

### Easy Read Edition

## Crisis In Our Communities: Racial Disparities in Community Living

Part 1: Dealing with Emergencies

# Words to Know in Part 1



#### Community

A community is a group of people who have something in common. It is also the relationships these people have to each other.



#### Discrimination

Discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of who they are.



#### **Emergency**

An emergency is a big problem that needs to be fixed right away.



#### **Environmental Justice**

Environmental justice is a way of thinking about how racism and unfair policies make some communities have more environmental problems.



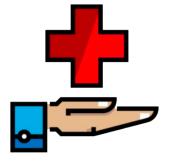
#### Environmental Justice Populations

Groups that have been hurt more by problems in the environment are called environmental justice populations. The government tries to do more to help environmental justice populations stay healthy and safe. It does this because it knows they are hurt more by environmental problems.



#### **Health inequity**

Health inequity is when some groups of people are less healthy than others because of unfair differences in where and how they live.



#### **Medicaid**

Medicaid is a program run by the government to help people pay for health care. It is meant to help people without much money and also people with disabilities. A lot of people with disabilities rely on Medicaid to pay for the services we need.



#### Policy

A policy is a rule that people or the government make about how they will do things.



#### **Racial Disparities**

Racial disparities are unfair differences between groups of people because of race. A lot of racial disparities are caused by policies. A lot of policies that cause racial disparities are done on purpose, because of racism.



#### Racism

Racism is when people are treated unfairly because of their race. Sometimes people can be racist, and treat people unfairly because of racism. Sometimes policies can be racist, if they treat people unfairly. Sometimes racist policies get made on purpose. This can be because the people making the policies are racist.



#### **Relief sites**

Relief sites are places where people can go during emergencies to stay safe. Sometimes we need relief sites during emergencies because it isn't safe to stay home. Sometimes relief sites will also give us things we need to stay safe, like water or blankets.



#### Utilities

Utilities are very important services that we pay to get. They are important for keeping us safe and healthy. Some examples of utilities are electricity and running water.



#### Zoning

Zoning is rules that the government makes that say what types of buildings a place can have.

#### 1. Dealing with Emergencies

#### What is an emergency?



An emergency is a big problem that needs to be fixed right away.



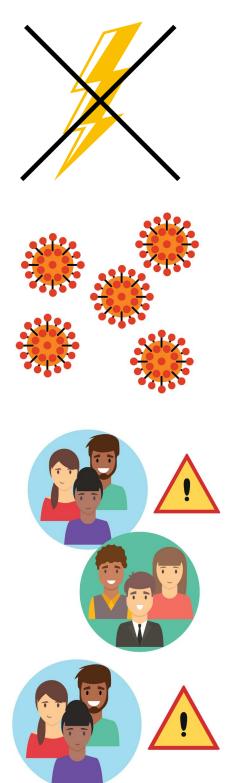
When we say "emergency" in this toolkit we are talking about things that affect a lot of people. Like:



• Floods.



• Hurricanes.



Big power outages.

• Times when diseases spread very fast (like COVID-19).

Emergencies affect different communities in different ways.

Often, emergencies happen just to certain communities.



Other communities might not be affected at all.



Often, emergencies are worse for some communities than others.



Communities where emergencies are worst often also have less money



People in these communities often have worse health.

Why does this happen?



Policies play a big role in deciding what our communities are like.



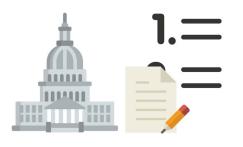
They are the main way we try to change things or keep them the same in our communities.



A policy is a rule that people or groups make about how they will do things.



A lot of policies are made by the government.



The government makes laws about what people can and can't do.



The government also gives some people money to do things it wants.



All of these rules are examples of policy.

Policies help decide what different places are like.



The government will sometimes make rules that say what types of buildings a place can have.





Zoning can decide that some types of buildings can only be built in some places.



It can decide that some types of buildings aren't allowed in some places.



