

Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities

Tips For People With Psychiatric Disabilities

Communication

- Think through what a rescuer might need to know about you and be prepared to say it briefly, or keep a written copy on hand. For example:
 - "I have a psychiatric disability and may become confused in an emergency. Help me find quiet corner and I should be fine in approximately 10 minutes."
 - "I have a panic disorder. If I panic, give me (name of medication and dosage) located in my (purse, wallet, pocket)."
 - "I take Lithium and my blood level needs to be checked every (hour, etc.)."

Reactions

- There are a number of emotional reactions that may occur or become more severe after a disaster. These include confusion, memory and thought processing difficulties, agitation, paranoia, crying, fear, panic, sleep disturbance, pacing, shouting, depression, withdrawal, irritability, anxiety and shaking.
- Anticipate the types of reactions you may have and plan strategies for coping with them.
- Consider seeking input from your friends, family, therapist or service provider(s).
- Be prepared to have members of your personal support network offer emotional support so you can acknowledge and express feelings.

Treatment Instructions

- You may need medical assistance or even be hospitalized. Keep a copy of your emergency health information card with you, as well as a copy of a durable power of attorney for health so that someone you have chosen may intervene for you.

Checklist

- Practice how to communicate your needs.
- Anticipate the types of reactions you may have after a disaster and plan strategies for coping with them. Give copies of your plan to people in your personal support network.
- Keep your emergency health information card with you in case you are hospitalized.

Excerpted from:

Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco
(<http://www.ilrcsf.org/resources/publications.shtml>)