

Emergency Preparedness For

PEOPLE WHO HAVE COGNITIVE OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



COGNITIVE AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES . . .

Cognitive and intellectual disabilities impact an individual's ability to access, process or remember information. A person with a cognitive or intellectual disability may have difficulty processing emergency warnings and instructions. For many individuals, being involved in the development of a personal emergency plan, practicing it on a regular basis, and participating in emergency evacuation drills and exercises allow for the process to be learned in a variety of modes and can be extremely beneficial.

Practice what to do during and after different types of disasters that occur in your area. Practice communicating and evacuating from places where you spend time (work, home, school, volunteer assignment) until you feel comfortable and confident that those who are assisting you know what to do during and after an emergency.

If your family member lives in a group home or residential care facility, request the agency's Emergency and Evacuation Plans. Document the name of the staff person responsible for your family member, their contact telephone number and e-mail. Update the information every six months.

COMMUNICATION . . .

- **Talk with your employer/teacher** about the easiest way to notify you or your child of an emergency situation and which is the best ways to instruct you or your child.
- **Think about what a rescuer might need to know about you.** Be prepared to say it, pre-program your communication device with messages, or keep laminated emergency communication boards and/or communication cards with you. For example:
 - "I communicate using a communication board."
 - "You can find my emergency information in my (wallet/purse, backpack or emergency supply kit)."
 - "I may have difficulty understanding what you are telling me, please _____ to help me understand."
 - "I forget easily. Please write down information for me."
 - "I need specific help with (walking, eating, standing, dressing, and/or transferring)."

- "The best way to assist me with walking is to allow me to hang onto your arm for balance."
- **Include business cards** for personal care attendants (PCA), support service providers (SSP), sign language interpreters (SLI), other service agencies, and any other individuals or organizations that may be able to provide assistance to you.

CREATE A CARE-GIVING FILE . . .

- Keep an updated record of medications, including dosage, frequency, etc., in addition to any changes in health. Include the following:
 - Special dietary information
 - Instructions and routines that would be helpful to responders; and
 - Information of what may be helpful in deescalating behaviors.
- Also include the name of any Regional Center or other program that the individual receives services from, including but not limited to, names of Case Workers and their contact information.