



FEMA

March 3, 2017

Clyde Terry, Chairperson
National Council on Disability
1331 F Street, NW, Suite 850
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Terry:

Thank you for your communication on January 12, 2017, regarding the status of FEMA's Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC). As you noted in your message, FEMA and the National Council on Disability (NCD) enjoy a long history of collaboration and coordination to ensure that the needs of individuals with disabilities are met in national emergency situations.

Per your request, I positively affirm FEMA's ongoing commitment to address the needs of individuals with disabilities during all phases of emergency management and our continued work with disability partner and stakeholder organizations to deliver FEMA programs and services that are equally accessible to the whole community.

In 2010, ODIC was created to fulfill one of the requirements outlined in the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, establishing a disability coordinator who works in the Office of the Administrator. This role is still current, and the disability coordinator, the ODIC director, will still work in the Office of the Administrator. ODIC works within FEMA and with external entities to enhance our capacity to include and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs before, during, and after disaster operations.

Over the past seven years, the agency developed trainings, including the "Integrating Access and Functional Needs in Emergency Planning" course, created new partnerships and strengthened existing ones, and built a strong cadre of disability integration advisors and specialists. These advisors and specialists deploy to disaster operations, work with other FEMA program offices, and engage the community to ensure inclusivity and meet the needs of disaster survivors with disabilities.

Today, ODIC's mission remains the same since its inception in 2010 – to "lead FEMA's commitment to achieving whole-community emergency management, inclusive of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, by providing guidance, tools, methods, and strategies to establish physical, program, and effective communication access." This mission is an integral element of FEMA's strategic priority one – Be survivor-centric in mission and program delivery.

Here are some additional actions that demonstrate FEMA's continued commitment to disability-inclusive practices:

- In 2016, FEMA approved internal Directive 123-29, Disability Integration and Coordination – Inclusive Emergency Management, a formal statement of FEMA's policy and responsibilities to provide equal access under federal law.
- In 2017, FEMA will maintain and renew Memoranda of Agreement with five national disability support, service, and advocacy organizations.
- In 2017, FEMA will complete a self-evaluation to assess its compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 with respect to its public-facing programs and activities. FEMA will then establish a plan for addressing existing gaps or barriers.

FEMA remains deeply connected to the disability community at the national, regional, and disaster-operations levels, and will continue to partner with disability organizations to facilitate equal access to emergency management. I look forward to our continued partnership and collaboration. For additional information or assistance, please contact ODIC's Acting Director, Christopher Lagan at christopher.lagan@fema.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Fenton".

Robert J. Fenton
Acting Administrator