

# OVERNIGHT EMERGENCY SHELTER SIMULATION

➤ SURVEY RESULTS

***PRESENTED BY***



**PSEG**



**OEM**



Welcome,

On November 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, 41 people with disabilities and 26 emergency managers spent the night at an emergency shelter in Somerset County, New Jersey. This Overnight Emergency Shelter Simulation was hosted by the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI), the Somerset Office of Emergency Management and numerous agencies that engage in emergency response operations during disasters. This was the second simulation ACI has hosted. In 2014, a simulation was held in Middlesex County, New Jersey.

The purpose of the simulation was twofold: familiarize members of the disability community with an overnight shelter experience and provide emergency personnel experience working with the disabled community. At the same time, volunteers who have assisted at shelters during disasters had an opportunity to understand and better address the needs of people with disabilities and access and functional needs.

People with disabilities also had the opportunity to experience what it is like to stay in a shelter in the event of a mandatory evacuation. ACI believes that many people with disabilities and access and functional needs should be served in a general population shelter with minimal supports.

During the evening, people with disabilities and emergency personnel came together at a round table discussion, followed by hands on demonstrations. These interactions helped dispel myths and provided a better understanding each other's needs.

After the exercise, participants were asked to complete a 20 question survey on their experiences at the simulation. The results of this comprehensive survey are detailed in the following pages.

These Overnight Emergency Shelter Simulations are a commitment from the county and participants with disabilities to continue to work together to improve services for all in the event of a disaster. Our goal is to continue the simulations and work with counties to implement the improvements suggested in the surveys.

We hope that these simulations will be duplicated throughout the country so emergency personnel as well as people with disabilities are prepared to face the next disaster.

Our thanks to everyone from who participated in the Somerset and Middlesex County simulations. A special thanks to PSEG for their support.

**Carole Tonks**

Alliance Center for Independence  
Executive Director

Questions? Contact us at [ctonks@adacil.org](mailto:ctonks@adacil.org), 732-738-4388 or visit the ACI website at [adacil.org](http://adacil.org).



# OVERNIGHT EMERGENCY SHELTER SIMULATION SURVEY RESULTS

## 1. HOW WAS YOUR TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE TO AND FROM THE SIMULATION?

11

**Extremely  
positive**

8

**Very  
positive**

4

**Moderately  
positive**

2

**Slightly  
positive**

4

**Not at all  
positive**

Transportation - The driver, Maryanne, was great. She worked well with each of us. But she had no help and got no instructions.

ABBA transport driver was very irresponsible with driving - she seemed tired and not very patient (Private transportation company).

Why was it held at a shelter that is not on a public transportation route?

Drove myself, however, shelter is not on a bus route for those who don't drive signs needed outside.

In the event of a true disaster, roads wouldn't be so clear and to have one person to load a truck full of passengers wasn't efficient took one hour to load 7 wheelchairs.

I believe the emergency management must continue training such as this, to improve the service provided.

The vehicle was wonderful, however, the shelter wasn't located on a public transit or Access Link route.

Was not on an Access Link route. Was difficult to get a ride.

Drove myself but had to deal with traffic.

The driver didn't know where to drop us off.

I was able to drive myself here without any difficulty.

Drove myself but had to deal with traffic.

Drove personal vehicle - hit traffic on 287.

Traffic; slow.

Drove myself.

I was with my stepdad.

