



THE PARTNERSHIP
FOR INCLUSIVE DISASTER STRATEGIES



Building Inclusive Emergency Preparedness

Centering Resilience in the Disability Community

Welcome and About Us

Who We Are: The Partnership

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies is the only U.S. disability-led organization with a focused mission on equity for people with disabilities and people with access and functional needs throughout all planning, programs, services and procedures before, during and after disasters and emergencies.

Your Disability & Disaster Hub

www.disasterstrategies.org



Disability and Disaster Hub: What We Do



Support Disabled Disaster Survivors and Organizations



Strengthen Community Resilience



Increase Education and Awareness



Influencing Advocacy, Policy, and Systems Change

Who We Are: RTF & DSIL

- Roads To Freedom, Center for Independent Living of North Central PA (RTF-CILNCP)
- Disability Solutions for Independent Living (DSIL)

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agencies that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provide an array of independent living services.

What CILs Do

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) provide five core services:

- Information and referral
- Peer mentoring
- Advocacy (individual and systems)
- Independent living skills
- Transition (nursing facilities and education)

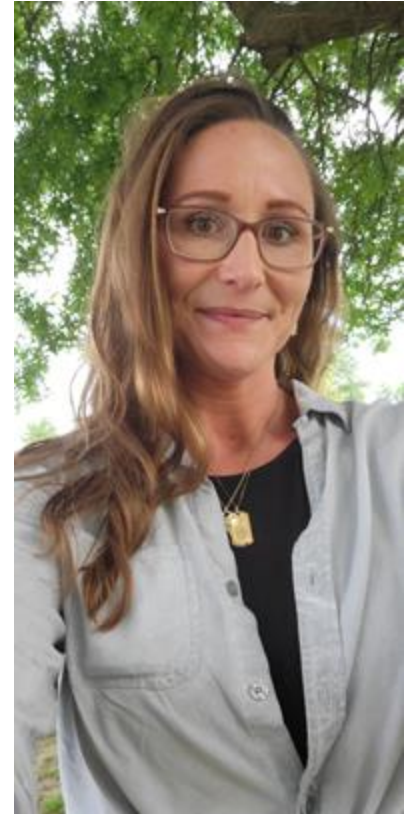
Misty Dion

CEO

Roads To Freedom, Center for
Independent Living of North Central
Pennsylvania (RTF-CILNCP)

Located in Williamsport, PA

www.cilncp.org



Ciawanda McDonald

CEO

Disability Solutions for Independent
Living (DSIL)

Located in Dayton Beach, FL

www.dsil.org



Today's Discussion

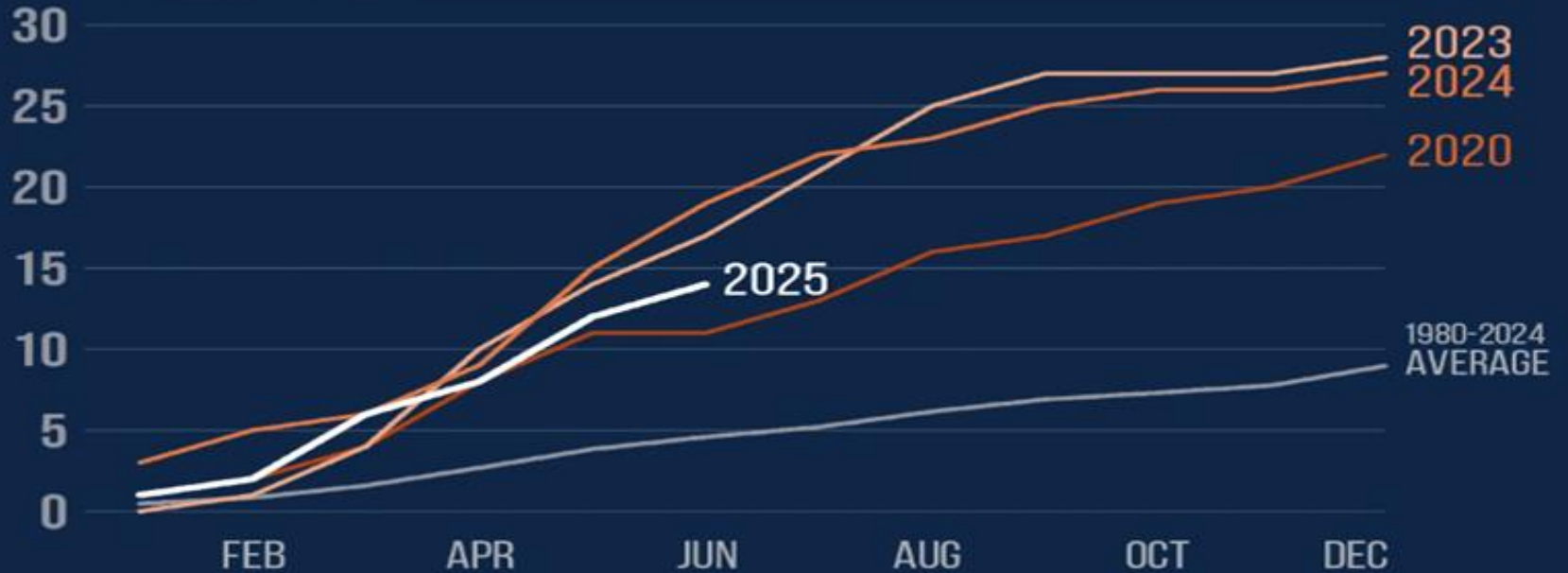
- Disproportionate impact of disasters
- Examples of disability-led organizations active in this work
- Disaster risks, disaster cycle, and ways to engage
- Ways to take action

