

PERSONS WITH FUNCTIONAL NEEDS AND ACCESS LIMITATIONS (DISABILITIES)

In any emergency, it is critical that persons with Functional Needs and Access Limitations (disabilities) receive the assistance they may need to remain safe. Persons who may require additional assistance in an emergency include (but are not limited to) those who are:

- Injured or medically fragile
- Visually-Impaired
- Hearing-Impaired
- Non-Ambulatory
- Wheelchair User
- Oxygen Dependent
- Physically/Mobility Impaired
- Mentally Impaired
- Developmentally Disabled
- Senior Citizens
- Minors and children (those under the age of 18)
- Low Income
- Homeless or displaced
- Non-English Speaking

When Assisting Persons with Functional Needs:

- Remain calm.
- Regardless of the person's disability it is important to communicate directly with them.
- Inform the person of the nature of the emergency and ask him or her if you may provide them with any assistance. Ask how you may help *before* providing assistance.
- Ask the person if there are any items that must come with them (wheelchair or other assistive devices) and, if it is safe to do so, make appropriate arrangements to bring these along.

When Assisting Persons with Communications Limitations

- Begin by identifying basic communication methods (pay attention to pointing, gestures, nods, sounds, eye gaze and eye blinks)
- Take time to listen carefully.
- Give the person extra time to respond.
- Always repeat the person's actions and/or what they tell you to confirm that you have understood.
- Say, "Show me how you say YES."

- Say, "Show me how you say NO."
- Ask questions one at a time and ask questions that can easily be answered with a YES or NO response.
- Say, "Show me how you point to something or someone you want."
- After communication methods have been identified, ask a few basic questions:
 - "Is there someone here who can help me communicate with you?"
 - "Do you have a communication board, communication book, or a speech generating device?"
 - "Did you bring it with you?" If they indicate YES, ask them where it is and help them retrieve it. If they indicate NO, show them an emergency communication aid and ask them if they can communicate with it.
- Try using a communication aid. If someone is unable to point because of their disability, you can point to their communication aid for them (e.g., point to a picture, word, or letter on their board) and ask "Is this the picture (or word or letter) that you want?" Then wait for a YES or NO response. Always confirm your understanding of the choice made before continuing.

When Assisting Persons with Visual Impairments:

- Have the person take your elbow and escort him or her to safety. Advise the person of any upcoming obstacles (stairs, trip hazards, or overhanging objects).
- When you have reached a safe location, orient the person to the location and ask if they require any further assistance.

When Assisting Persons with Hearing Impairments:

- Look directly at the person when communicating.
- Speak slowly and clearly, as they may be able to read your lips.
- Communicate using simple hand gestures or by writing a note.
- Communicate using American Sign Language (see chart, page 184).

When Assisting Persons with Mobility Impairments:

- A person with mobility impairments may need minimal assistance so it is important to communicate directly with them.
- If a person has mobility-impairments and must be carried to safety, whenever possible, such movement should be conducted by those who have received proper training and are utilizing proper equipment. Evacuation chairs should be utilized whenever possible, as wheelchairs may not have been constructed for safe lifting. If the wheelchair must be left behind, leave it in a place where it will not obstruct others. When moving a power wheelchair, make sure the footrests are locked and the motor is off.
- Whenever possible, at least two persons should be utilized to transport

another.

- When carrying a person for a significant distance, a “relay team” arrangement may be helpful.

When Assisting Children or Minors:

- Make every effort to keep children together with others in their own class or age group.
- Do not leave a child except under the supervision of a responsible adult.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE ALPHABET AND NUMBERS

