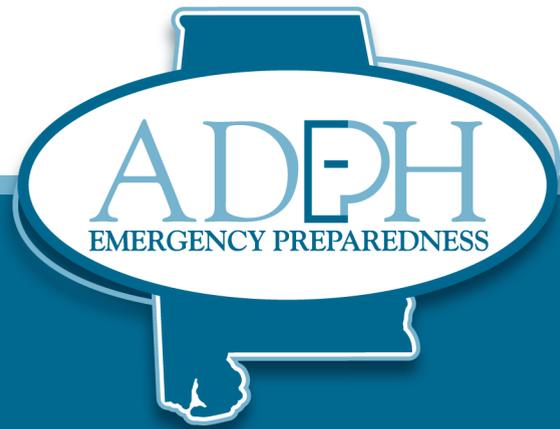


# Alabama Disability and Health Program

## Tips for Providing Services for Individuals Living with Functional and Access Needs

### References

Information for this brochure came from the Office of Disability Employment Policy; the Media Project, Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS; and the National Center for Access Unlimited, Chicago, IL.



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Emergencies can happen at any time. Whether they are man-made or natural, the best defense is to be prepared. Being prepared can help you prevent or reduce harm during an emergency. But preparing for an emergency can be a more difficult process if you have functional and access needs to address, or are caring for someone with functional and access needs. This brochure will offer valuable Tips for Providing Services for Individuals Living with Functional and Access Needs.

### Tips for Assisting People with Physical Impairments

- Always ask the person with the disability how you can best assist him or her. Do not assume you know how to assist. Improper assistance to their person or equipment could cause serious harm.
- Create barrier-free walkways throughout your facility for people using wheelchairs, walkers and canes to easily maneuver through - no back packs/purses hanging in walkway.
- Include people individuals with disabilities working in your business in the planning process for emergency evacuations. People with functional and access needs know best how they will be able to function in an emergency.
- Have extra canes and wheelchairs for people who might lose their equipment during an emergency.

### Tips for Assisting People who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- DEAF - A person with a hearing loss who, with or without amplification, cannot understand spoken language.
- HARD OF HEARING - A person with a hearing loss who, with or without amplification, can understand spoken language.

*It is important to remember that many people who are deaf or hard of hearing will not be noticed at first glance. Shelters and facilities assist people who are deaf and should make sure that there are visual messages and interpreter assistance available. The following are additional tips for people assisting people who are deaf/hard of hearing.*

- Writing may be an option. Despite popular belief, all people who are deaf cannot lip-read (speech read). Even those who can understand only gain about 5 percent of information through speech reading. Instead, use visual forms of communication such as "picture books" which would contain pictures of commonly requested items — food, water, medicine and restroom locations.
- Place posters and large signs containing pertinent information in picture form throughout the facility, with methods to update the information as it becomes available. Using dry erase boards may be helpful with this task.
- Interpreters must be certified. Agencies must provide qualified interpreters such as those who work with the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.

### Tips for Assisting People with Speech Impairments

- If you do not understand something the individual says, do not pretend that you do. Ask the individual to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back to the deaf person.
- Be patient. Take as much time as necessary.
- Ask questions which require only short answers or a nod of the head.
- Concentrate on what the individual is saying.
- Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish his or her sentences.
- If you are having difficulty understanding the individual, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the individual if this is acceptable.

## Tips for Assisting People with Blindness/Low Vision

- **BLIND:** People are considered blind if they have severe vision loss and see only darkness. People who are also considered blind include those whose vision consists of seeing only light perception, seeing light and shadow, or those who see movement or outlines of objects but cannot make out details. Offer to help complete forms.
- **LOW VISION:** Some people are considered “legally blind” because they can only see limited areas at a time, have patchy or no central vision, or are hypersensitive to glare. They may be able to do many tasks, but still have enough trouble with their vision that they are limited in other areas.
- Place large print and Braille signs for restrooms, exits and medical stations.
- Give plenty of verbal information about surroundings, safety precautions, and other pertinent information.
- When using guides, make sure to introduce guide and blind person. Best practice is to use the same guide throughout the event. If must “hand off,” then make sure to introduce new guide.
- Make surrounding areas unobtrusive by either closing all doors or leaving all doors open. Whatever the decision, make sure that it is consistent. Additionally, make sure all chairs and tables are located in areas out of the pathway for walking.

## Guide Dogs

Designate a location for guide dogs and their owners to ensure that those allergic to dogs are not disturbed.

Designate a relieving area for the dogs that is equipped with plastic bags and trash cans.

## Tips for Assisting People with Mental Illness

Create or adapt stress-relieving techniques that can be used for calming purposes in an emergency.

Organizations or facilities that may assist people during an emergency should partner with their local mental health authority for assistance, or mental health or crisis counseling training for their employees and volunteers.

## Tips for Assisting People with Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities

- Use a quiet or private location, if possible.
- Be prepared to repeat what you say orally or in writing.
- Offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions.
- Provide extra time for decision-making.
- Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not “over-assist” or be patronizing.
- Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.

## Tips for Assisting Non-English Speaking Persons

- Provide signage in as many languages as possible about important information in shelters and community centers.
- Picture boards of such things as food, water and restrooms that non-English speaking persons can point to help them with communication.
- Include non-English speaking representatives in emergency planning for your workplace, community organization or shelter.
- Make sure preparedness information is provided to non-English speaking outlets such as radio stations, churches and community centers/organizations.

## Additional Resources

- Spanish Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Hispanic) [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Alabama Department of Public Health’s Office of Minority Health [www.adph.org/minorityhealth](http://www.adph.org/minorityhealth)
- Boat People SOS, Inc. (Vietnamese) [www.bpsos.org](http://www.bpsos.org)
- March of Dimes [www.nacersano.org](http://www.nacersano.org)
- National Alliance for Hispanic Health (Hispanic) [www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org)
- Alabama Latinos (Hispanic) [www.alabamalantino.com](http://www.alabamalantino.com)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health [minorityhealth.hhs.gov](http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov)

## Remember

- Relax.
- Treat the individual with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Listen to the individual.
- Offer assistance, but do not insist or be offended if your offer is not accepted.

## Words

People first language empowers. When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put the person first. Group designations such as “the blind,” “the retarded” or “the disabled” are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality or dignity of people with disabilities. Further, words like “normal person” imply that the person with a disability isn’t normal, whereas “person without a disability” is descriptive but not negative. The accompanying chart shows examples of people first language.

<b>PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE</b>	<b>LANGUAGE TO AVOID</b>
person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	retarded; mentally defective
person who is blind, person who is visually impaired	the blind
person with a disability	the disabled; handicapped
person who is deaf	the deaf; deaf and dumb
person who is hard of hearing	hearing impaired, suffers a hearing loss
person who has multiple sclerosis	afflicted by MS
person with cerebral palsy	CP victim
person with a seizure disorder	epileptic
person who uses a wheelchair	confined or restricted to a wheelchair
person who has muscular dystrophy	stricken by MD
person with a physical disability, physically disabled	crippled; lame; deformed
person who used a devie to speak	dumb; mute
person with a mental health disability	crazy; nuts
person who is successful, productive	has overcome his/her disability; is courageous (when it implies the person has courage because of having a disability)