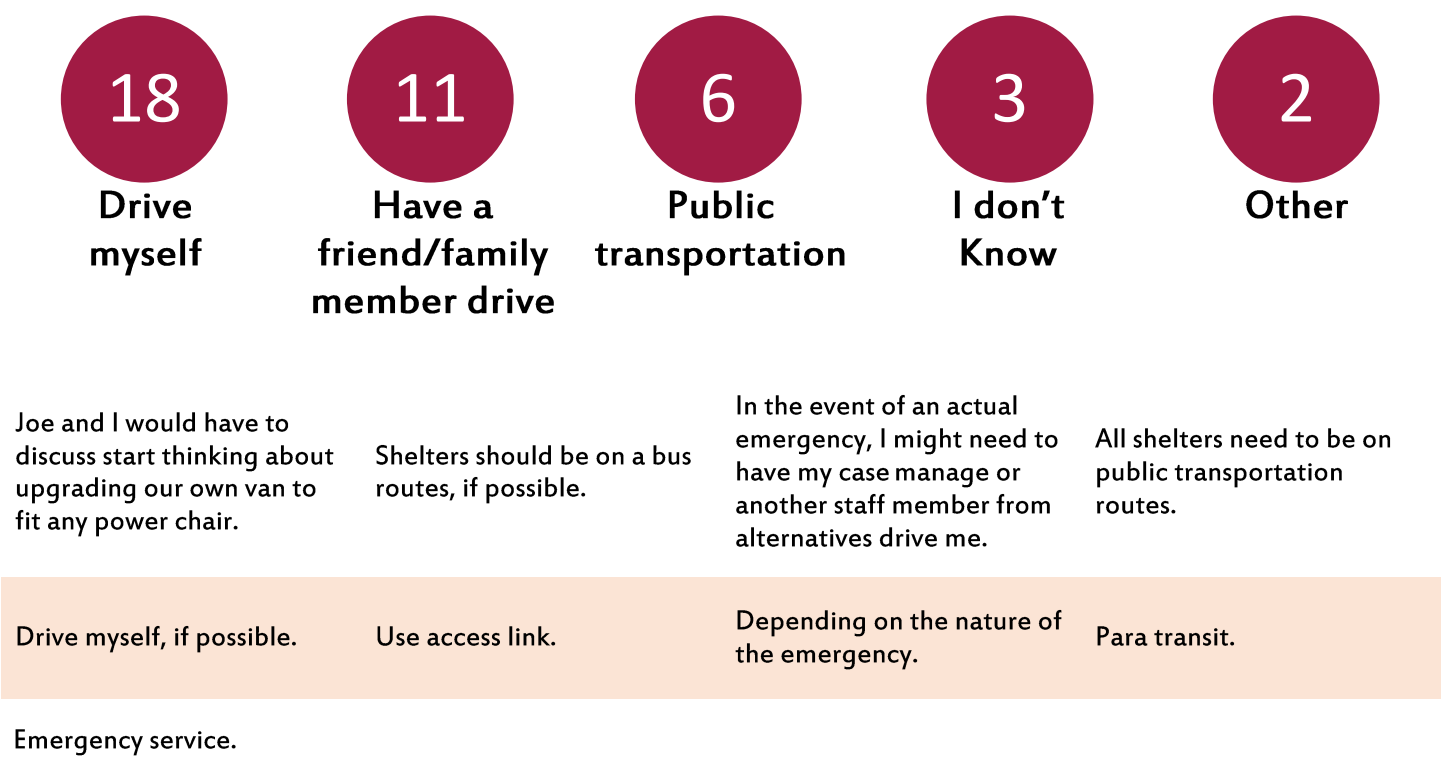
Too much traffic.

I drove myself.

Drove.

Drove myself.

2. IN THE EVENT OF AN ACTUAL EMERGENCY, HOW WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO GET TO A SHELTER?



3. HOW ACCESSIBLE WAS THE HILLSBOROUGH MUNICIPAL BUILDING IN TERMS OF LOCATION AND FACILITY?



Bathroom wood door hard to open/close; door buttons on front were difficult to see/hit (small red button); layout of registration/medical check in - crowded; difficult to physically maneuver/due to crowded conditions/noise; noted some people acted stressed - what about putting medical area in side room to have more space/privacy.

Poor signage: approaching municipal complex and shelter location. Accessible bathrooms looked upon arrival.

The location was very accessible to me and I want to thank the town of Hillsborough for their efforts.

Difficult to know I was at the right place. Maybe a sign outside would help.

Nice facility but was out of the way and difficult to find.

Nice facility but out of the way from things.

Building was accessible, location was very far away.

The building was great, location was not easy to get to.

