



Disability Equity During Disasters

*A Toolkit for Passing the **Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act** and the **Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA)***

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Introduction

All too often, the disaster-related needs of disabled people are overlooked or ignored. Disabled people face often insurmountable barriers during and after disasters, resulting in disabled people and older adults being two to four times more likely to die or be seriously injured during a disaster. This is the direct result of the discrimination and exclusion we face in disaster planning and preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts.

We know all too well the many stories of preventable harm to our community: inaccessible communications systems that leave people without access to information about escalating conditions or evacuation plans; barriers to safe evacuations that leave people stuck in disaster zones; failure to plan for emergency electricity needs; inaccessible shelters and disaster recovery centers; inaccessible registration processes for aid, housing, and other critical services; loss of healthcare and long term services and supports; involuntary institutionalizations; and the many other barriers and violations of our rights that result in tragedy.

The egregious failures to meet our needs before, during, and after disasters are a violation of our civil rights. Changing this is a matter of survival.

Congress has reintroduced two important bills: the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act (S. 2658 / H.R. 4938) and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) (S. 2646 / H.R. 4937). These bills will help address and dismantle the barriers disabled people face before, during, and after disasters. They will help ensure the diverse voices of disabled people and older adults are included in disaster preparation and help remedy many of the barriers disabled people across the country face. As disasters continue to increase in frequency and severity, and as we continue to deal with disasters on top of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to pass these bills has never been greater.

This toolkit is designed to help you understand the barriers disaster-impacted disabled people and older adults face, explain how the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA would help address them, and provide tools to help you with your advocacy efforts. Together, we can get the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA passed into law!

Disability & Disasters Talking Points

- ✓ People with disabilities are **2 to 4 times more likely to die** or sustain a critical injury during a disaster than people without disabilities
- ✓ The disproportionate death and injury rates are not inevitable. They are the direct result of the discrimination and exclusion we face in disaster and emergency planning systems and processes.
- ✓ Disabled people are often abandoned during evacuations and turned away when seeking assistance due to discrimination and inaccessibility of services and facilities.
- ✓ Disasters that impact the disability community are not just “acts of God.” Failures in basic services such as safe water supplies and electricity unfairly and disproportionately affect disabled people.
- ✓ Gaps in existing basic services such as accessible transportation systems, housing, and health care options make it even harder for disabled people to get to safety.
- ✓ Restrictions in service systems, including asset limits in public programs and caps on prescription drugs, mean disabled people are prevented from adequately preparing in advance of disasters.
- ✓ Communities where disabled, lower income, and racially marginalized people live are particularly vulnerable to all kinds of disasters because we live in places where disasters are more likely to strike and the things that keep people safe are less reliable and well-maintained in the places where we live.
- ✓ Inequalities in communities where people must evacuate to escape disasters often leave disabled, lower income, and racially marginalized people behind.

Disabled people’s rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Civil Rights Act, the Fair Housing Act (FHA), and other laws and policies are not waived during disasters!

The READI for Disasters Act

Senate Bill: [S. 2658](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2658), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2658>

House Bill: [H.R. 4938](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4938), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4938>

Introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI). [Read the READI for Disasters Act One-Pager and Section-By-Section from the Senate Special Committee on Aging \(PDF\)](#).

Committees:

- House Education and Labor Committee
- House Energy and Commerce Committee
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

Emergency planning systems do not always include disabled people. They do not always anticipate our needs or accommodations. When emergencies happen, disaster response systems are often not prepared to help us. When these systems fail, disabled people can be trapped in our homes. We can be sent into institutions. We can be stranded without enough food, water, or medications. We can be left to die.

People with disabilities must be included in planning how communities will respond to disasters and emergencies. Congress has introduced a bill to make sure disabled people are included in emergency planning. It is called the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (READI) for Disasters Act.