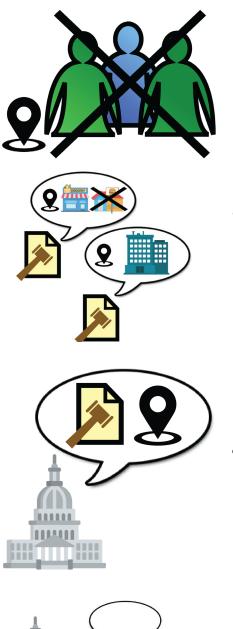
This policy is used in a lot of different ways:



It can be used to keep businesses that might hurt people away from where a lot of people live.



It can be used to keep away new buildings that will change the way a neighborhood already is.



Sometimes it is used to keep people out of some communities and in others.

Zoning policies are used in a lot of different ways.

How they are used depends on what the government wants to happen.



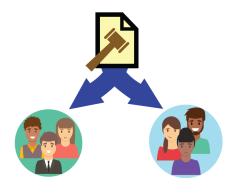
One way the government decides what it wants is by listening to what people ask for.



But sometimes it doesn't listen to everyone.



Sometimes it decides it wants to keep communities the same because some people ask.



People live in different communities because of policy decisions.



Policy decides how much money a community has.



Policy decides how healthy the environment in a community is.



Policy decides what housing is like in a community.



Policy decides who can live in a community.



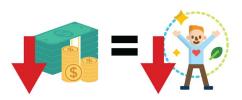
Many times policy makes people of color live in communities with less money.



They made people live in places that were less healthy for them.



More people with disabilities also live in these communities.



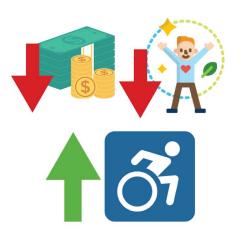
People without a lot of money are more likely to live in unhealthy environments.



People living in an unhealthy place are more likely to become disabled.



People who already have disabilities are also more likely to live in these communities.



This can be because not having a lot of money or living in an unhealthy place can make someone become disabled.



But it can also be because of policies that make people with disabilities live in some places and not others.



This means that disasters can have a worse impact on people with disabilities because of where they live.

Example:



Houston is a city in Texas.

Texas gets some types of emergencies more often because of where it is.



One type of emergency that happens a lot in Texas is a hurricane.



Hurricanes cause a lot of wind and rain.

This causes flooding.



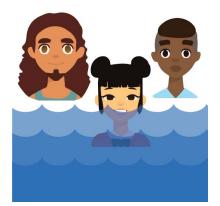
In 2017, a very bad hurricane happened called Hurricane Harvey.



A lot of places in Houston flooded because of Hurricane Harvey.



More people with disabilities lived in the places that flooded the worst.



People of color were also more likely to live in the places that flooded the worst.



People without much money were also more likely to live in the places that flooded the worst.



These were all the same places.



This was probably because many people with disabilities in Houston lived in public affordable housing.



Public affordable housing was mostly built in poor neighborhoods.



It was also mainly built in neighborhoods with more people of color.



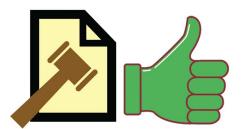
These communities had the worst flooding.



Policies put affordable public housing in these communities and not others.



Many times when affordable public housing is built it is built in communities like these.



Sometimes people who make these policies are trying to do it for good reasons.



Some people think this can help people where they already live.



But sometimes these policies are made for bad reasons.



Sometimes people in other communities don't want affordable public housing near them.



They don't want people without much money living near them.



They don't want people of color living near them.



They don't want people with disabilities living near them.



So instead people in those communities support policies that put public housing in other places.



They support policies that put public housing in communities that are poorer.



This means public housing gets put in more places that are less healthy.



When a policy builds affordable housing in places that are less healthy, it hurts people with disabilities.

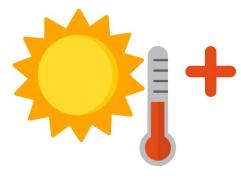
## Emergencies and the environment



A lot of emergencies are caused by problems in the environment.



Problems in the environment can be things like pollution in the air or water.



They can be changes that make places get dangerously hot in summer.



And they include changes that make places more likely to flood.



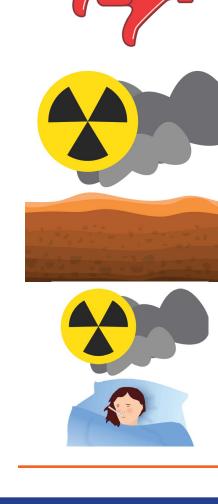
They can make people sicker because they live near these problems.