Disproportionate Impact of Disasters

Disasters are Increasing

U.S. BILLION-DOLLAR DISASTERS

1980 - June 2025



<https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/billion-dollar-disasters-oct-2025> 11

1980 - June 2025 U.S. billion-dollar disaster year-to-date event count (CPI-adjusted).
Source: Climate Central.

CLIMATE CENTRAL

Disasters are Increasing

“In the near term, **every region in the world is projected to face further increases in climate hazards** ... [including] an increase in heat-related human mortality and morbidity; ... food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne diseases and mental health challenges; ... and flooding in coastal and other low-lying cities and regions...”

[\[Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)\]](#)

“Extreme heat kills more people per year than any other weather event.”

(National Weather Service)

Disproportionate Impact

“People with disabilities are 2-to-4 times more likely to die or be injured in a disaster than non-disabled people.”

(United Nations)

“During Hurricane Katrina, Black people were 1.7 to 4 times more likely to die than white people.”

(“Disparity in disaster preparedness between racial/ethnic groups”)

Increased Disasters Impact People with Disabilities

“Climate change is directly and disproportionately threatening the right to health of people with disabilities due to higher ambient temperatures, elevated air pollutants, and increasing exposure to extreme weather events that include heatwaves, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires.”

([The Lancet](#))

Impact of Disasters on Marginalized Communities: People of Color

“Low income communities and communities of color are on the front lines of natural disasters and climate change. Due to historical residential segregation including redlining, **people of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods that have worse infrastructure increasing their risk of harm and limiting their ability to prepare** or safely shelter-in-place.”

(Kaiser Family Foundation)

Impact of Disasters on Marginalized Communities: Limited English Proficiency

“[Evacuation efforts](#) for storms have highlighted disparities in peoples’ abilities to prepare for and evacuate in advance of major storms.

About half of immigrants have [limited English proficiency](#) (LEP) and may face language barriers accessing evacuation and preparation resources.”

([Kaiser Family Foundation](#))

Impact of Disasters on Marginalized Communities: Limited English Proficiency

During “[Hurricane Beryl](#) ... in 2024, significant portions of the city’s community with LEP felt unprepared as most emergency resources were written in Spanish and English **but not other languages spoken by a large number of residents.**”

([Kaiser Family Foundation](#))

Impact of Disasters on Marginalized Communities

- Rural Communities: face physical isolation, high poverty rates, and limited access to health care.
- Low-Income Communities: are more likely to face financial challenges in preparing for disasters.

Causes of Disproportionate Impact

People with disabilities are overwhelmingly impacted “due to a [lack] of inclusive planning, accessible information, early warning systems, transportation, discriminatory attitudes within institutions and among individuals.¹”

([The Lancet](#))

Disruption of Access

“Disasters also disrupt access to

- health-care services,
- medications,
- oxygen,
- haemodialysis,
- personal care assistance, and
- medical devices.”

([The Lancet](#))

Disruption of Access

- Healthcare
- Education
- Housing
- Employment
- Transportation
- Voting
- Food security
- Utilities and Energy
- Communications
- Social and community services
- Environmental health
- Displacement

Funding Disparities

- About 80% of charitable giving happens in the immediate days after a disaster.
- Foundation funding for disability only represents approximately two cents of every foundation dollar awarded.
- Funding for disability has increased in recent years but it is only 4% of philanthropic giving.

