Improving Disaster Planning and Response for Persons with Mobility Limitations – Nobody Left Behind

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Scoping the problem

According to Gallimore White, PhD, Director of the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas, "We are overwhelmed with the demands of Homeland Security. The media heightened our awareness of this problem from the reports of many individuals with disabilities who claimed that they were trapped in the World Trade Center Towers during the 9/11 disasters. While such acts of terrorism are rare, other catastrophic events, such as floods, hurricanes, and fires are more frequently experienced across this nation and can lead to tragic results. It was hard to use my electric wheelchair."

Nobody Left Behind

Focus Area 1: Need/Program, Policy, and Practice

Where do we think this will lead?

• The FEMA Emergency Planning and Special Needs Course (Focus Area 1: County Programs, Policy, and Practice) Improved Surveillance

The Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas, "A common theme emerging from 9/11 is there are virtually no empirical data on the safe and efficient evacuation of persons with disabilities. The media heightened our awareness of this problem from the reports of many individuals with disabilities who claimed that they were trapped in the World Trade Center Towers during the 9/11 disasters. While such acts of terrorism are rare, other catastrophic events, such as floods, hurricanes, and fires are more frequently experienced across this nation and can lead to tragic results. It was hard to use my electric wheelchair."

Focus Area 2: Assessment

The literature in this new and emerging area for people with disabilities has few experimental studies with methodological rigor. Where do we think this will lead?

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Methods:

Identify FEMA disaster declarations for the past five years and contact persons with disabilities who have mobility impairments exposed to disasters?

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Learned from 9/11

Disasters have high impact and wide consequences for people with disabilities. The 9/11 attacks created a new awareness of the need for disaster preparedness and emergency response in place for residents with mobility impairments. It was hard to use my electric wheelchair.

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