

WHO CAN YOU COUNT ON? WHO COUNTS ON YOU?

FACILITATOR GUIDE



FEMA

ACTIVITY: WHO CAN YOU COUNT ON? WHO COUNTS ON YOU?

Purpose: The purpose of the activity is to encourage the development of personal support networks whose members can help one another if a disaster occurs.

Objectives:

- Identify the resources you need to help cope during a disaster.
- Establish a personal support network so that you can help one another during an emergency.

Preparation and Needed Materials: Prior to conducting this activity, you may want to:

- Ask advocates and individuals with functional needs to attend the session and speak about how people can contribute to and benefit from personal support networks.
- Arrange for demonstrations of how to operate and move common medical and assistive devices, such as a wheelchair, insulin pump, computer speech device, etc.

Presentation Tips:

- Welcome participants to the session.
- Explain that by the end of the session, they will be able to establish a personal support network in their neighborhood, school, workplace, or other location where they spend a lot of time. During a disaster most of us are willing to help out those in need. However, we often are limited by our lack of understanding of how best to help one another.
- Explain that the process begins by asking yourself: In a crisis, who could you count on to help you out? Identify at least three people in each major location where you regularly spend time. Try not to depend on only one person.
- Distribute the Establishing a Support Network handout. Suggest that the participants invite members of their networks to a planning get-together (making it a social event by adding coffee, tea, and cookies works well). During this session:
 - Discuss each other's needs and how you can help one another. Explain how you may need different help in the event of an evacuation, power outage, darkness, or other conditions.

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Presentation Tips: (Continued)

- Provide written emergency contact information with key phone numbers of relatives and medical professionals. Include relevant medical information, such as the types of medications, doses, and locations where items can be found. Also, note any vital things to check in the event of a fall or other injury.
- Show the members how to operate and move any assistive devices or specialized medical equipment. Attach laminated labels to equipment with operating instructions.
- If you have service animals, make sure that they are familiar with people who will help.
- Give copies of keys to get into your home or office in case of an emergency.
- Work out a system for contacting one another during a crisis. Signals can be whistles, shouting, knocking, or visual signs. Do not count on telephones as the only means of communication.
- Develop a system for letting each other know when you will be traveling.
- Select a way to communicate to let the members of the network know that you are safe.
- Finally, make a commitment to get together periodically to review the plan.
- Optional Demonstrations and Activity: Demonstrate how to operate and move common assistive/medical devices. Next, demonstrate how to help individuals with mobility limitations evacuate a building. After the demonstrations, develop teams to help different individuals evacuate from the building.
- Thank the participants for attending the session.

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ESTABLISHING A SUPPORT NETWORK: HANDOUT



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Often, during the initial period of a crisis our safety depends on helping each other. Most of us are very willing to help those who may need assistance. Our actions may be limited by not understanding how best to offer help. Building a personal support network is an old-fashioned concept of neighbors helping neighbors. By establishing a personal support network, we know who we can count on and who counts on us. And we will be ready to help.

- **Assess Your Capabilities:** It is important to evaluate your capabilities, limitations and needs, and surroundings to determine what type of help you will need in an emergency.

Question	Yes	No
Will you be able to shut off the necessary utilities (gas, water, electricity)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you operate a fire extinguisher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will you be able to carry your emergency supply kit or critical assistive/medical devices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will you be able to move or objects that might block your evacuation path? Note: You should move or secure objects that could block an evacuation route.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there potential barriers to being able to evacuate? Do you have an alternate exit path?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to hear or see warnings or announcements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- **Identify Members of Your Support Network:** A personal support network can consist of friends, roommates, family members, relatives, personal attendants, coworkers, and neighbors who will check in with you in an emergency to ensure you are OK and provide assistance if needed. Do not depend on any one person. Identify a minimum of three people at each location where you regularly spend your time: job, home, school, volunteer site, etc.
- **Meet With Your Network Members:** Invite members of your network to a planning get-together (making it a social event by adding coffee, tea, and cookies works well). During this session:
 - Discuss each other's needs and how you can help one another. Explain how you may need different help in the event of an evacuation, power outage, darkness, or other conditions.
 - Provide written emergency contact information with key phone numbers of relatives and medical professionals. Include relevant medical information, such as the types of medications, doses, and locations where items can be found. Also, note any vital things to check in the event of a fall or other injury.

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- Show the members how to operate and move any assistive devices or specialized medical equipment. Attach laminated labels to equipment with operating instructions.
- If you have service animals, make sure that they are familiar with members.
- Give copies of keys to get into your home or office in case of an emergency.
- Work out a system for contacting one another during a crisis. Signals can be whistles, shouting, knocking, or visual signs. Do not count on telephones as the only means of communication.
- Develop a system for letting other know when you will be traveling.
- Select a way to communicate to let the members of the network know that you are safe.
- Finally, make a commitment to get together periodically to review the plan.

"Carry-With-You" Supplies to Keep With You at All Times

- Emergency health information card
- Instructions on personal assistance needs and how best to provide them
- Copy of emergency documents
- Essential medications/copies of prescriptions (at least a week's supply)
- Flashlight on key ring
- Signaling device (whistle, beeper, bell)
- Small battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Packing/Container suggestions: a fanny pack, backpack, or drawstring bag that can be hung from a wheelchair, scooter, or other assistive device

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Specialized Supplies to Add to Emergency Kits

Check with your medical provider to determine a sufficient quantity of specialized supplies to last for up to 2 weeks (medication syringes, colostomy supplies, respiratory aids, catheters, padding, distilled water, etc.). If you have chemical sensitivities or a respiratory or cardiac condition, store towels, masks, industrial respirators, or other supplies you can use to filter your air supply. Emergency shelters or first aid stations might not be able to meet your supply needs. In an emergency, supplies will be limited.

Store supplies in areas you anticipate will be easy to reach after a disaster. If you are unable to afford extras, consider contacting disability-specific organizations such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arthritis Foundation, United Cerebral Palsy Association, etc. They may be able to assist you in gathering low-cost or no-cost emergency supplies and medications. Additional items to consider:

- Extra eyeglasses, hearing aids if you have them or have coverage for them
- Battery chargers and extra batteries for hearing aids, motorized wheelchairs, or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices
- Copies of medical prescriptions, doctor's orders, and the style and serial numbers of the support devices you use
- Medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency
- Supplies for your service animal
- Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, physician contact information, list of your allergies and health history
- A list of the local nonprofit or community-based organizations that know you or assist people with access and functional needs similar to yours
- A list of personal contacts, family, and friends that you may need to contact in an emergency
- A laminated personal communication board, if you might need assistance with being understood
- If possible, extra medicine, oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies you use regularly
- If you use a motorized wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available for emergencies. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- Even if you do not use a computer yourself, consider putting important information onto a thumb drive for easy transport in an evacuation.