



*Advocacy for People with Disabilities
Before, During and After Disasters
Using the CMIST Framework*

Why Disability Advocacy Matters

Disasters impact everyone, but **people with disabilities often face additional barriers** to information, transportation, healthcare, and recovery resources.

Effective advocacy:

- Ensures **equitable access to emergency information**
- Promotes **inclusive preparedness planning**
- Protects the **rights and dignity of people with disabilities**
- Improves outcomes **before, during, and after disasters**

Advocacy ensures **no one is left behind during emergencies.**



Access and Functional Needs

Emergency planning must consider **Access and Functional Needs (AFN)**.

AFN refers to individuals who **require assistance to maintain independence** during emergencies.

These needs fall into five functional areas:

CMIST

- **C** – Communication
- **M** – Maintaining Health
- **I** – Independence
- **S** – Support, Safety, Self-determination & Sensory
- **T** – Transportation



Who May Have Access and Functional Needs

Access and functional needs **are not limited to diagnosed disabilities.**

Examples include:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Older adults
- Women who are pregnant
- Individuals with chronic medical conditions
- Individuals with pharmacological dependencies
 - Methadone
 - Naltrexone
 - Disulfiram
- Individuals supported by social or advocacy organizations

Needs may be **temporary or permanent.**



CMIST - A Framework for Inclusive Planning

The **CMIST framework** helps emergency planners and advocates identify and address functional needs.

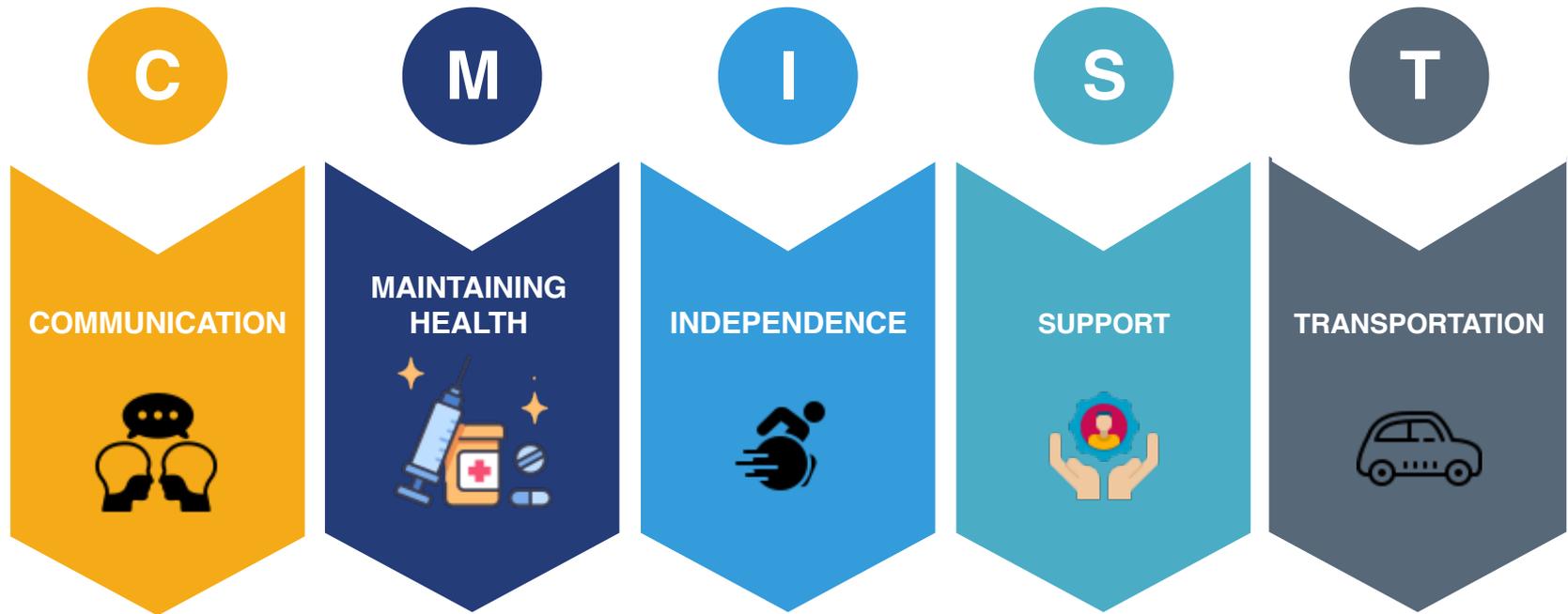
It ensures that disaster planning:

- Supports **communication access**
- Maintains **health and medical needs**
- Protects **independence**
- Provides necessary **supports and sensory accommodations**
- Ensures **accessible transportation**

Advocacy ensures these needs are **integrated into planning, response, and recovery.**



C-MIST Framework



C - Communication

Written communication should be accessible to everyone.

Tools that help:

- Plain language guidance
Plainlanguage.gov
- Readability tools
[Hemingway App](#)
[Readable](#)
- Multilingual translation

Accessible communication allows individuals to **understand emergency instructions and make informed decisions.**



DROP, COVER, HOLD ON



Protect Yourself During Earthquakes!

**IF
POSSIBLE**



**USING
CANE**



**USING
WALKER**



**USING
WHEELCHAIR**



www.EarthquakeCountry.org/disability

M - Maintaining Health

Maintaining health during disasters requires continued access to:

- Medication
- Durable medical equipment
- Consumable medical supplies
- Personal care assistance
- Knowing one's rights

Examples include:

- Oxygen and nebulizers
- Feeding tubes and specialized formulas
- Dialysis needs
- Chronic disease management

Disruptions in these supports can **quickly become life-threatening.**



I - Independence

Disasters should not remove an individual's independence.

Supports that maintain independence include:

- Mobility devices (wheelchairs, walkers, canes)
- Personal assistance services
- Accessible shelter environments
- Service animals

Advocacy ensures individuals **remain in control of their decisions whenever possible.**



Service Animals

Service animals are **working animals, not pets.**

They provide critical supports for people with disabilities and other access and functional needs.

During evacuation and sheltering, service animals must remain with the individual.



Service Animals

- Mobility Assistance Dogs (miniature horses – not widely used)
- Guide Dogs
 - Seeing Eye Dogs
 - Hearing Ear Dogs
- Medical Assistance Dogs
 - Seizure Alert or Seizure Response Dogs
 - Diabetic Alert Dogs
 - Psychiatric Service Dogs
 - Social Anxiety Dogs
 - Sensory Signal (Social Signal) Dogs
 - Allergy Alert Dogs



