



CCD Emergency Relief and Disaster Preparedness Task Force  
**Annual Report**  
**January 4, 2008**

### **Summary of 2007 Activities**

An early highlight of the year was the inclusion of disability-specific mandates in the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act (H.R. 5441). The act includes funding for a disability coordinator position at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), long pushed for by the task force and other disability advocates. Over the summer, FEMA announced the hiring of a professional for this role, an individual known well by many in CCD, Cindy Daniel, formerly of the National Organization on Disability (NOD). The act also directs FEMA to include representatives of the disability community in planning and review processes, a good sign for continuing opportunities for engagement by the task force, and the formation of a National Advisory Council. The task force's own Hilary Styron of NOD has been named to the council, to "represent disability issues in emergency management."

Over the year, the task force has continued to foster positive relationships with a variety of federal offices. Key among these is the National Council on Disability, whose newly appointed executive director Mike Collins comes with a strong background in disability related emergency management and a concern for the inclusion of people with disabilities in all federal emergency management efforts. The Chair of NCD, John Vaughn also has a significant commitment to emergency preparedness and management for people with disabilities. NCD's position as an independent federal agency and their advocacy perspective provides a unique ally to the task force in raising issues of concern for people with disabilities in the federal emergency management dialogue. Other federal colleagues met with the task force at various times this year, including Margaret Giannini, HHS Office on Disability, Admiral Johnson, Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer and Pauline Campbell, Director, Office of Equal Rights for FEMA, Dan Sutherland and Claudia Gordon from the Department of Homeland Security, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and FEMA's new Disability Coordinator, Cindy Daniels.

The task force was most pleased with the DOJ release of their *ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments*. The Tool Kit, issued July 26, 2007, includes:

- Chapter 7, Emergency Management under Title II of the ADA
- Chapter 7, Addendum 1: Title II Checklist (Emergency Management)

- Chapter 7, Addendum 2: The ADA and Emergency Shelters: Access for All in Emergencies and Disasters
- Chapter 7, Addendum 3: ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters

The task force submitted comments during open federal comment periods on a number of draft documents and proposed regulations. Submitted comments included:

- Public Consultation on Homeland Security, Emergency Preparedness, Disaster Relief and Recovery for People with Disabilities (NCD)
- Draft Guidance on Allocating and Targeting Pandemic Influenza Vaccine (HHS)
- National Response Framework and Annexes (DHS)

On Capitol Hill, the task force had a number of valuable meetings and comment opportunities with Congressional staff to serve as a resource to them as new pieces of legislation were developed that could impact individuals with disabilities and their families in a disaster. These included:

- Senate Committee on Aging discussion of draft legislation of the Safeguarding Our Seniors Act
- Senate HELP committee input on an amendment to the Homeland Security bill for a special needs registry pilot program
- GAO on their investigation into sheltering for people with disabilities

The task force also continued to foster a productive relationship with the American Red Cross, headquartered in Washington. In May, the task force was invited to meet with Red Cross leaders to provide expert advice on durable medical equipment in order to help the Red Cross with their policies and practice regarding DME as well as to help them develop parameters for a national emergency “stockpile.” This meeting was facilitated by Task Force co-chair, Curt Decker.

Task force members Marcie Roth, Betsy Berry and Hilary Styron participated as observers in TopOff4, the DHS inter/national terrorism exercise.

Finally, the task force membership would like to recognize the hard work of one of its former co-chairs, Janna Starr of the Arc-UCP Disability Policy Collaboration, who relocated out of the area mid-year and is greatly missed.

## **Agenda for 2008**

The task force anticipates that a number of major issues which drew our attention in 2007 will remain on the front burner in 2008. Key topics include:

- concerns with establishment of registries for people with disabilities and possibly other special needs to theoretically facilitate better disaster evacuation and response systems

- concern over the term “special needs” as used by FEMA and other agencies when crafting plans for the inclusion of people with disabilities into disaster response plans
- enforcement of the civil rights of persons with disabilities, including equal access, in emergency evacuation and sheltering situations
- development of government infrastructures which adequately plan for and include persons with disabilities’ needs in times of emergent threat, such as mass communications, public transportation, and public health

**Submitted by task force co-chairs:**

Curt Decker, Marcie Roth and David Morrissey (January 4, 2008)