

TITLE: The Importance of Disability-Inclusive Emergency Management

AUTHOR(S): Cody Selker

PRESENTER(S): Cody Selker

STUDENT SUBMISSION: No

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Disability Rights/All Public Health Professionals, but specifically program developers and health educators working at the State and local level.

ABSTRACT: Background: In June of 2020, the Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Bill 1606 to ensure that Oregonians with disabilities can have a support person in the hospital, despite the visitor bans due to COVID-19. The Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) COVID-19 Feedback Team (CFT) and other teams within OHA, received many reports of eligible patients being denied their right to a support person. Purpose: To support people with disabilities by helping to remove the barriers to accessing a support person in the hospital. Methods: Through a feedback management system, the CFT was able to track the concerns and identified the need to provide accessible education and advocacy. Through a cross-agency collaboration, OHA developed a webinar and educational materials to inform the community and hospital staff on SB1606. Results/Outcomes: OHA was able to educate the disability community on their rights and equip them with tools to effectively engage with the hospital. This led to many people being granted a support person, which leads to better clinical outcomes. Conclusions/Implications: Having a feedback management system, designed to analyze and escalate community feedback, was essential to quickly escalating the issue. Accessible education and advocacy are crucial to ensuring that people know their rights and have access to the care they deserve.

OBJECTIVE(S): Discuss how crucial it is to include people with disabilities within the development of emergency preparedness/management and ensure that equity is built into the emergency response system. Describe how systemic ableism continues to create barriers to care for people with disabilities and how the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted these inequities. Demonstrate the importance interpreting policies into plain and accessible language through education and advocacy.