They can make people who are already sick sicker.

Sometimes if places have more than one problem, the problems can make each other worse.

For example, some places have pollution in the water or the soil.

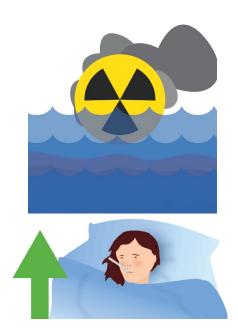
This pollution can make people sick.











If this place floods, the flood can spread that pollution around.

It can make more people sick.



Flooding can also cause mold.



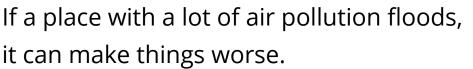
Mold can make it hard for people to breathe.



It can make things worse for people who already have breathing problems.



Pollution in the air can also make it hard for people to breathe.

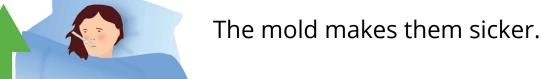


it can make things worse.

People were already sick.













Communities with environmental problems can have worse emergencies.



Just like emergencies, some communities have more problems in the environment than others.



The government knows that some communities have more problems in the environment than others.



Poorer communities and communities of color live near pollution more often.



These communities get sick from this pollution more often.



These communities have less money to fix health problems from pollution.



Sometimes, these communities have worse environmental problems because of racism.



**Racism** is when people or groups are treated unfairly because of their race.



Sometimes entire communities are treated unfairly because of racism.



**Environmental justice** means thinking about how things like racism make some communities have more environmental problems.



Racist policies let polluting businesses run near communities of color more often.



Communities without much money or communities of color were forced to live in places nobody else wanted.



Sometimes the only jobs that people of color or poor people were allowed to work at polluted a lot.



A lot of times people experience both of these things.



People without much money get hurt more by problems in the environment.



People of color get hurt more by problems in the environment.



People of color also often have less money.



A lot of people are in both groups.



People with disabilities are also more likely to be hurt by problems with the environment.



Some problems in the environment are more likely to make us sick.



Pollution can make people become disabled.



We are more likely to get sick from pollution.



We are less likely to have the money to

#### **Emergencies interrupt services**.



There are a lot of services we rely on in our communities.

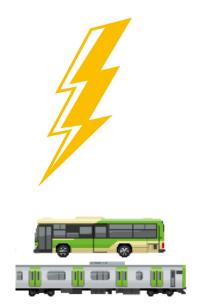


We need these services to live in the community and stay safe.

These can include:



• Running water.



• Electricity.

• Public Transportation like buses and trains.



 Medical response like ambulances and emergency rooms.



• Public walkways and roads to get around.



Services that we pay to get that are very important are called utilities.



Running water and electricity are types of utilities.



Emergencies interrupt these services.



We can lose electricity when there's bad weather.



If something bad happens to the water or our pipes, we can lose running water.



Or it might not be safe to use the water we do have.



A lot of emergencies can make it dangerous to use the roads.



When roads are too dangerous to use, we lose services that use the roads.



This can include public transportation and medical responses.



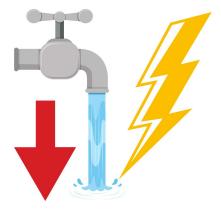
When a service is interrupted, it is hard to stay safe.



Losing access to these services can be dangerous.



It can even be life-threatening.



Some places already have trouble getting services.



Sometimes a community already doesn't have them.



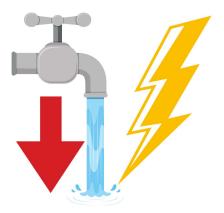
Sometimes they already weren't reliable before an emergency.



Less money is spent on services for poorer communities and communities of color.



This makes it harder to keep those services running.



There is less access to these services even before emergencies.



These communities are more likely to lose services during emergencies.



One example is losing electricity during blackouts.



Many emergencies can cause blackouts.

Some examples of emergencies that have caused blackouts are:



Hurricanes in places like Texas,
Florida, Louisiana, and Puerto Rico.