No signage outside the building.

N/A I live in Red Bank (Monmouth county)

I am a Belle mead resident.

One hour drive from accessible location.

Needs ADA improvement.

Dark in parking lot.

Too far to travel from Edison.

Winding roads to get here - dark.

#### 4. HOW DID THE LAYOUT OF THE FACILITY, COTS AND EQUIPMENT PROVIDE FOR EASE OF MANEUVERABILITY?

9

**Extremely  
easy**

15

**Quite  
easy**

6

**Moderately  
easy**

2

**Not very  
easy**

1

**Not at all  
easy**

Moderately easy/cots, barely easy/the halls and bathrooms; there were times that it was difficult for me to maneuver/guide the people I was assisting due to areas of congestion in the "registration" areas. In addition, in a genuine emergency the number of bathrooms could not support the number of participants, much less 50 people w/ disabilities and staff.

Crowding by registration and medical tables/people seated throughout was hard to navigate, spread tables out more/use side room; easy to maneuver between cots; people with oxygen often need to sleep with head elevated - maybe put medical cots and people with respiratory equipment; CPAP, BiPAP. Ox. Etc. together.



Layout was ok, tables could have been spread out a bit more to allow for wheelchair users to move freely through all aisles.

I worked with the staff to make some accommodations for use of an electrical outlet for medical equipment, use of REGRIG for medication and a little help to get dressed.

Setup of tables - in hallway - somewhat constrictive for w/ wheelchairs - crowded in/around med/survey table.

Cots too close, registration should have been done in entrance.

I think cots were a bit close to each other for wheelchair users.

More medical/bariatric cots needed.

Nice facility, could have laid out in a more efficient way.

Registration tables were crowded.

Slept in my wheelchair.

Accessible bathrooms were locked.



## 5. HOW WELL DID THE VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF RESPOND TO YOUR REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATIONS?

24

Extremely  
well

6

Very  
well

1

Moderately  
well

0

Slightly  
well

0

Not at all  
well

As the Personal Assistant, I felt the support staff listened and did their best when suggestions or accommodation were made on behalf of a participants particular requirements. However, a privacy curtain should be addressed next time in core people need to administer insulin in their abdomen for example Staff tried very hard to be accommodating. The way they approached people with disabilities improved after the training.

After the discussion by/with the people with disabilities. The communication improved significantly. Training beforehand not to speak down to people with disabilities.

Volunteers very helpful and willing to collaborate / talk openly - great folks - thank you.

They were very knowledgeable and if they could not answer a question they directed me to someone who could help.

All staff and volunteers were accommodating to all reasonable requests. Thank you.

Very pleasant and helpful but need more training in different disabilities.

Helpful with food, bathroom and bedding.

Very accommodating and pleasant.

Did not need.

They were very helpful.

The people were great.

## 6. IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC TRAINING THAT YOU THINK THE SHELTER STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS SHOULD HAVE?

14

No

20

Yes

Ongoing Access and Functional Needs training to increase familiarity/comfort ... but everyone was great.

How to act as an assistant for People With Disabilities and other disability related areas of concern in addition to how to work in conjunction w/ each other.

Setting up the staging area for the initial intake it seemed that the space was crowded and raised my anxiety level.

More training on helping impaired - blind people; recognizing people with "invisible" disabilities. I don't think there were any hearing impaired persons.

They were very receptive but it's difficult to know about all the needs others have.

Disability etiquette language, diversity training, (i.e. different types of disabilities).

More real life simulations - transferring simulation was helpful.

Language, knowledge of a variety of disabilities, introduction to some of the medical equipment being used.

I think that there is always more to learn, no one knows everything.

DME usage, transferring, personal care modality.

More on disability language.

No families with children with disabilities participating.

More emergency simulations, injuries.

More team participation.

Setting up layout of cots, etc.

Epi pen training, CPR/first aid.



Ongoing screenings.

Language/understanding  
different disabilities.

General shelter training.

Service animals.