The READI for Disasters Act will change an existing group, the National Advisory Committee on Individuals with Disabilities and Disasters (NACIDD). This group addresses the disaster-related needs of people with disabilities. They will have to include more disabled people from diverse backgrounds.

The READI for Disasters Act will create centers to do training, technical assistance, and research. These centers will help state and local governments and others better involve people with disabilities in their local emergency planning and better meet the needs of aging and disabled members of their communities when disaster strikes.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 gave disabled people the right to services in their community. This includes the right to use emergency services. The READI for Disasters Act makes sure local groups understand their requirements and how to ensure disabled people are prepared and remain safe during and after disasters.

The Department of Justice is a federal agency that enforces the civil rights of disabled people under the ADA. The READI for Disasters Act would have the Department of Justice look at whether disabled people are getting the services they need in times of disaster. The READI for Disasters Act would also require a study to see if the way money has been spent on disasters is in compliances with disability laws.

DRMA

Senate Bill: [S. 2646](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2646), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2646>

House Bill: [H.R. 4937](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4937), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4937>

Introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Congressman Jimmy Panetta (D-CA). [Read the DRMA One-Pager and Section-By-Section from the Senate Special Committee on Aging \(PDF\)](#).

Committees:

- House Energy and Commerce Committee
- House Ways and Means Committee
- Senate Finance Committee

People are often forced to leave their homes during disasters. Sometimes people need to leave their state. If a person receives healthcare or home and community based services (HCBS) through Medicaid, moving to another state often means losing those. Programs do not pay the workers who help us in our homes if we have to leave our home state to be safe from a disaster.

Congress has introduced another bill to address the needs of people with disabilities who are affected by disasters and need to relocate to another state. This bill is called the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA).

The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) would:

- Establish a new category for Medicaid-eligible people from disaster areas; they will be known as Relief-Eligible Survivors
- Help Relief-Eligible Survivors keep their Medicaid services if they need to move out-of-state
- Create a simpler process for Relief-Eligible Survivors to apply and be approved for Medicaid services
- Provide assistance and funding to states to support the needs of Relief-Eligible Survivor
- Implement a grant to help states create an “emergency response corps” to provide HCBS to Relief-Eligible Survivors

The REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA Advocacy Tools

Sample READI for Disasters Act Letter of Support

Dear [Senator / Congressman or Committee / Subcommittee members],

On behalf of our organization, [Organization name], and the people we serve, we write to you today to ask your support for S. 2658 / H.R. 4938, the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (READI) for Disasters Act. [insert description of the agency and the work it does related to disability disaster preparedness and response]

As the nation moves toward the annual observance of Emergency Preparedness Month in September, it is a good time to reflect on how people with disabilities have been left behind as communities have prepared for and responded to disasters of all types. The lack of inclusion of people with disabilities has meant we have faced evacuation challenges, inaccessible shelters, forced institutionalization and inability to return to our communities because of barriers to affordable, accessible housing when disaster has struck.

The READI for Disasters Act will address these barriers.

The READI for Disasters Act will ensure that older adults and people with disabilities are considered in preparation for, response to, recovery from and mitigation of disasters. The bill expands the National Advisory Committee on Individuals with Disabilities and Disasters to focus on accessible communications, transportation, evacuation, sheltering and health care issues during major emergencies. The legislation also calls for creation of a network of training and technical assistance centers to help states and localities better prepare themselves to include older adults and those with access and functional needs in their planning, preparation, response and recovery systems. The bill calls for a review of federal spending in past disasters to determine if those monies were spent in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and requires the Department of Justice to examine the performance of states and communities in protecting the civil rights of people with disabilities and older adults during and following disasters. Finally, it recognizes the vital role played by Centers for Independent Living in local response to disasters.

As a matter of life and death for aging and disabled people, we ask your support of the READI for Disasters Act, S. 2658 / H.R. 4938.

Thank you.

