

Meeting Minutes #14 – Ohio The Health Collaborative Disaster Health Equity Task Force

Date: July 8, 2025

Time: 1:30 pm EST

Location: Zoom

Meeting Facilitators:

- Nicole Volpenhein
- Dee Grimm
- Allysa Rapadas
- Christina Alfaro

Executive Summary:

- The task force identified key challenges in emergency communication and accessibility for people with disabilities, including gaps in reaching individuals without smartphones, lack of disability cultural competency among service providers, and insufficient representation of people with disabilities in decision-making processes.
- Proposed solutions include improving emergency alert systems, developing cultural competency training for service providers, and building partnerships with disability-led organizations to ensure better representation and inclusivity.
- Nicole Volpenhein outlined next steps for the task force, including a final meeting on September 9th to break down high-impact ideas, determine specific action steps, and assign organizational ownership. After September, the health collaborative will lead facilitation and action items.

Meeting Notes:

Meeting Introduction and Recap

- Nicole Volpenhein welcomed everyone to the second-to-last meeting of the task force with Wid as facilitator.
- Potential funding for the fifth year may not go through, but support will continue regardless.
- After September, the health collaborative will lead facilitation and action items.
- Brief recap of May meeting:
 - Focused on community service provider competency when assisting people with disabilities.
 - Used "how might we" activity to generate solution ideas.

- High impact, high effort ideas included workshops, focus groups, and training development.
- Low effort, high impact ideas included creating resource lists and identifying community champions.

Communication and Accessibility Discussion

Identifying Communication Gaps

- Lack of understanding on whether current communications are accessible for people with disabilities.
- Uncertainty about how people with disabilities interact with different technologies.
- Concerns about emergency communications and weather alerts relying on technology and individual sign-ups.
- Dee Grimm highlighted the relevance of this discussion, mentioning recent flooding near Kerrville and inadequate communication to affected people.
- Nicole Volpenhein suggested learning from past experiences and events to identify communication gaps.
- Brandon proposed surveying the community to understand their communication preferences and needs.
- Chantel suggested reaching out to first responders and emergency management agencies to share lessons learned from specific incidents.

Improving Provider-Patient Interactions

- Identified a lack of disability etiquette when directly communicating with a person with a disability.
- Dee Grimm suggested focusing on educating first responders in disaster settings about disability cultural competency.
- Discussed the need to improve cultural competency for all types of service providers, not just medical professionals.
- Mentioned the importance of improving communication with homebound individuals, especially in the context of telehealth services.
- Chantel suggested organizing webinars for medical providers and nurses to learn about different cultures and issues that might cause distrust in the medical system.

Proposed Solutions for Communication Barriers

- Brandon suggested leveraging social media and various companies to spread information.
- Chantel highlighted the barrier of requiring account creation for emergency alert systems like Smart911.
- Proposed making account creation optional and allowing simpler sign-up methods like texting keywords.
- Brandon suggested using existing accounts (e.g., Google, Apple) for easier sign-up processes.

- Provided information on Smart911 and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) systems used by Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs).
- Discussed the need for alternative communication methods for those without smartphones or data plans, such as voice calls to landlines or TV alerts.
- Brandon proposed using radio and TV advertisements to inform people about available services and how to access more information.
- Nicole Volpenhein suggested using virtual meetings like Zoom to share knowledge and best practices, noting that Zoom also has a phone interface for those without computers.
- Brandon recommended creating a system to store recorded meetings or webinars for those who miss live sessions.

Systemic Bias and Organizational Improvement

Addressing Bias in Agencies and Organizations

- Nicole Volpenhein introduced the topic of embedding the needs of people with disabilities into organizational policies and priorities.
- Discussed the importance of identifying and preventing disability bias in agencies and organizations.
- Chantel suggested mandatory diversity trainings that include people with disabilities, especially those from intersectional backgrounds (e.g., disabilities and LGBTQ+ identities).
- Dee Grimm highlighted the importance of understanding intersectionality between people with disabilities and other marginalized populations.

Building Partnerships with Disability-Led Organizations

- Nicole Volpenhein proposed building partnerships with disability-led organizations to ensure disability representation in decision-making processes.
- Suggested identifying existing relationships with Disability-Led Organizations (DLOs) that partners might already have.
- Nicole Volpenhein mentioned WETA as a potential resource to identify disability-led organizations, both nationwide and local to the area.
- Discussed incorporating disability representation into existing monthly meetings and inviting people from the community or DLOs to join future discussions.

Developing Organizational Trainings

- Nicole Volpenhein mentioned the need for educating the community on available options for receiving alerts.
- Suggested creating resources that explain different ways individuals can receive notifications, especially for those without smartphones.
- Dee Grimm emphasized the importance of developing organizational training to improve awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.
- Discussed the possibility of peer-led trainings, which could be virtual, in-person, or hybrid.

Action Planning and Next Steps

- The group focused on three main areas for future action:
 - How to identify gaps in communication for disaster and emergency events to ensure timely communication.
 - How to educate on disability cultural competency for service providers to improve interactions.
 - How to build partnerships with disability-led organizations and ensure disability representation in decision-making processes.
- Nicole Volpenhein suggested leveraging the tri-state disaster preparedness coalition to engage disability organizations in disaster preparedness efforts.
- The next meeting is scheduled for September 9th, which will be the last special meeting with Wid.
- In the September meeting, the group will:
 - Break down high-impact ideas
 - Determine specific action steps
 - Assign organizational ownership for these actions
 - Discuss what can be accomplished in the near future
- Nicole Volpenhein mentioned that they will work on how to share the information gathered in this meeting with all participants, possibly using a whiteboard format.

[End of Meeting Minutes]