

REALTIME TEXT FILE

DISABILITY COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP WEBINAR

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>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Hello, everyone! This is Claudia Friedel with the Disability and Health Program. I am here to welcome you all to our fourth quarterly Disability Community Planning Group webinar where we have Kevin Towles from the Center for Independent Living to speak about the state and county emergency operations centers. Kevin works for the Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida working to help people with disabilities by meeting with government agencies and assisting with advocacy and emergency.

He volunteers his time with the Marion County sheriff's department and was a volunteer firefighter. He is originally from North Alabama and has lived in Ocala for 30 years. Kevin's presentation will focus on similarities and differences between county and state EOCs. Thank you Kevin for your time. Take it away.

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Thank you.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Any questions you have, feel free to put them in the chat box and we'll address them at the end of the presentation. Thank you.

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. Like Claudia said, my name is Kevin Towles, and I'm happy to be here to talk to y'all today.

A couple of the things we will be going over is what is a CIL? What do we do?

Also, what is the history of the EOC/NIMS and ICS.

Those three things work together in the state and county EOCs.

How does the county -- how does the county EOC work?

And also the state EOCs.

You can see going all the way back to Ed Roberts, he is the founder of the Independent Living Movement for the first Center for Independent Living and has defined the movement.

Throughout his life, he aided all persons with disabilities to a full --

[Background noise on telephone].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: -- of their.

[Background noise on telephone].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: People with disabilities are --

[Background noise on telephone].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: -- goes into the Civil Rights Act.

[Background noise on telephone].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: It was a reality of people who actually have rights with the laws and in the classrooms.

In the beginning in the long-term status, the Civil Rights, Martin Luther King to Alabama and started the Civil Rights. And it moves on and goes back into the Resolution Act. And these are all the partners with the Center for Independent Living under the Resolution Act in 1973. FACIL, the Independent Living Council, Council on Independent Living and many more.

Center for Independent Living has been in business in Florida for over 35 years.

What does it do for people with disabilities? The Center for Independent Living is a local control consumer-driven community-based, non-resident, not-for-profit location, and our headquarters are here in Gainesville, Florida.

These are all the Centers for Independent Living in the state of Florida. You can see that we're the yellow area. And we cover over 16 counties.

And for me -- with emergency management, those are my main areas, those 16.

And like I said, we're a 501(3), we have an office in Gainesville and satellite office in Ocala and that's where I work out of.

So CILs help providers across all disabilities in general.

In the past years, we have partnered up with a lot of agencies. These are some of the agencies we have partnered with, great partners, and we're all working together and helping each other and people with disabilities.

Here is some of the programs that we have had in the past. We have helped out in drills, we have also helped by hosting FEMA to come out and do research or damage assessment in Marion County.

We were asked to do a round table at the Governor's Hurricane Conference last year. We partnered up with FACIL and Disability Rights Florida to talk to people about what goes on during a disaster and during emergency preparedness for a disaster.

This is a big honor to myself and to the group, that we had the opportunity to do this.

[Pause].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Now we're going into the history of the EOC, NIMS, and ICS. What is the role of an emergency manager?

They ensure all components of the system, knows the threat of the community, what goes on in the community. He knows what's going on, he touches base with everybody.

[Pause].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Who is responsible for emergency management and the operations responsibility? Many of the emergency staff have lots of duties and tasks in their offices. They go all the way from crisis in a disaster, all the way to helping people with special needs, volunteers, and stuff like that.

You can see right here is a chart of -- it's an incident command chart that -- can it work with all locations? Yes. People don't realize that the incident command is the owner of the business.

This is a strict out of the handbook, the FEMA handbook guide CSS100 and it's a layout, diagram, of the functions, equipment, personnel, products, and all the other components in emergency management.

Now we're going to talk about the command staff and general staff.

And if you look at it, up top there, right underneath this command, is the public information officer, safety officer, and liaison officer. That is your command staff.

The public information officers, they call PIO, they're the ones who talk to the media, all

that stuff, to help people understand what's going on more broadly.  
The safety officer is basically the person who makes sure everybody's safety's first.  
There's no damages, nothing out there.  
And the liaison officer is a member of the command staff response and is responsible for working with the other agencies to be the contact person.  
Because if somebody else comes from a different location, you need to know where to go. That's who he reports to.  
Now, general staff make up the operation section. All technical incidents, operations, they're the main people; they're the ones who make stuff happen.  
The planning includes evaluating the operation information in regards to the incident. They perform the action plan and make sure action plans work.  
Logistics, we need paper for a printer, we need tools, we need whatever is necessary for that job. That's what logistics handles.  
They're one of the big components in the group. One of the big groups, I mean.  
And last, but not least, is finance. Everything comes down to dollars and cents. And that's what the finance or the administration section does.  
In that whole thing, we've got to figure out which level there is for emergencies. And there's three types of levels during an emergency.  
Level three is what is most common, it's, regular staff -- regular day routine.  
At level two, we set up people as the timeframe, from 9:00-5:00 working the EOC, just monitoring at nights, very low staff. Not a lot of people activated, but we're monitoring the situation for a disaster or the emergency.  
And, level one, the state like we are right now with COVID, everybody is at a level one, 24/7, mostly. I know for the state EOC, we're at a level one right now. That's 24/7, everybody is at a desk.