[Your name and / or organization name]

Sample DRMA Letter of Support

Dear [Senator / Congressman or Committee / Subcommittee members],

On behalf of our organization, [Organization name], and the people we serve, we write to you today to ask your support for S. 2646 / H.R. 4937, the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA). [insert description of the agency and the work it does related to disability disaster preparedness and response]

As our country has dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, the disability community has borne a disproportionate burden of the infections and deaths, with people in institutional settings accounting for a significant portion of the lives we've lost. This pandemic has only solidified what we've always known about institutions. Yet during disasters, disabled people are frequently institutionalized, and often becomes even more true when disabled people and older adults must evacuate across state lines.

The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) has recently been reintroduced to address this issue. DRMA would provide time-limited access to Medicaid services in the community to Relief-Eligible Survivors – eligible Medicaid beneficiaries residing in covered areas – ensuring continued access to critical Medicaid community based long term services and supports for people who need to relocate due to a disaster. DRMA would also provide technical assistance and support to states to develop strategies for supporting evacuating individuals in need of Medicaid services.

As a matter of life and death for aging and disabled people, we ask your support of DRMA, S. 2646/ H.R. 4937.

Thank you.

[Your name and / or organization name]

Sample Action Alert

Ask Congress to Support the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA

[Your organization name] is excited by the recent reintroduction of two important bills that will help address the barriers disabled people face before, during, and after disasters: The Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act (S. 2658 / H.R. 4938) and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) (S. 2646 / H.R. 4937).

The REAADI for Disasters Act will help ensure the diverse voices of disabled people and older adults are included in disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation. It will ensure states and localities better include and support disabled residents through the creation of a national network of training and technical assistance centers. It will require a review of spending to ensure compliance with the *American with Disabilities Act* and a review of the extent to which disabled people's civil rights are upheld during and after disasters. It will also recognize and strengthen the role Centers for Independent Living (CILs) play in local disaster response. DRMA will help ensure disabled people who are forced to move out of state because of disasters are able to keep their Medicaid services. DRMA would provide states with resources and supports to enable this change, including a time-limited increased FMAP.

- [Read more about the REAADI for Disasters Act](#) (PDF)
- [Read more about DRMA](#) (PDF)

Ask your Senators and Representative to support these bills!

Take Action:

- Call your Members of Congress. Call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 (voice) or (202) 224-3091 (TTY). Ask to be connected to your Senators or Representative.
- You can find your Senators' contact forms at [senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and your Representative's contact form at [house.gov/representatives](https://www.house.gov/representatives).
- You can find your Members' phone numbers, Twitter handles, Facebook pages, and other contact information on [Contacting Congress](#).
- You can use [Resistbot](#) to turn texts into faxes, mail, or hand-delivered letters by texting "RESIST" to 50409.

Sample Scripts

Sample Email / Phone Script to Members of Congress

Hi, my name is [NAME], and I'm from [CITY, STATE].

I am [calling / writing] to urge you to sponsor the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disabilities Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA). These are two critical bills that will help disaster-impacted disabled people and older adults.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, disabled people were two to four times more likely to be injured or die in a disaster. As you likely know, those rates skyrocketed during this pandemic, with disabled people and older adults getting infected and dying at staggering rates. These disproportionate rates are not a byproduct of our disabilities; they are the direct result of the discrimination, inaccessibility, and exclusion we face.

The REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA aim to change this. The REAADI for Disasters Act would make sure disabled people of all backgrounds are involved in emergency planning and through all stages of disaster response. It would help to ensure our rights are enforced and support federal agencies and states in these efforts. DRMA would ensure people who must relocate across state lines can maintain access to needed Medicaid supports and services, and it would support states in responding to increased disaster-related needs.

Disabled people across the country are dying unnecessary deaths. The REAADI for Disasters Act (S. 2658 / H.R. 4938) and DRMA (S. 2646 / H.R. 4937) will change that. As your constituent, I urge you to support these life-saving bills.

Thank you for your time.

