

Communication Plan for Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

As part of its efforts to prepare a plan for communicating information about health risks to the residents of [City/Town], the [Local Board of Health] is committed to working with [Emergency Management] and other response partners to reach a number of populations throughout the municipality who may not receive information distributed via dominant media channels (e.g., television, radio, print) or in the most commonly spoken language (English). Language, culture, demographics, geographic location, and physical or mental capacities can impact the way information is received. Preparedness and response officials recognize that developing a comprehensive risk communication plan entails addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs throughout [Town/City] to ensure all residents have the information they need before, during, and after an emergency.

This plan outlines strategies for implementing communication and outreach processes that take into consideration the ways in which individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs receive and act on information. The following checklists provide a standard protocol for collaborating with key stakeholders and sharing important emergency public health information. Identifying appropriate, trusted messengers to deliver the communication is an important aspect of the response. Many of the items in this plan involve reaching out to agencies that serve individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Information will be sent regarding the nature of the incident, where it is taking place, when it started, and any other pertinent information known at the time. The checklists are broken down into the first 12 and 48 hours of communication. These timeframes are merely a guide and can be shortened or extended depending on the size and scope of the incident. This checklist should be considered a “living document” that will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

FIRST 12 HOURS CHECKLIST

Step 1. Notify agencies within the City/Town	
Action Item	Complete
Send a message to the Community's 24/7 call-down roster or contact list	
Notify the Housing Authority	
Notify the Council on Aging	
Notify the Municipal VNA	
Notify Meals on Wheels	
Notify Veterans Services	
Notify any other departments and Board of Selectmen (i.e. Public Works, School Department)	
Notify the local Food Pantry	
Notify the Commission on Disabilities	
Convene a conference call for the municipal officials if necessary	
Step 2. Notify Community-Based and Faith-Based Organizations within the City/Town	
Action Item	Complete
Meet/collaborate with the YMCA	
Meet/collaborate with the Interfaith Council	
Meet/collaborate with the [Insert Organization]	
Step 3. Work with the closest Centers for Independent Living (CIL) in Massachusetts	
Action Item	Complete
Send a message to the CIL Director and/or other key leadership	
Invite the CIL staff to sit in on conference calls and other information events	
Step 4. Miscellaneous	
Action Item	Complete
Ensure homeless agencies have information (e.g. Boston Healthcare for the Homeless/Springfield Healthcare for the Homeless)	
Ensure a behavioral health presence or plan for mental health needs at any public events (i.e. vaccination clinic, public gathering)	
Work with municipal response partners to ensure access to information about public health risks is available to local community first responders (i.e. Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS)	

FIRST 48 HOURS CHECKLIST

Step 1. Coordinate with key stakeholders to develop/distribute accessible materials

Action Item

Complete

Ensure that all materials being distributed are in .pdf and .rtf formats
Begin the process of translating information into multiple languages or utilize information from various state/federal agencies that is already translated
Ensure any materials developed by the City/Town are low literacy materials
Create .rtf documents of any pictures, maps, etc. that are not compatible with screen readers

Step 2. Convene Conference Calls to Solicit Feedback

Action Item

Complete

Encourage community-based and faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders that work with individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs to let the town know what questions they have
Begin developing Q&A documents based on questions from the individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs communities
Take suggestions for accessibility of information

Step 3. Miscellaneous

Action Item

Complete

Send updated information to all agencies notified in the first 12 hours
Update all parties about the status of the event by sending out SitReps
Convene regular conference calls to update key stakeholders about the event
Work with all parties during the response to ensure consistent messages and communication
Provide information and guidance throughout the response and recovery
