- Power wheelchairs and scooters
- Ventilators
- Oxygen, suction or at home dialysis equipment
- Videophone calls for Deaf people (can't call for information)
- Keeping medicine refrigerated
- Electronic beds
- Audible devices

States like Texas and Florida have established voluntary registries for residents who may need specialized assistance in an emergency.

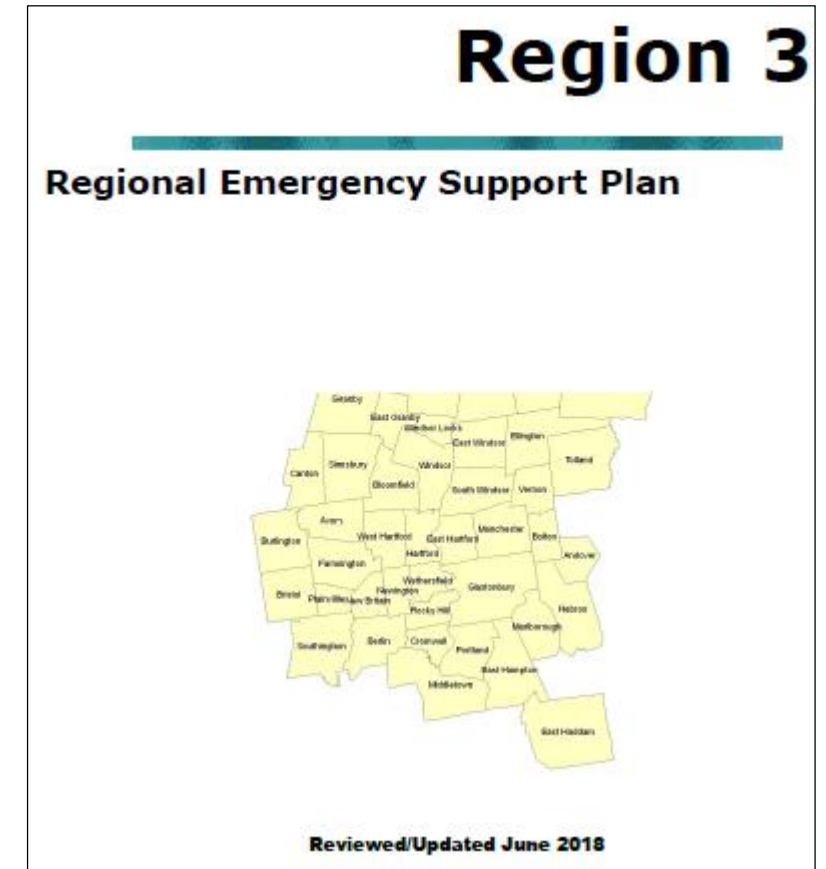
https://adata.org/sites/adata.org/files/files/Emergency%20Power%20Planning_final2018.pdf

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/699061.pdf>

Emergency Planning in Connecticut

- 5 Regions that cover the state of Connecticut and report to the State Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.
- Each region has a “Mass Care” coordinator, which is responsible for vulnerable populations.
- More input regarding people with disability’s needs into these meetings and support plans are needed for the state of Connecticut.

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEMHS/Emergency-Management/Resources-For-Officials/Regional-Offices>

