

# Module 8 - Individuals with Disabilities or Access & Functional Needs

## Objectives

- Define groups that may require additional assistance
- Recognize ways to help individuals who need additional assistance affected by a public health event

## Planning for the Whole Community

FEMA's National Response Framework recognizes that preparedness is a shared responsibility, it calls for the involvement everyone—not just the government—in preparedness efforts. By working together, everyone can keep the nation safe from harm and resilient when struck by hazards, such as natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and pandemics.

Whole Community includes: individuals and families, including those with access and functional needs, individuals with a disability or an access and functional need, may need to take additional steps to prepare for emergencies.

Populations whose members may have additional needs before, during, and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to: maintaining independence, communication, transportation, supervision, and medical care. Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include those who have disabilities; who live in institutionalized settings; who are elderly; who are children; who are from diverse cultures; who have limited English proficiency or are non-English speaking; or who are transportation disadvantaged.

During an emergency, care may need to be modified for:

- The elderly
- Children
- People with physical and cognitive disabilities
- Non-English speakers
- Other individuals with additional needs



## Ways that Volunteers Can Help

MA Responds Volunteers can provide support to members who may need it by:

- Making certain that everyone is safe and assisting people who require help to move out of harm's way
- Sharing information in various ways including written, spoken and visual options
- Moving items, such as portable diagnostic equipment and beds, out of the way that could cause slips, falls or injuries
- Showing respect to each person and assisting them in a calm, patient and helpful manner

## Ways to Help the Elderly

Older adults, especially those over age 80, may tire more easily and need to rest. Some may become confused and need supervision to make sure they are safe.

Volunteers can:

- Ask if help is needed with walking, hearing, seeing or performing tasks
- Help find medications, glasses, hearing aids or walking aids, as needed
- Ask if information can be heard, especially in noisy situations
- Offer adequate seating options to help avoid lengthy standing times
- Allow extra time for responding to questions, moving from place to place and performing tasks
- Assist those with dementia and their families with registration in the [Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program](#)



## Ways to Help Children

Children's needs vary based on their age and development levels. Smaller children may be less aware of signs of injury or failing health and may be less able to seek help on their own; they also may need additional supervision to prevent injuries.

Volunteers should:

- Provide supervision, especially in busy areas or around potentially dangerous equipment
- Help small children with walking, feeding and other activities, as needed; provide comfort and support
- Encourage age-appropriate activities, such as playing with toys or coloring, to reduce stress and provide comfort
- Allow additional time for answering questions, moving from place to place and performing tasks
- Help children find parents and/or other designated caregivers, if possible
- Whenever possible, keep children and parents together



### **Ways to Help People with Physical Disabilities**

A disability is a limitation that affects a person's ability to perform a specific function. With the help of assistive devices, however, many people with disabilities can perform needed tasks.

Volunteers can:

- Ask if assistance is needed with walking, hearing, seeing or performing tasks
- Use of gestures and facial expressions to help communicate with hearing impaired patients or family members, as needed
- Offer emotional support to people separated from their assistive devices
- Provide American Sign Language interpreters, assistive listening devices and Braille and large print documents, if available
- Provide power backups and rechargers for equipment needed for medical disabilities, if available



### **Ways to Help People with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities**

Individuals with cognitive disabilities often cannot understand well what to do in an emergency and may not respond quickly. They are often disoriented and confused in crisis situations and may not know what to avoid and may not be able to perceive potential danger. Continuous supervision and communication modifications may be needed.

Volunteers can:

- Allow additional time for thinking and answering questions
- Offer assistance when forms need to be completed
- Give clear, simple and specific directions
- Provide help if patient is unable to make decisions about safety or seems to be confused



### **Ways to Help Non-English Speakers**

On-site translators and language line (phone) interpreters may or may not be available. English-speaking family members and some volunteers also may speak the needed language.

Volunteers can:

- Ask if information needs to be provided in a language other than English
- Give clear, simple and specific directions
- Use common English phrases and words that may be familiar
- Offer “point and say options” which include universally understandable images that can be used when answering questions
- Offer emotional support to those who have difficulties communicating because of limited English reading, writing and speaking skills
- Be sensitive to cultural differences



### **References and Resources**

<https://unmhealth.org/services/development-disabilities/programs/other-disability-resources/first-responder-tips.html>

University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability's Tips for First Responders

[People with Disabilities and Other Access and Functional Needs](#)

Ready.gov

<https://www.ready.gov/disability>

[Disaster Mitigation for Persons with Disabilities](#)

Center for an Accessible Society

## Summary

- During an emergency, care may need to be modified for:
  - The elderly
  - Children
  - People with physical and cognitive disabilities
  - Non-English speakers
  - Other individuals with additional needs

## Test Your Knowledge

8.1	<b>Check the statement that is TRUE about individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> 1. May request volunteers to provide additional assistance or attention before an emergency</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 2. May only be helped by <i>MA Responds</i> volunteers who have completed specialized training</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Must be provided with translators before implementing any emergency plan</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Include non-English speakers, people with physical and cognitive disabilities, children, and elderly</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Can only be moved by medical personnel to have completed required training courses</li></ul>
8.2	<b>Check the statement that describes how <i>MA Responds</i> volunteers can work with individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs:</b> <i>MA Responds</i> volunteers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> 1. must check with their supervisor to work with people who need assistance</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 2. can assist people with additional needs by showing respect and treating them in a calm helpful manner</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 3. must receive special training on ways to help each group needing assistance</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 4. can provide support to people with additional needs by making sure everyone is evacuated</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 5. can help people with additional needs by not giving bad news to keep people calm</li></ul>

## **Correct Answers**

8.1: 4

8.2: 2