## 7. ARE YOU BETTER PREPARED AND MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT YOUR EVALUATION AND SHELTER OPTIONS NOW THAN PRIOR TO THE SIMULATION?

17

A great  
deal better

9

Quite a bit  
better

4

Somewhat  
better

3

About the  
same

0

Worse

0

Don't  
know

I wondered if a shelter  
could accommodate my  
need to use medical  
equipment that used  
electricity.

This went more smoothly  
than Piscataway drill and  
certainly better than after  
sandy.

This is my first experience.

Absolutely.

Yes!!

My first time.

## 8. WERE THE DISCUSSIONS DURING THE SIMULATION HELPFUL IN PREPARING YOU FOR A DISASTER?



Helped a great deal



Helped quite a bit



Somewhat helped



My knowledge stayed the same



Not helpful at all



Don't know

For future simulations, a sound system should be considered. This will help people to get everyone to easily and clearly hear what is being said. Especially those that are farthest away from the speaker.

Suggestion that next simulation we hear from emergency management on what they go through and what we can do on our end.

Wonderful start to the dialogue between people w/ disabilities and emergency personnel.

The round table was outstanding and more beneficial and interesting than I initially expected.

Roundtable was amazing, especially Disability Language by Millie and Colleen.

Yes, it brought everyone together to get to know each other.

There were a great conversation concerning preparedness.

Fostered much better communications in the group.

Was helpful to know emergency volunteers roles in an emergency.

Information session was great, I learned a lot.

Interaction between everyone was great.

Absolutely -very helpful to hear everyone sharing info and ideas.

Learning about CART was great.

Awesome round table discussion.

Great discussions.

Did not attend.

## 9. BASED UPON YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE SIMULATION, HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO EVACUATE TO A SHELTER UNDER A MANDATORY EVACUATION ORDER?



Extremely likely



Very likely



Moderately likely



I don't know



I will make other arrangements

Most likely I would only be a support person (personal assistant). I am prepared to remain at my home and support several other family members. In fact, after volunteering @ Arthur Brisbane (SANDY) I decided I would remain in my home even if my life would end rather than deal with the chaos and uncertainty of living in a shelter. After Piscataway, I created a 4 day "survival kit" in my attic as well as one for my car

Day 1 is still a slumber party. But the reality of a different disabilities plus those without and children, etc. is a different much scarier story.

Obviously I would prefer to stay home with family at first.

Only if I had to.

If it was mandatory.

## 10. OFTEN TIMES, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE AN AFTERTHOUGHT WHEN IT COMES TO PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY DISASTERS. DO YOU THINK THIS SIMULATION HELPED TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS BETWEEN EMERGENCY PLANNERS AND THOSE WITH DISABILITIES?

14

**Barriers removed a great deal**

16

**Barriers removed a moderate amount**

3

**Barriers removed a little**

0

**Barriers remain unchanged**

0

**Barriers increased**

These drills are beneficial for shelter organizers (FEMA, Red Cross, etc.) For example, I have celiac and require a gluten/soy free diet. There was nothing of any nutritive value that I could eat. (Fortunately, I came prepared with my own food, however in a true emergency, presume every single person has nothing other than what is being worn at the time. Eventually, this should be done for a weekend and include children (both w/ and w/o disabilities as well as showering/grooming.

I tried to speak to others and ask what their needs were I wanted to get to know everyone.

Increased comfort and communication in just a few hours. We should do this everywhere.

To be helpful what was learned here must be put into best practices going forward.

The discussion between users of the shelter and the staff were very positive.

Both sides must continue to communicate with one another.

Yes. Should be done throughout the state/country.

More communication still needed.

Dialogue. Teamwork. Collaboration.

More open line of talk.

However, we need to do more.

Keep up the good work.

## 11. IF YOU BROUGHT MEDICATIONS, WERE THEY HANDLED APPROPRIATELY?

19

Yes

7

No

Check-in person kind of assumed I was taking medications?

Refrigeration was offered.

Brought it myself.

I handled them myself.