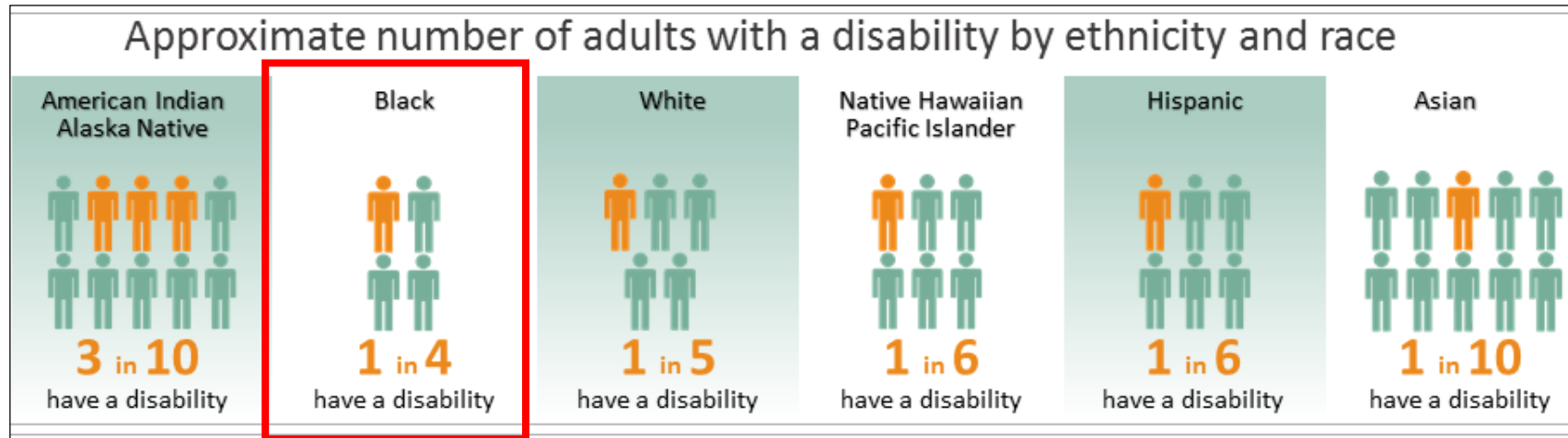


Accessibility

“When you erect buildings that are not accessible to the handicapped, you enforce segregation” -Judy Heumann



Adults with Disabilities: Ethnicity and Race



The Black population is identified with the highest rate of disability, at 25%.

Housing Accessibility

- Physical accessibility
- Less than 1% of housing is accessible for wheelchair users
- Accessible homes tend to be newer and also more expensive



<https://www.apartmentlist.com/research/how-accessible-is-the-housing-market>

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/accessibility-america-housingStock.pdf>

Housing Accessibility Requirements

- Accessible building entrance on an accessible route.
- Accessible common and public use areas.
- Usable doors (usable by a person in a wheelchair).
- Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit.
- Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls in accessible locations.
- Reinforced walls for grab bars.
- Usable kitchens and bathrooms.



Housing Accommodation/Modification Letter

Connecticut Fair Housing Center



- Fair Housing Act
- Free Disability Letter Accommodation Generator

Interactive Self-Help Guide for Requesting a Reasonable Accommodation or Reasonable Modification

Terms of Use

This web-site will help you create a letter asking your landlord to change a rule or policy or for permission to make changes to your apartment. [Click here for more information.](#)

To use this tool you must accept our terms of use. Click on the following items to read them:

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SUBMIT

When Disaster Strikes

- Most people with disabilities do not want to leave behind what accessibility they do have at home i.e. routes, devices, etc.
- “Previous studies have shown medically fragile individuals to be more likely to shelter in place and to be less prepared for disaster.”
- A disaster doesn’t have to be huge, but something as simple as a power disruptions can have a huge impact.

There must be overall effort in planning to create accessibility in public and private entities for effective evacuations.

What COVID-19 Showed Us

- There's not enough services to ensure people who are locked into their housing and can't get out because of health issues
 - i.e. food delivery service, general maintenance, healthcare at home, companionship, readily available medical devices in stores
- Medical testing sites and shelters need to be more accessible to people with disabilities.
- An outsized number of COVID-19 deaths occur in congregate settings, such as nursing facilities, other long-term care facilities, and correctional facilities, including detention centers.
- The voting system is still inaccessible to people with disabilities, i.e. paper absentee ballots for voters who are blind.



Services include:

- Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation Planning
- After Action Reports
- Capacity Building
- Community Engagement
- Consultation on accessible alerts, registries, evacuation, communication access, sheltering, health maintenance, personal assistance, medical care, assistive devices, temp. and permanent housing
- Focus groups
- Emergency Plan Review
- 24-Hour Disaster Hotline 800-626-4959 info@disasterstrategies.org
www.disasterstrategies.org

Disaster Planning

“You have to plan like no one is coming for you”

-Disability Planner

Suggested Action Steps in the Report

Implement an **Access and Functional Needs (AFN) coordinator** within the Connecticut State Department of Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management.

To support state and local emergency management needs, before, during, and after disasters. Understands state and Federal requirements around accessibility. Also trains and provides guidance to other emergency planners, managers, members of the disability community, and other service providers.

I.e. California, Colorado, and New Jersey.

Presenters



MARISSA RIVERA, ADVOCATE
860-297-4300 ext. 123
Marissa.Rivera@DisRightsCT.org



STEPHEN M. BYERS, ESQ., STAFF ATTORNEY
860-297-4300 ext. 130
Stephen.Byers@DisRightsCT.org

Stay Connected!

Disability Rights Connecticut

846 Wethersfield Ave.

Hartford, CT 06114

(800) 842-7303 (toll-free in CT)

(860) 297-4300 (voice)

(860) 509-4992 (videophone)

(860) 296-0055 (fax)

info@disrightsct.org

www.disrightsct.org



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