NIMS. Emergency support functions. All the NIMS that's what the government and private sectors, resources, and other components work together to make a good team. That's what we have in the county and state EOC.

Under the federal emergency support functions, these are -- they come up with 15ES -- emergency support functions. I know there's, like, 18 or 19 in all, but through the federal level, it's 15.

As for me, I am under ESF-8, the public health care and medical services.

I go to the local meetings in my counties. And I also go to help them out for drills in general.

When a disaster happens, I'm under ESF-6. That's mass care. Because we are helping people with disabilities before, during, and after an emergency.

And my question is -- which ESF group are you under? If you could think about it, what are you under if you did fall underneath one of these?

What can -- what can be the primary reason for activation of an EOC?

Anything.

If your organization has the command or junction it needs to be an incident command, the EOC director will say we're going to activate. They will take steps to do that.

NIMS is a complete national appearance of all incidents in a level across all functions. NIMS is a group format and it also ties in with the third programs.

Why do we need NIMS? NIMS is a nationwide form to enable government at all levels, federal, government, and non-agencies to prepare, protect, support, recover, and any other agency of any size or cause of an incident.

Basically anybody can use NIMS.

Why is ICS? ICS stands for incident command system. It's a little bit different than NIMS, but NIMS assists the framework for the ICS.

It's a standardized core for incident management where the incident and additional resources are provided from different organizations within a single junction (sic) with outstanding effect.

Who uses NIMS and ICS? All levels of stakeholders, including levels of government, private sector organizations, non-governmental, and whoever has a role in the emergency management area that are from the 15.

But like I said earlier, anyone can use it, use that chart in their everyday lives.

The benefits for ICS. A clearly defined chain of commands, the command duties. That's basically it. That's what ICS is, a command, it's all the commands put together. [Pause].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Who can activate a county EOC? And what do they have for their training?

In the county EOC, the director, like I said earlier, can activate the EOC. There's a lot of trainings through FEMA you have to have.

For me personally, I have the top five or six to get in the EOC, I can work in the EOC. Plus I'm in the process of studying for more classes to better myself.

Does the local EOC have partners to help them every year?

The emergency management have staff to cover every part, like I said earlier. Special needs, they also have people on their staff for their special needs program, they have volunteers, they also do training, and other different things. They are always on call 24/7 when people don't realize it.

[Pause].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: They're also working with other agencies who they have partners with. And they also do a lot more partnering every day to better the community in their areas.

[Pause].

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Who can activate a state EOC? That is the emergency operation -- the state emergency operation center director or the chief can activate the state. They're the only two who can activate the state.

But within the county, the county director of the emergency management can activate the county. But that's the difference between the county and the state.

There's a lot of people in the state EOC. You can see in this picture that there are only a small group of people in this room. And I had the opportunity in the beginning of March to go to a state EOC for two weeks to help out.

In this picture, you can't see it, but I'm sitting down at the ESF-6 desk and there's, like, four, six rooms off behind me for all the different departments for the ESF-6 groups.

There's also ESF-8, ESF-1, 2, and the post and the financial people are also in this room.

So my question is to y'all, up here in the state, you can see right there in the center bottom, there's a spot for people with disabilities having a seat in the state EOC.

My question is, why can't the county EOCs let Center for Independent Living or other agencies that serve PWD sit in like the state did? Have a spot in their EOC to help out? Give them resources. Technical support. Because we know what's going on. We can assist them much better.

In each group in the ESF, 15, of the 15 groups, there's a leader.

Out of these leaders, they can all be broken up in each function of the groups. As for ESF-6, there's, like, 15 different programs under the ESF-6. That's where the mass casualty group helps out with food, people with disabilities, elders affair, and a whole bunch of other groups.

Here's some other sites that you can look up that will help you out in the future, different sites that you can look at.

And there you go, Claudia. And I want to thank you very much.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: Thank you so much, Kevin.

That was really super interesting on all the differences between what the state and the county can do and who can activate.

I know -- Bryan is so busy with his work at the EOC, so it's really nice to hear from somebody who's been there and to hear, what it's like.

Does anybody have any questions? I don't see any; I don't know if you see any, Patrick.

But we have Kevin's information here on this last slide, so if anything comes up that anyone can think of question-wise, feel free to e-mail him or you can e-mail me and I can connect you guys as well.

I'm trying to think... of anything else... I'm going to give people a minute in case anybody has any questions that come up.

But I really appreciate your time, Kevin. Thank you for your expertise.

And for taking the time to share it with us.

>> KEVIN TOWLES: Well, you're very welcome.

>> CLAUDIA FRIEDEL: We really appreciate it.

All right, well hearing none, we are going to go ahead and close out.

Thank you so much, everyone. We really appreciate everyone's time. And everyone stay safe during these crazy time.

And we'll be back in a few months with our next webinar.

Thanks again, everyone! Bye!

[Concludes at 3:27 p.m.]

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### **Recommendations and Findings to improve access to services**

-A Key recommendation from this presentation included the need for agencies who serve persons with disabilities, like CILs, to have a seat at the table at county emergency operations centers (EOCs) like they do at state EOC's.