Disability Leadership in Disasters

Disability-led and Disability-related

Disability-led organization: 51% or more of staff, board, and volunteers are people with disabilities.

- Ex: Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

Disability-related organization: An organization whose mission has focus on people with disabilities or a particular type of disability, or a provider of disability-related supports and services.

- Ex: The Arc, or a homecare agency

Centering Disability Leadership

- Ensuring disability-led organizations have a meaningful seat at the table before, during, and after disasters/emergencies.
 - Treated as assets - NOT liabilities, “special,” or expendable
 - Force multipliers
 - Trusted source in the community

Disability Justice Principles

- **Intersectionality**
- **Leadership of those most impacted**
- Anti-capitalist politic
- **Commitment to cross-movement organizing**
- Recognizing wholeness
- Sustainability
- Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
- **Interdependence**
- Collective access
- Collective liberation

Engaging in the Disaster Cycle

Disaster Cycle

Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Recovery

Mitigation includes actions taken to prevent or reduce the cause, impact, and consequences of disasters.

Examples include:

- Digging water channels to redirect water and planting vegetation to absorb water.
- Elevating homes and businesses to reduce flood damage.

Preparedness includes planning, training, and educational activities for events that cannot be mitigated.

Examples include:

- Developing disaster preparedness plans for what to do / where to go / who to call for help in a disaster.
- Exercising plans via drills, and tabletop and full-scale exercises.

Disaster Cycle

Response occurs in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

Examples include:

- Implementing disaster response plans
- Conducting search and rescue missions

Recovery is when restoration efforts occur concurrently with regular operations and activities, which can take months or even years.

Examples include:

- Rebuilding damaged structures
- Reducing risk to future disasters

Disaster Risk in PA

- Flooding
- Tornadoes
- Straight line winds
- Extreme heat
- Winter storms
- Extreme cold
- Power outages
- Environmental
 - Train derailment in East Palestine, OH (2023)
 - Three Mile Island accident (1979)