Ice storms like the one in Texas in 2021.



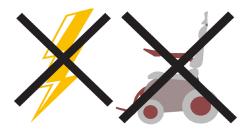
• Wildfires in places like California.



When we lose power, it can be very dangerous.



If we need electricity for medical devices, we can lose use of those devices



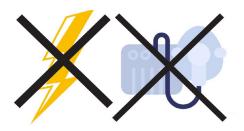
If we use electric devices to move or speak we lose that ability.



We can lose independence and access to our communities.



If we take medicine that needs to stay cold, losing electricity can ruin the medicine.



If we use electric devices to help us breathe or to give us medicine, we can get very sick or die.



In 2021, Texas had a very bad ice storm.



A lot of people in Texas lost electricity.



A lot of people died.



A lot of people who died couldn't stay healthy without electricity.



We still don't know exactly how many people died.



We didn't get good information on why people died during the ice storm.



We don't know how many died because they didn't have electricity.



But we can compare the Texas ice storm to years when there's no ice storm.



And we know that hundreds more people died during the ice storm emergency.



A similar thing happened in Puerto Rico in 2016.



In 2016, Puerto Rico had a very bad hurricane.



Puerto Rico's electricity system was very old and not in good condition.



A lot of people in Puerto Rico lost electricity when the hurricane happened.



A lot of people died.



Some people died during the hurricane.



But a lot more died later in the months after the hurricane.



For a very long time we were not told how many people died after the hurricane.



A lot of people died because they couldn't stay healthy after losing electricity



A lot of people had to leave their homes completely.



They had to find places that still had electricity to survive.



Losing services hurts poor communities worse.



It hurts communities of color worse.



This is because they do not have as much money.



It costs money to prepare for emergencies.



It can sometimes be very expensive.



People without much money cannot afford to prepare for emergencies.



It can be even more expensive for people with disabilities to prepare for emergencies.



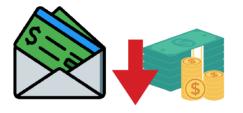
But it's harder for some people with disabilities to save money.



Some people with disabilities use SSI.



SSI is a payment that a lot of people with disabilities rely on.



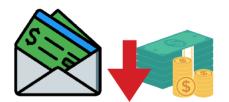
But in order to get SSI, you can't have very much money.



If people who get SSI earn too much money, they lose SSI.



They also lose SSI if they save too much money.



The amounts of money people are allowed to earn or save on SSI is very low.



It isn't enough to move to a new home during an emergency.



It isn't enough for people to prepare for emergencies.



Sometimes people with disabilities have other problems preparing for emergencies.

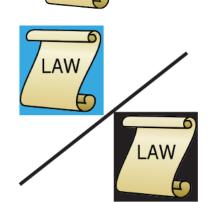


We can run out of medicine during emergencies.



It can be hard to get extra medicine before emergencies.

There are laws that allow pharmacists to give you extra medicine in an emergency.



LAW

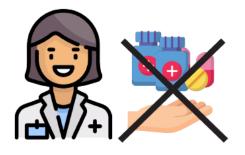
But every state's laws say different things.



It is hard to know what the law in your state is.



Sometimes even pharmacists don't know the law.



So they don't give extra medicine in emergencies.



Sometimes the extra medicine doesn't last as long as the emergency.



Sometimes the law says that some medicines can't be given out this way.



It can also be expensive to get extra medicine in an emergency.



Most state laws only say Medicaid has to pay for extra medicine in emergencies.



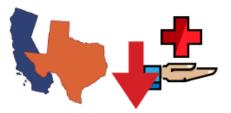
Medicaid is a type of health insurance run by the states.



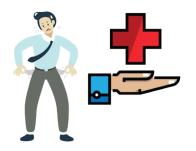
If you have different insurance, you might not be able to get extra medicine.



Medicaid is not available to everyone.



Some states limit Medicaid.



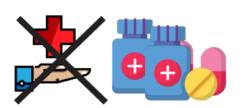
In these states only people with the least amount of money get Medicaid.



A lot of people who need help paying for medicine can't get it.



In these states many people withdisabilities do not get Medicaid.



This means a lot of people who need extra medicine for emergencies do not have Medicaid.