[YOUR NAME]

**If leaving a voicemail or emailing, please leave your full street address and zip code. This will ensure your call or email is tallied.*

Sample Facebook Post

@[Your Senator or Representative]: When disaster strikes, your disabled constituents face overwhelming barriers and disproportionate rates of death and serious injury. These are often the direct result of discrimination and exclusion from disaster planning, response, and recovery efforts. The Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (#REAADI) for Disasters Act (S. 2658 / H.R. 4938) and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (#DRMA) (S. 2646 / H.R. 4937) are two critical bills that will help address the disaster-related barriers disabled people face. As your constituent, I urge you to support these important bills!

Sample Tweets

.@[Your Senator or Representative]: Effective emergency preparedness and disaster response are a matter of life and death for disabled people. Please support your disabled constituents by supporting the #REAAADI for Disasters Act!

2-4 times as many disabled people and older adults die or are seriously injured in disasters. The #REAAADI for Disasters Act and #DRMA will save lives - @[Your Senator or Representative], please support these important bills!

Including disabled people in emergency preparedness and disaster response is a matter of survival. The #REAAADI for Disasters Act will save lives. @[Your Senator or Representative], please support this bill!

The #REAAADI for Disasters Act and #DRMA will address and dismantle the barriers disabled people face before, during, and after disasters. @[Your Senator or Representative], please support these critical bills!

Institutionalizations increase during disasters because disabled people lose services & supports. This is especially true if forced to move across state lines. @[Your Senator or Representative], please support the #REAAADI for Disasters Act and #DRMA to keep people safe at home!

READI for Disasters Act and DRMA One-Pager

People with disabilities and older adults are 2 to 4 times more likely to die or be seriously injured during a disaster than nondisabled people. This is largely because all too often, the disaster-related needs of disabled people and older adults are overlooked or ignored.

Congress has just reintroduced two important bills: **the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (READI) for Disasters Act (S. 2658/ H.R. 4938)** and **the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) (S. 2646 / H.R. 4937)**. These bills will help address and dismantle the barriers disabled people face before, during, and after disasters. They will help ensure the diverse voices of disabled people and older adults are included in disaster preparation and help remedy many of the barriers that disabled people across the country face.

The READI for Disasters Act will:

- Ensure the diverse disabled voices of disabled people and older adults are included in disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation by expanding the National Advisory Committee on Individuals with Disabilities and Disasters
- Ensure states and localities can better include and support disabled residents through a national network of training and technical assistance centers
- Review disaster spending compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*
- Examine how states and communities uphold the civil rights of disabled people during and after disasters

DRMA will:

- Ensure disabled people and older adults forced to move out of state because of disasters are able to keep their critical Medicaid coverage and services
- Provide states with resources and supports to enable this change

As disasters continue to increase in frequency and severity, and as we continue to deal with disasters on top of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to pass these bills has never been greater.

Please support the READI for Disasters Act and DRMA!

Tips

Tips for hosting an online town hall

Town Hall events provide Members of Congress, staffers, and other policy makers with an opportunity to hear from disabled and aging people in their communities. People can share their experiences from past disasters and express concerns about future disasters. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many activities are being held remotely, but Town Halls can still be held successfully online. Here are some tips for hosting an online Town Hall:

- Set a date and time; the recommended length of an event is two (2) hours. Make sure to consider potential participant work schedules and other set events including religious holidays or observances.
- Identify format and facilitator / presenter(s).
- Organize accessibility accommodations: ASL interpreters, CART transcription services, audio descriptions, and plain language materials. Make sure the invitation includes accessibility information and there is contact information people can use for questions or to request additional accommodations.
- Develop invitation list. Invite Members of Congress and staffers, State Medicaid Directors, State and local emergency preparedness and response system administrators, FEMA Disability Integration Coordinators, local non-governmental response organizations (American Red Cross), consumers, advocacy organizations, and others.
- Send out invitations and publicize the event. Use community calendars, social media, and press releases to obtain earned media to promote the event.
- Consider whether you want to encourage attendees to submit questions ahead of time.
- Create an agenda and make it available to everyone; decide whether you want to send it out before the event.
- After the event, gather the input from participants and put them into a document as a “report out”. Send thank you communications to participants and include the “report out”.

