

**Accessibility & Shelter: Bringing it all Together**  
**A Table Top Exercise presented by Carole Tonks & Luke Koppisch**  
**The Alliance Center for Independence**

The intent of this exercise is to provide a no fault, low stress environment that will promote a healthy discussion about shelter operations in support of those with functional and access needs (disabilities). Some of the specific topics covered will include transportation to the shelter, life within a shelter, and access to care while in a shelter environment. The audience will consist of emergency response/management personnel, and individuals with functional and access needs (disabilities). The intent is to discuss each other's abilities and expectations, learn from one another, learn about what resources may be available, and to discover topics that need further attention.

**Objective 1:** Discuss the topic of transportation to emergency shelters. Learn more about expectations, roles & responsibilities, and potential alternatives.

**Objective 2:** Discuss the topic of life within a shelter in order to clarify expectations. What to expect, daily routine, common services provided, and potential strengths and weaknesses.

**Objective 3:** Discuss how individuals with functional or access needs (disabilities) can receive assistance while living in an emergency shelter. What are common methods used to report or identify potential needs? How are special / reasonable accommodations met? What do we expect from one another?

**Objective 4:** Capture the most common topics discussed and work to address the issues through awareness, education, and advocacy.

This event will be divided into three separate discussion modules:

**Module 1: Accessing the Shelter**

**Module 2: Living in the Shelter**

**Module 3: Receiving Care in the Shelter**

For each module the participants should think about their individual roles, responsibilities, needs and concerns as if this were a real incident. The participants will be provided with a short series of questions to review and discuss as small groups. After a few minutes each group will be asked to give a brief report on what they discussed and others will have the opportunity to provide additional comments and feedback. Final thoughts and highlights will be captured at the conclusion.

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**Module 1: Accessing the Shelter**

Your community is facing a large natural disaster (flood) and an evacuation order has been issued. The American Red Cross has opened several shelters around your community and you will need to leave your residence. People in the evacuation zone will not be able to return home for several days or longer.

What are your plans for transportation to the shelter?

Will anybody need to come with you?

What items do you need to bring?

Best guess: How long would it take you to prepare your items and leave your residence if you had to do this today? (think of ways to improve)

What transportation resources are available for those needing assistance?

Are there any known strengths or weaknesses associated with the use of particular modes of transportation?

Any personal experiences that may add to the discussion?

**Please use the space provided for notes, comments, and lessons learned:**

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**Module 2: Living in the Shelter**

You managed to access the shelter and are getting settled in to what will be your home for the next few days. At this point you may have a list of questions and concerns about gaining access to the services you need.

What are your expectations about life within the shelter? What concerns do you have?

Do you know who to speak to if you need accommodations?

Do you know what accommodations can be made if needed?

Any other ideas, needs, or concerns that have not been addressed yet?

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**Module 3: Receiving Care in the Shelter**

At this point in the scenario you have gotten established in the shelter and have received your first meal. As you prepare for a night of rest you begin to wonder about what to expect for the next few days.

What are your expectations or preconceived ideas about life within a shelter environment?

Do you have any fear about being in a shelter? What are your primary concerns?

Has this conference been able to address any of your previous concerns?

Would anyone like to share an experience that may help others prepare for evacuation/transportation and life within a shelter environment?

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**Conclusion:**

Review final thoughts, common themes, new resources, action items, and identify a path forward.

**Notes:**