So, they might not be able to get extra medicine.



Many people of color with disabilities do not have Medicaid or other insurance.



Many people with disabilities cannot afford to get extra medicine for emergencies.

## People with disabilities get put in institutions because of emergencies



Institutions are places where a lot of people with disabilities live.



People living in institutions did not decide to live there.



They usually can't leave when they want to.



They usually can't control where they go and who they see.

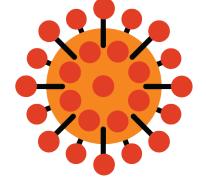
Institutions are dangerous.



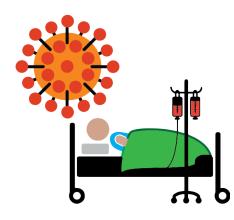


During emergencies, institutions are even more dangerous.

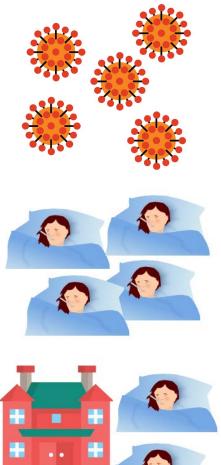
For example:



COVID-19 is a bad disease.



It spreads through the air and makes a lot of people very sick.



In 2020 a lot of COVID-19 was spreading.

It spread from person to person.



It was especially dangerous to people living in institutions.



People living in institutions live very close together.



People living in institutions can't control how many people are around them.



People could not leave the institutions to be safer.



A lot of people in institutions got sick and died from COVID-19.



People have the right to live in our communities.



When we are put in institutions, we lose our communities.



We can lose contact with friends and family.



If we are working, we can lose our jobs.



If we are in school, we can lose our place in school.



Once we are put in institutions it can be hard to get out.



It can be hard to go back to our communities.



But during emergencies, a lot of us get put in institutions against our will. This can happen because:



Services we rely on get interrupted.



Emergency relief sites don't give us the accommodations we need.



Emergency services don't speak to us in ways we can understand.



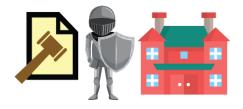
Emergency services don't give us the tools to tell them what we need.



Many people who are put in institutions during emergencies were in their own homes before.



Many people did not want or need institutions but are put in them anyway.



Policies need to protect us from being put into institutions during emergencies.

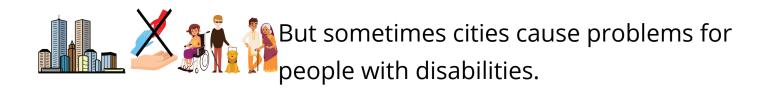
## Accessibility of Emergency Responses



Cities need to help people during emergencies.



They need to keep people safe.





Sometimes, help makes things worse.

For example:



Snow removal is important.





Snow and ice can be dangerous.



Snow and ice can make roads inaccessible.



During snow emergencies, cities clear roads.



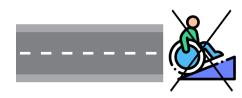
When cities clear roads they push snow into sidewalks.



They push snow into crosswalks.



They push snow into curb cuts.



Then, the sidewalks are not accessible.



Some cities clear snow in some communities before others.



They clear snow in communities where more white people live first.



Later, they clear snow in communities of color.



That means people of color with disabilities are stuck in their homes longer than white people with disabilities.



That's not fair.



Snow removal policies are important.



But cities need to be careful.



Snow removal policies can make our communities less accessible.



They can make our communities less equal.



It is important for snow response policies to think about people with disabilities.



Unequal access can also cause problems in emergencies.



Emergency information is not always given in ways we can understand.



This makes it harder to know what to do.



For example, some people who are Deaf or have trouble hearing need to get news in American Sign Language.



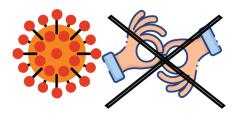
If information about emergencies isn't given in American Sign Language, some of us won't understand it.



We might not know what to do.



This happened for some people during the COVID-19 emergency.



The Federal government was not giving updates in American Sign Language.



Some people didn't know what they needed to do to stay safe.

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They had to sue the government to get information they could understand.

It can also be a problem when emergency responders are not trusted.



Sometimes emergency responders can be seen as a threat.