## 12. IF YOU HAVE A SERVICE ANIMAL, PLEASE SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE.

Shelter personnel should be trained in ADA requirements for service animals.

## 13. WAS THE LIGHTING ADEQUATE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE?

20

Yes

11

No

There should be a shelter where lighting should be much more adequate - lights with a dimmer for example.

It was way too dark in the room where people was sleeping.

Inside yes, outside lacked signage and adequate light.

Outside could have been much better.

Parking lot was dark, inside good.

Very well light facility inside.

Inside was fine, outside was dark.

Not outside and poor signage.

Very dark outside and entering the building.

Needs more lighting.

Very dark.

Outside was too dark.

## 14. WERE YOU TREATED RESPECTFULLY?

31

Yes

4

No

Beginning was a little tricky with sign in and some discomfort between volunteers and participants with how to interact with each other, but quickly resolved.

Yes. Volunteers a little condescending, it changed after discussion group.

Somerset County didn't seem to want our knowledge, at least at first.

Yes, everyone was nice and well intentioned.

People were great.

Volunteers were great.

Condescending at first.

Everyone was great.

Very willing to help.

## 15. WHAT WAS THE MOST POSITIVE ASPECT OF THE OVERNIGHT SIMULATION?

This is the first time payment was offered for services rendered. Thank you, ADACIL for compensating the P.A.'s. Although I would donate services, it is refreshing to have being a direct support professional treated as such. Plus, state/other funding sources will have to allocate funds to having a proper direct staff for a "real" shelter on a longer term basis.

I was not as anxious as I thought I would be and I was able to sleep during the night and get ready for work in the morning.	I know that emergency management is equipped to service all persons with disabilities.	They were able to accommodate with a brand new cot, and I had help getting into it.	The workshop was very helpful and interactive the volunteers were right there when I needed them.
The drill was good all the way around.	The people with disabilities, roundtable.	Friendliness and willing staff and volunteers.	Interaction of volunteers with participants.
The cots and Red Cross and food.	Training/smoothness of safety.	The diversity of people coming together for a common cause.	Everyone's willingness to hear from one another.
Experience first time shelter experience.	Experience first time, shelter.	Getting to know the unknown	I learned a lot about shelters.
The interactions w/ participant and shelter volunteers.	Bringing both groups together.	Coping skills.	Thanks ACI.
Helping with registration.	Discussions!	Seeing all the attendees.	The exchange.
Exposure to PWD and CERT.	A great experience.	Discussion session. Interacting with everyone.	Everything.



## 16. WHAT AREAS CAN BE IMPROVED UPON?

Accommodating food sensitivities/ allergies (Including cross contamination); organization/streamlining registration process; in a real shelter, a 1:3 ratio would be needed for PWD requiring support/assistance.

Food options/decaffeinated hot drink options. Not everyone can eat cheese, or wheat or pork. There needs to be options beyond pizza and sausage/egg/cheese sandwiches - for those people... some people did not eat any breakfast because of this. Heat - It got a little cold.



Middlesex County bus driver needs more training about bus.	Continue to collaborate to make all volunteers and staff and participants more comfortable and prepared.	Shelter initiation for everyone. Where were restrooms, who was there to assist? Have a schedule of events.	More curbside lighting, signs of entering for night driving.
Nothing! I think this survey can give you enough to work on the privacy curtain is important.	Having more seats available while waiting for the administrate log in to take place.	Assigning more detailed roles to volunteers, layout of area.	Better sleeping accommodations and temperature in facility.
Lighting outside; signage outside, people got lost trouble finding building.	How to get cats and dogs to shelter act more friendly and talk to people.	Concerned about how to accommodate a sight-impaired person's needs.	Concerned about how to accommodate a sight impaired person's needs.
Overnight stay talking volume/it was a little difficult to sleep.	Still a lot to learn from each other. Emergency personnel should also give presentations on shelter to PWD.	I think just listening to what is written on the surveys.	Simulation exercises while we're all here so were all active throughout the evening and injects.
Everything was good.	Action instead of just talking.	Continue to educate personnel.	The lighting of the main calming area.
A setup for a charging station for recharging electronic devices.	Service animals to shelter, being more friendly.	Shelters being on Access Link routes.	More simulations across the state!
More simulations.	More experience.		