Tips for Holding a Press Conference

Press conferences are events that can help you and your community or organization generate news, often about an event, cause, or project. Press conferences are a great opportunity to get your message out to a broad audience. Here are some tips for holding a press conference:

Before the event:

- Define the key message(s) you want to get out to the community.
- Select speakers who will be able to communicate those messages to the media. This can be members of your organization, other community members, people from partner organizations, politicians, or others.
- Select a moderator.
- Set a date and time.
 - Recognize that you may have to schedule a press conference on short notice if you're responding to breaking news, but a lot of the groundwork can be laid ahead of time.
 - When scheduling, make sure to consider speaker and potential participant work schedules and other set events, including religious holidays or observances and other major press events.
 - Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays tend to be good days for press conferences, as they are often slower news days.
 - Mid- to late-morning (10-11am) tends to be a good time to get maximum news coverage and increase your chances that your event/issue will be covered in the afternoon or evening news.
- Organize accessibility accommodations: ASL interpreters, CART transcription services, audio descriptions, plain language materials. Make sure the invitation includes accessibility information and that there is contact information people can use for questions or to request additional accommodations.
- Develop invitation list. Include assignment editors and reporters at television stations, news directors at radio stations, and editors and reporters at local and major newspapers. You may also want to contact reporters who have covered similar issues in the past.
- Send out invitations and publicize the event. Make sure to follow up after invitations are sent.

During the event:

- Have members of the press sign in, with their affiliation. If you are hosting a virtual event, many platforms allow you to keep track of who enters the virtual room.
- Make sure the event starts as close to on-time as possible.
- Have each speaker speak for about 3-5 minutes.
- The speakers' presentations should end after 30-45 minutes.
- After speakers are done, a moderator should allow time for the press to ask questions.

After the event:

- To the extent possible, personally thank the representatives from the press who attended the press conference.
- Keep track of your press contacts for future events!

Tips for Writing a Press Release

A press release (also known as a press statement or news / media release) is a way to make an announcement to media outlets and beyond. The goal of a press release is that the media outlets you notify will be interested and spread the word. Most press releases are short – one to two pages long – and provide media outlets with the information they need to write their own story if they choose to do so. Organizations use press releases to promote events, cover newsworthy occasions, or make significant announcements. Typically, you will send a press release along with an email pitching your “story” or summarizing the information in the release.

Sample Press Release Template:

PRESS RELEASE

For more information:

(Name: phone)

(Name: phone)

[Date]- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

If it is an event:

WHO: [Organization]

WHAT: [Event name or description]

WHERE: [Event location]

WHEN: [Date and time]

ATTENTION-GRABBING HEADLINE (the most important part!)

Optional Sub-headline

(City, State) – Introduction- this should cover all of the basic information (who, what, why, where, when, how, etc.). It should be a straight-forward summary.

Second paragraph- a bit more detail, why this matters to you/the outlet’s audience.

Quote from someone involved- press releases should include one or two quotes from key stakeholders. These may be used if the media decides to cover your story.

Third paragraph- any remaining relevant information that hasn’t been covered.

Last paragraph – boilerplate language / background information about the subject / your organization.

###

Tips for Writing an Op-Ed

Getting an op-ed in a newspaper is an opportunity to share your opinion with a wide audience. An op-ed is not a news story or a presentation of facts; it is your opinion about an issue, and it is an opportunity to convince people about something.