During hurricanes in Florida and Texas, a lot of people had to leave.

It wasn't safe to stay.





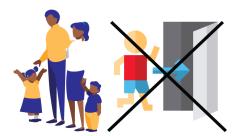
They needed to go somewhere else.



The government set up places called **relief sites** to help people who had to leave.



Relief sites were safe places.



Many families with immigrant family members did not want to leave.



They were worried that their family members would be arrested and taken away.



The governments of Florida and Texas did not explain that these families would be safe.



And people did not trust these governments.



The governments had hurt their families before.



So these families tried not to leave.

They didn't use relief sites.



This meant these families were in more danger from the hurricanes.



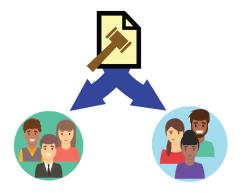
It is even dangerous if people with disabilities think it is unsafe to get help.



We are more likely to get hurt or sick or be put in institutions if we cannot use emergency services.

## What can we do?

## Improving the places where disabled communities and communities of color live.



A lot of differences in the places people live are caused by policies.



Sometimes those policies have been harmful.



Sometimes those policies have caused differences on purpose.





Sometimes the reason for those policies was racism.



To address these differences we need to address how policies cause them.



We need to make sure everyone can live in the community.



We need to make sure everyone can live where they want.



This means people should not be discriminated against when looking for homes.



It also means that communities that have been hurt in the past should get more help today.



It means making sure these communities get treated fairly today



And getting treated fairly means spending more money to fix the ways they were hurt.



Spending money fairly is also important for emergencies.



When emergencies harm poor communities, they don't get as much money to recover.



When emergencies harm communities of color, they don't get as much money to recover.



People living in these communities are left on their own.



But people who stay in these communities have less money.

They have less support.



After an emergency, they are in even more danger of getting sick.



They might not be able to move.



Moving costs a lot of money.



People who have to move still lose their community.



The government needs to spend more money helping poor communities get ready for emergencies.



The government needs to spend more money helping communities of color get ready for emergencies..



They also need to get more money to help after an emergency.



Helping these communities get ready for emergencies can help them survive.



We also need to do more to help people with disabilities deal with problems in the environment.



When we think about people who are hurt by the environment, we know some groups get hurt more.



We know that people of color and people without much money are hurt more.



The government knows these groups are hurt more.



The government tries to help those groups in particular.



It calls these groups **environmental justice populations**.



Environmental justice populations are groups of people who are hurt more by problems with the environment.



The government gives communities extra money to help these groups fix the environment.



Sometimes it makes special programs to help these communities.



It tries to do more to help people who get sick from the environment.



People with disabilities also get hurt more by problems in the environment.



The government should call people with disabilities environmental justice populations too.



They should think about ways to help people in all three groups.



A lot of people are part of all three and not just one group.



Doing this can help the government do a better job helping us when there are environmental emergencies.



It can help them think about ways the environment makes it harder for people with disabilities in emergencies.



It can help them find ways to stop emergencies that will hurt people with disabilities the most.



It means that communities with a lot of people with disabilities can get more help.

## Let Us Use Medicaid in Emergencies and Keep Us Out of Institutions



Being in an institution is dangerous.



During emergencies, being in an institution is even more dangerous.



Making sure that we can live in our communities is important.



We should have the support we need to live in our communities.



If we have the support we need, then we can stay out of institutions during emergencies.



Some emergencies mean that we have to move.



For people with disabilities, this can be dangerous.



We might lose supports when we move.



For many people with disabilities, our supports are paid by Medicaid.



Medicaid is a health insurance system provided by the state you live in.



If you need to leave your home state, you can lose your services.



It is important to make sure that people can keep their Medicaid services if they move states.



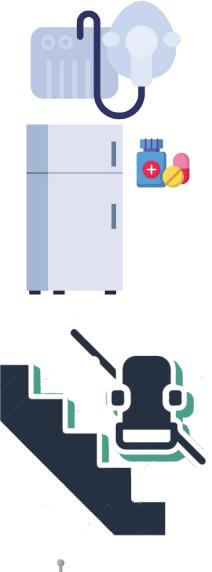
If we need to leave the state because of an emergency, we need to be able to keep our services.



