



News from
Office of the Mayor

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Contacts:

Karen Boyd, Acting Communications Director, (510) 238-6365, kboyd@oaklandnet.com
Renee Domingo, Office of Emergency Services Director, (510) 755-5843, radingo@oaklandnet.com
Christine Calabrese, ADA Coordinator, (510) 238-4754, ccalabrese@oaklandnet.com
Karla Gilbride, Disability Rights Advocates, (510) 665-8644, kgilbride@dralegal.org

**City of Oakland, Disability Rights Advocates Herald Agreement to Adopt
Model Disaster Readiness Programs for the Disabled**

-Oakland First City in Country to Implement Functional Needs Framework

Oakland, CA – The City of Oakland (City) and Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) have reached an agreement on the settlement of a class action lawsuit filed by the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers and Californians for Disability Rights to improve disability access to emergency preparedness programs. Under the settlement, the City shall create a Functional Needs Annex to its Mass Care and Shelter Plan, which will specifically address the needs of persons with disabilities regarding emergencies.

"This settlement is a victory for all Oaklanders – residents and the disability community alike –who have a right to equal access to mass care and shelter programs," said **Mayor Ron Dellums**. "It would be indefensible to delay improving disability access to our emergency services programs. Instead of debating this through the legal process, costing hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars, we are taking immediate action to adopt cutting-edge disaster readiness initiatives for people with disabilities. I commend staff from the Fire Department's Office of Emergency Services and City Administrator's ADA Programs Division that are accomplishing this very challenging endeavor at limited expense to the City."

"This is the first constructive resolution in the country in which the broader disability community and a public entity worked cooperatively to develop the best possible plan for disability access to disaster readiness activities," said **Sid Wolinsky**, DRA Director of Litigation.

Oakland's Mass Care and Shelter Plan and all other emergency preparedness initiatives are adopting the functional needs framework for serving persons with disabilities and older adults. "Disaster preparation and emergency response systems can be made more effective for people with disabilities, as well as for the population as a whole. An essential element of building appropriate levels of capacity is to move beyond use of the "special needs" category and adopt a more accurate and flexible framework based on five essential functional areas: communication, medical, independence maintenance, supervision and transportation," said **June Isaacson Kailes**, the City's disability policy consultant.

Judith Smith, an Oakland resident who is a wheelchair user, expressed her satisfaction with the settlement. "Prior to the settlement, I feared that I would be stranded in my home during a disaster or turned away from a shelter because of my wheelchair. As a result of collaborative efforts between DRA and Oakland, I am relieved that an emergency plan exists for people with disabilities."

Highlights of the Functional Needs Annex include:

- Oakland has identified 20 accessible emergency shelters that will accommodate people with mobility disabilities and is working with other entities to identify additional accessible shelter locations.
- Each emergency shelter will have a designated Shelter Functional Needs Coordinator responsible for assisting persons with disabilities. The coordinator will identify and request durable medical equipment, consumable medical supplies and reasonable accommodations.
- The City's emergency notification system, which contacts people to alert them of an emergency situation in their area, will interface with various electronic and wireless devices used by people with hearing, mobility and vision disabilities in addition to standard telephones. Specific information during times of emergency, including locations of open shelters and information on which of those shelters are accessible to people with mobility impairments, will be available through Eden Information and Referral Services. People can access this information by calling 2-1-1 on a voice telephone or TTY machine, a communications device used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- A Geographic Information System (GIS) has been created to assist City first responders with identifying the location of persons who may require accessible transportation services. The GIS has mapped the home addresses of individuals who have voluntarily registered for the City's 9-1-1 Registry Program, residential care facilities for the elderly and nursing homes, and Oakland Housing Authority public housing facilities. The City continues to work with local organizations for people with disabilities and older adults to encourage their clientele to participate in the 9-1-1 Registry Program.

Under the terms of the settlement, which was just approved by the Oakland City Council, the new plan will be periodically updated and Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) will monitor Oakland's progress in implementing the plan over the next four and a half years.

To read the settlement agreement, visit: www.dralegal.org.