Writing your op-ed:

- General tips:
 - Try to keep your piece between 600 and 800 words.
 - Make sure your main message is clear. State your main argument early and back it up throughout your op-ed.
 - Use simple language and short sentences. Be clear and to the point.
- Format:
 - First paragraph: state your opinion / argument. Try to use an attention-grabbing first sentence to make your reader want to know more. This is often referred to as a “hook.”
 - Middle paragraphs (2-6 paragraphs): support your opinion / argument. These are meant to convince readers of your opinion / argument. Each paragraph should make its own point in support of your larger argument. You can include personal stories, examples, or statistics; if you include facts or statistics, make sure to cite them.
 - Last paragraph: summarize your opinion / argument and remind your readers why this issue should matter to them. You can provide a recommendation or a solution, or you can summarize your points.

Pitching your op-ed:

- Pitches are often – not always – done by email. An effective pitch will include:
 - A summary of your idea in a few lines, including information about why people should care about this issue and / or why this topic is relevant now
 - Your relevant credentials (why are you the best person to write this?)
 - Your contact information
 - Your finished piece below your pitch (not as an attachment)
- Make sure to follow submission guidelines. Different outlets have different guidelines, including word count limits or instructions for submitting pitches.

- If you do not hear back in a reasonable amount of time, follow up!

Resources:

- The Op-Ed Project: theopedproject.org
- The Learning Agency: How To Write an Op-Ed: A Step By Step Guide: the-learning-agency.com/insights/write-an-op-ed

Tips for Having a Virtual Hill Visit

Scheduling your visit:

Many Members of Congress will have meeting request forms on their websites, or they will offer a phone number and / or email address to contact for scheduling appointments. All requests, whether made by email or phone, should contain:

- Your name
- Your address (so they know you are a constituent)
- A very brief overview of the issue(s) you want to discuss
- The preferred way you would like to meet (phone, online, in-person; if in person, specify the office you want to meet at)
- The dates and times you would like to meet (include several options if possible)

Sample script:

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] and I live at [YOUR ADDRESS].

I would like to request a meeting with [SENATOR / REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] regarding two bills that are very important to me: the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act, and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA). These bills would help ensure disabled people's rights are protected during disasters, and in light of the COVID pandemic and the increasing disasters we are facing, this a very important to me as one of your disabled constituents.

I am hoping you are able to meet [provide them with some times or dates that you are hoping to meet. Make sure to give them several options.] Do you have any availability during that time?

Thank you,

[Your name]

Before your visit:

- Plan out your talking points, including your specific "ask(s)".
- Make sure to confirm your appointment one or two days before.

- If you are meeting over the phone or online, send the REAADI / DRMA one-pager ahead of time.

During your visit:

- Be sure to show up on time!
- Be prepared for a short visit. Often legislators and staffers will have less than 30 minutes, and they may have even less. The more concise you can be, the better.

Sample script and talking points:

“Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is [YOUR NAME], and I live in [CITY].

I’m here today to talk about two bills that are very important to me: the Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act, and the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (or DRMA).

These bills would help ensure disabled people’s rights are protected during disasters, and in light of the COVID pandemic and the increasing disasters we are facing, this a very important to me as one of your disabled constituents.

Talking Point 1

Example: Talk about why these bills are important to you. You can feel free to share a personal story or other examples.

Talking Point 2

Example: Provide them with some facts. Some of the information in the resources in this toolkit may be helpful, as may some of the recommendations from the GAO and NCD reports.

Talking Point 3

Example: Talk about how the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA would change things. *(Sample language: The REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA aim to change this. The REAADI for Disasters Act would make sure disabled people of all backgrounds are involved in emergency planning and through all stages of disaster response. It would help to ensure our rights are enforced and support federal agencies and states in these efforts. DRMA would ensure people who must relocate across state lines can maintain access to needed Medicaid supports and services, and it would support states in responding to increased disaster-related needs.)*

Disabled people across the country are dying unnecessary deaths. The REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA will change that for me and for your other disabled constituents. Do you have any questions, or is there any information I can provide you as you consider these issues?

[Allow time for questions]

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.