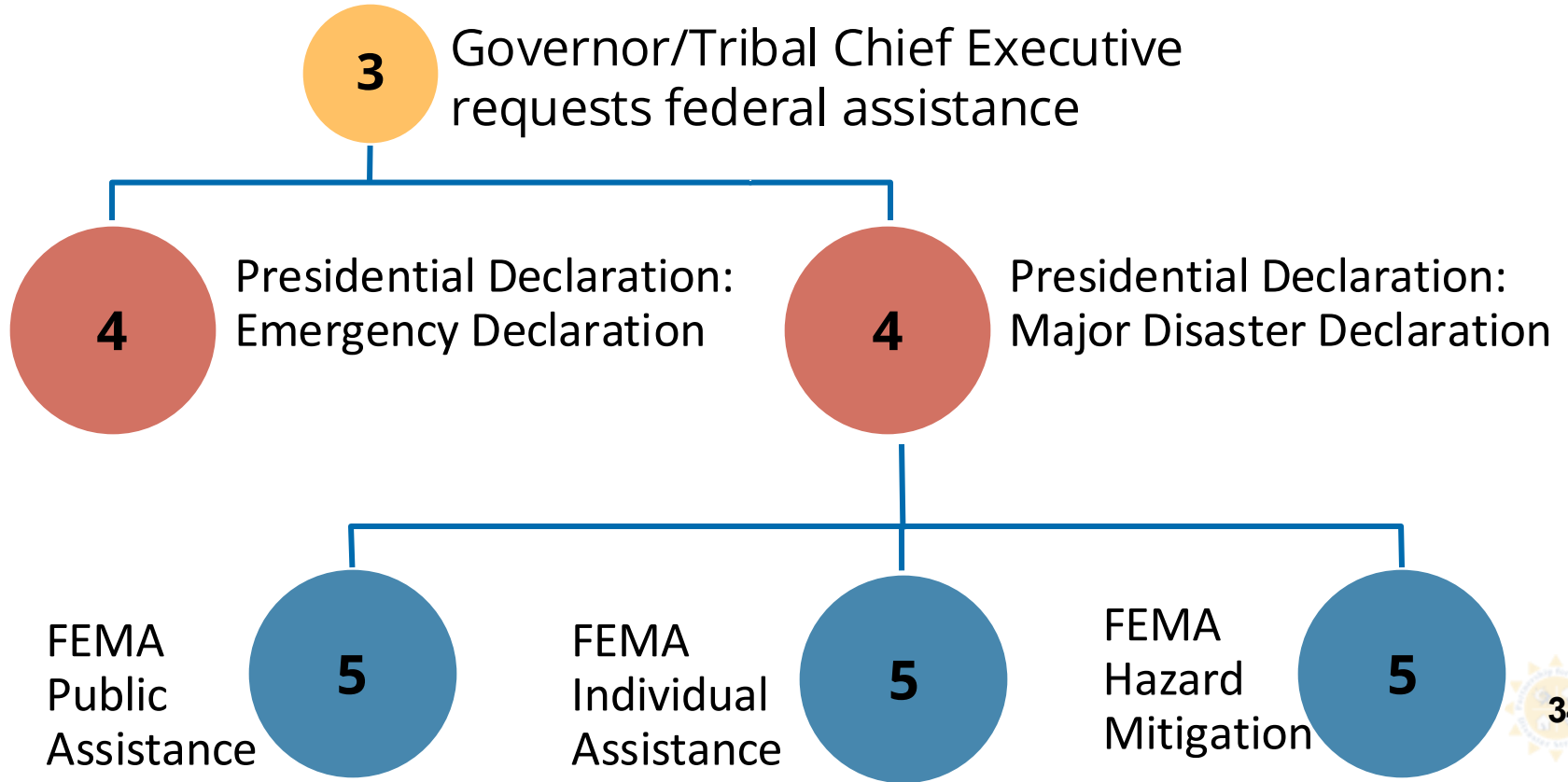
Emergency and Disaster Classifications

- **Minor Emergencies**
 - Residential fires, localized chemical spill, storm damage (wind, hail, or ice)
- **Limited and Potential Emergencies**
 - Localized flooding, extreme heat, drought
- **Major Disasters**
 - Large-scale flooding, wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes

Steps to a Disaster Declaration

- 1 Threat of disaster / Disaster occurs
- 2 State resources are overwhelmed
- 3 Governor/Tribal Chief Executive requests federal assistance
- 4 Presidential Declaration is issued

Disaster Declaration Process



Engaging in Preparedness

Educate your community on:

- Your local disaster risks
- Your rights before, during, and after disasters and emergencies
- Signing up to alerts and warnings
- Making a preparedness plan

Engaging in Response

Contact:

- Local/county/state emergency management agency
- VOAD: Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
- COAD: Community Organizations Active in Disasters

These are coalitions of organizations that respond to disasters. Their goal is to facilitate cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration.

- [Find your state VOAD at NVOAD.org](https://www.nvoad.org)

Engaging in Response

- Identify what you can offer (resources, time, materials, equipment, etc)
 - As an individual
 - As an organization
- Identify your community needs and where the gaps are
- Approach all collaborations with a “do with, not for” mindset

Engaging in Recovery

- Joining Long Term Recovery Groups (LTRG)
- Being involved in rebuilding activities to support with accessibility
- Advocate for system-level change while meeting urgent unmet needs
- Document everything (needs, gaps, solutions) for post-disaster analysis and future preparedness

Take Action

Areas of Advocacy

- Local and state emergency operations plans (EOPs)
- Local access and functional needs committees/taskforce
- MOUs with emergency management agencies
- Pushing back [against registries](#) for disabled people in disasters and educating on the harms they can cause
- Disability Rights are NEVER waived in disasters

Areas of Advocacy

- Federal policy and legislation
 - Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters Act
 - Disaster Relief Medicaid Act
- FEMA [Regional Disability Integration Specialists \(RDIS\)](#)

Questions?

Resources

Educational Resources

- [Rooted In Rights](#): The Right to be Rescued Documentary
- [National Council on Disability \(NCD\)](#): Preserving Our Freedom: Ending Institutionalization of People with Disabilities During and After Disasters
- [Georgetown University](#): Disability and Climate Change: A Public Archive Project
- [Census Data Shows U.S. Fails Disabled People After Disasters](#)
- [Emergency Relocations Toolkit](#)

Preparedness Resources

- [Disability Rights in Disasters](#)
- [Disaster Tips](#)
- [Personal Preparedness Planning Checklist](#)
- [Download the FEMA App](#)
- [Download the Red Cross App](#)
- [**Disability and Disaster Hotline**](#)

Call/Text: 800-626-4959

Email: hotline@disasterstrategies.org



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Thank you!

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