S – Support, Safety, Self-Determination & Sensory Support

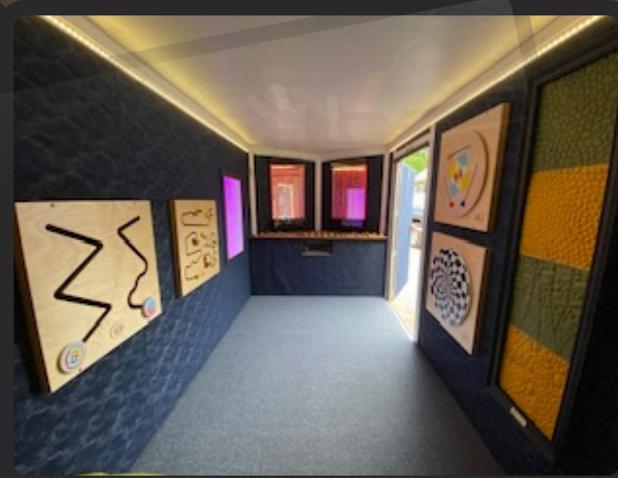
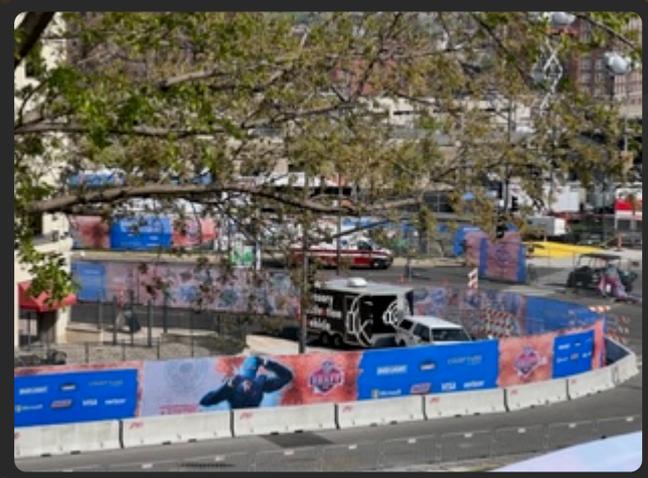
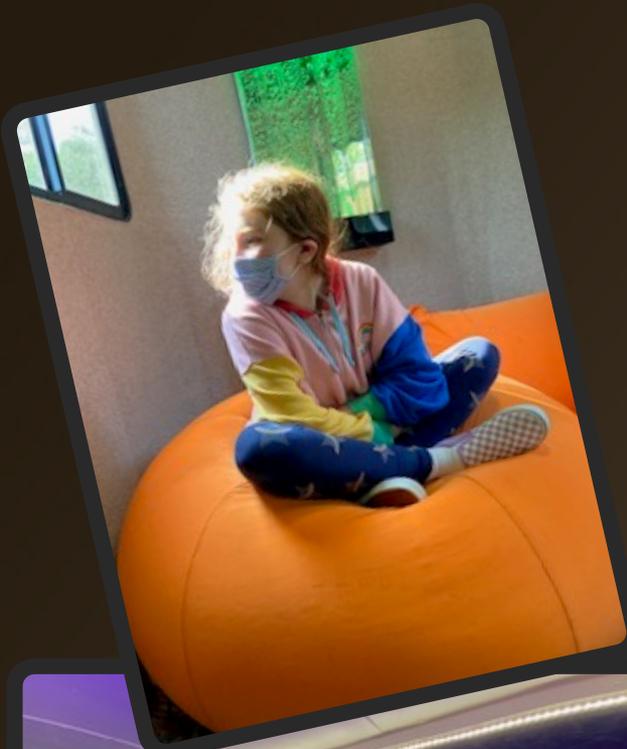
Disasters can create additional stress and confusion.

Key advocacy priorities include:

- Trauma-informed support
- Safety when individuals are separated from caregivers
- Assistance navigating disaster services
- Respecting self-determination
- Sensory supports for individuals with sensory processing needs

Providing these supports helps individuals **remain safe and stable during crisis situations.**





T - Transportation



Accessible transportation is critical for evacuation and recovery.

Advocacy should ensure:

- Accessible vehicles and lifts
- Paratransit integration into evacuation planning
- Transportation to shelters and recovery sites
- Coordination with emergency management

Without accessible transportation, **individuals may be unable to evacuate safely.**



Key Takeaways

Advocacy for people with disabilities must occur:

Before disasters

- Inclusive planning
- Training and outreach

During disasters

- Accessible communication
- Health and support services

After disasters

- Accessible recovery programs
- Community reintegration

When disability perspectives are included in planning, **everyone is safer.**



Disability inclusion is not a special consideration.

It is **essential to effective emergency management.**

By applying the **CMIST framework**, advocates and emergency planners can ensure that **all individuals are prepared, protected, and supported before, during, and after disasters.**



Disasters do not create inequities — they reveal the ones that already exist.

When people with disabilities are included in planning, training, and decision-making, communities become more resilient and better prepared for everyone.



Questions?

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