Tips:

- Recognize that you might be meeting with your legislator, or you might be meeting with your staff. This is still a great opportunity to talk with them about why the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA are important, as they will relay this information and may make recommendations to your legislator.
- While it is helpful to plan out your talking points ahead of time, it is fine to bring notes with you to your meeting!
- It is okay to say you don't know something! If they ask you a question and you don't have the answer, that gives you an opportunity to follow up with them with more information after the meeting. It is also much better to say you don't know than to provide inaccurate information.

After your visit:

Follow up with a thank you and any information you said you'd follow up with!

Sample script:

Dear [Senator / Representative Name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on [date]. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA and their importance to your disabled constituents.

You will recall that we touched on [list the key issues or summarize your talking points].

[If you said you would provide follow up information, include it here.]

I hope we can count on your support for these important bills. As we discussed during our meeting, both the REAADI for Disasters Act and DRMA are critical for your disabled constituents and for disabled people across the country.

I look forward to staying in touch about this issue, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

*If they committed to sponsoring the bill(s), make sure to thank them.

Resources

- [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\): Tips for Effectively Communicating with the Whole Community in Disasters](#)
- [NCIL Resolution: Inclusive Emergency Management](#) (September 2019)
- Government Accountability Office (GAO) report: [Disaster Assistance: FEMA Action Needed to Better Support Individuals Who Are Older or Have Disabilities](#) (May 2019)
- National Council on Disability (NCD) Report: [Preserving Our Freedom: Ending Institutionalization of People with Disabilities During and After Disasters](#) (May 2019)
- Disability Rights North Carolina: [The Storm after the Storm: Disaster, Displacement and Disability Following Hurricane Florence](#) (February 2019)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Recommendations for Emergency Managers for Improving the Delivery of Disaster Assistance to Disaster Survivors with Disabilities (April 2019):
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - These recommendations were made following listening sessions in a number of communities heavily impacted by natural disasters in 2017 and 2018. [Read more information about those listening sessions with disability stakeholders.](#)
- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP): [Left Adrift: A Snapshot of Texas Assisted Living Facility Care During Hurricane Harvey with Policy Recommendations](#) (August 2018)
- The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies: [Getting it Wrong: An Indictment with a Blueprint for Getting it Right](#) (May 2018)
- Department of Justice (DOJ): [ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments](#) (March, 2017)
 - See in particular: Chapter 3 plus addendum - *General Effective Communication Requirements Under Title II of the ADA*; Chapter 4 plus addendum - *9-1-1 and Emergency Communications Services*; Chapter 5 plus addendum - *Website Accessibility Under Title II of the ADA*; Chapter 7 plus addenda - *Emergency Management under Title II of the ADA*
- Government Accountability Office: [Federal Disaster Assistance: FEMA's Progress in Aiding Individuals with Disabilities Could Be Further Enhanced](#) (February 2017)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS): [Notice from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, FEMA Office of Equal Rights, and FEMA Office of Disability Integration & Coordination](#) (December 2016)
- [Guidance from Department of Justice \(DOJ\), Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\), Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\), Department of Health and Human](#)

[Services \(HHS\), and Department of Transportation \(DOT\) to State and Local Governments and Other Federally Assisted Recipients Engaged in Emergency Preparedness, Response, Mitigation, and Recovery Activities on Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) (August 2016)

- NCIL: [Building Relationships with Local Emergency Management](#) (November 2014)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): [Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs Support Services in General Population Shelters](#) (November 2010)
- National Council on Disability (NCD): [Effective Emergency Management: Making Improvements for Communities and People with Disabilities](#) (August 2009)
- DOJ: [An ADA Guide for Local Governments: Making Community Emergency Preparedness and Response Programs Accessible to People with Disabilities](#) (August 2006)
- National Council on Disability (NCD): [The Impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on People with Disabilities: A Look Back and Remaining Challenges](#) (August 2006)
- National Council on Disability (NCD): [The Needs of People with Disabilities with Psychiatric Disabilities During and After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Position Paper and Recommendations](#) (July 2006)