For example:



Power outages can hurt people who rely on things that need electricity like:



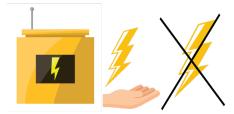
Breathing machines

Refrigerators for medicine

• Lifts



People who use these things need a backup **generator**.



A generator is a machine that can give you electricity when the power is out.



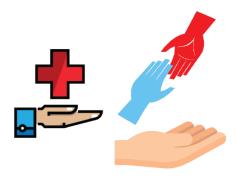
If someone has a back-up generator, they will have enough power during emergencies.



But back-up generators are expensive.



If someone can't afford a back-up generator, they might have to go to an institution when they lose power.



Medicaid should help.



Medicaid should pay for the back-up generator.

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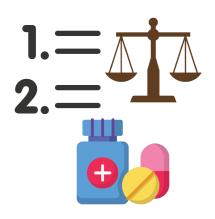
Then people with disabilities can stay in the community, even during emergencies.



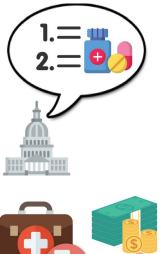
It is also important to get extra medicine before emergencies.



Governments should make sure each state uses the same rules.



The rules should be fair to people with disabilities.



Governments should make sure that pharmacists know these rules.



Insurance besides Medicaid should also pay for extra medicine for emergencies.



Fix SSI so we can save for Emergencies

Saving money is an important way to prepare for emergencies.



But a lot of people with disabilities can't save much money.



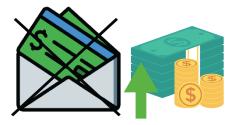
A lot of benefits people with disabilities rely on say they can't save money.



SSI is a payment that a lot of people with disabilities rely on.



But in order to get SSI, you can't have very much money.



If people who get SSI earn too much money, they lose SSI.



They also lose SSI if they save too much money.



The amount of money people are allowed to have on SSI is very low.



SSI only allows people to keep \$2000 in savings.



\$2000 is not enough money for emergencies.



It isn't enough to move to a new home during an emergency



It isn't enough for people to prepare for emergencies.

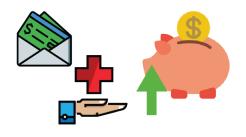


People with disabilities need to be allowed

to make more money.



We need to be allowed to save more money than \$2000.



Benefits like SSI and Medicaid should be changed to let us save more.

## Make Emergency Responses Accessible



When emergencies happen it is dangerous for everyone.



But people with disabilities are in even more danger.

We can get sick during emergencies.



We can get put in institutions against our will.



Emergency plans need to give extra attention to our needs.



When the government talks about emergencies they need to be accessible.



They should be sure to talk in ways we can understand.



This means using different ways to speak to us.



This means using both speech and writing to tell us things.



This means using sign language interpreters when speaking to the public.



It also means being sure to use any languages people in the community use.



Emergency messages should use different languages that people use.



Emergency messages should be sent in different ways.



Governments should not leave people out by ignoring the best way to reach them.



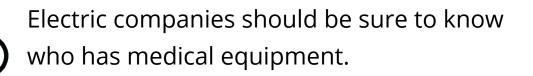
Utility companies also need to think about the people with disabilities they serve.

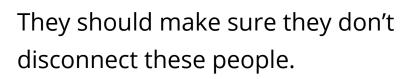


They should make sure that they are keeping us safe.



They should make plans to protect us in emergencies.







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They should be sure to reconnect these people first.



They should let people know about these plans.

They should let people know how to get included in these plans.

99



Utility companies should also plan in advance so people don't lose service.



For example, electric companies know that bad weather can cause blackouts.



They should make sure that they protect their equipment from bad weather.



This can help prevent blackouts during emergencies.



Local community groups also need to make emergency plans.



Many community groups serve people with low incomes or communities of color.



Some might not think they are providing disability services.



But they should know that the communities they serve include many people with disabilities.

These groups should think about how their services affect people with disabilities.

They should think about what happens to people with disabilities when their services get interrupted.



They should make sure to have plans to keep services or get them back quickly in emergencies.



They should be sure they can keep helping their community members at the most risk.