## 17. WHEN THINKING ABOUT THE SIMULATION AS A WHOLE, HOW WELL RUN AND ORGANIZED WAS THE ENTIRE SIMULATION?



The collaboration between each department was put together very well.

Better than Piscataway, certainly better than SANDY.

I think check in could have been a little smoother less stops.

Not enough medical/bariatric beds. Pre-training for volunteers.

It was big, cold and chaos with medication at check in.

Thanks everyone for putting this together.

Love Stacey.

Fantastic.

## 18. HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND THIS TYPE OF SIMULATION TO A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE?

24

Extremely  
Likely

10

Likely

0

Not at  
all likely

## 19. BASED ON THIS SIMULATION, WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD YOU HAVE FOR A GENERAL POPULATION SHELTER? (IE: BETTER SIGNAGE, LIGHTING, ETC.)

I would LOVE to be part of the round tables, organization meetings, etc. I would also be happy to be a presenter/help organize future drills. Signs - directions where to go. What to do when you first come in.

Possibly set aside areas close to restrooms and the food service for disabled. Just to make it easier to get to those 2 places. Thank you so much for everything and for opening the eyes and minds of emergency responders.

Better signage, better lighting, and more accessible features. Food/allergy notifications.

Signage, exterior lighting, information on what time "lights out", etc., but great experience.

Definitely better signage - bus driver got annoyed that she had to go inside the complex to find out where to take me.

Lighting, registration in wider hallway, heat.

Continue simulations to continue improving communications and coordination as teams.

Better signage and lighting, more space at registration table.

Have more bedding set up and ask can I help you and act more friendly to people here.

Show. Orientate people with visual impairments to the shelter that is helpful.

I have no recommendation for this facility, you guys rock!

Realize that the people with disabilities are part of the general population!

Wants braille instructions as well.

Keep having them.

Better signage on the main roads.

Better signage, transportation access.

Large print instructions.

Better signage.

Bathroom, food.

Better lighting in calm area.

Signage/lighting.

Very well light.

Better outside.



## 20. PLEASE SHARE YOUR OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH US.

As a visually impaired person, I really appreciated the opportunity to be able to see, feel and hear how an emergency shelter would be handled. Also the additional resource information was such a great perk. Thanks so much for the preparation that was involved as well as for the go pack. I've shown it to a few people already who were very impressed by it, along with hearing about the event.

It was great to participate in order to relieve the anxiety of the unknown. Being visually impaired you don't really want to leave your home, even under normal circumstances. To see that emergency responders are being trained to understand disabilities helps relieve that anxiety. Very much appreciated.

This disaster simulation was a good opportunity to demonstrate my ability to live in a shelter situation to both myself and the staff. When I woke up early the staff quietly talked with me and I didn't feel awkward or a bother. I learned so much this evening. I was grateful to have this opportunity.

What was done was very positive but it must be put into best practices for next time or it will not improve the system much going forward.

The simulation was a great experience and an opportunity to learn about things needed for an exercise and meet and understand more about people with a disability.

I liked it but the lighting in sleeping area wasn't great and when we were registering hold on medication area wasn't good.

I will email my additional thoughts to Carol Tonks + Joe Amoroso - it certainly can be shared with those they deem appropriate.

Wonderful experience. Met many great people across the board. Made new connections. Learned a lot more than I thought I would.

It was nice getting to know about all the different agencies that are involved in an emergency situation. I had a great time, thank you.

I learned so much speaking to individuals coming off the bus. I gained knowledge from ACI, ARC, etc. I want to thank Carole and everyone at ACI for welcoming me.

Previous shelter experience made me feel unsafe and uncomfortable much better this time.

It is always a pleasure to be a part of an event with ACI - the simulation has been an eye opener in many levels. Thanks.

Amazing group of staff/volunteers, great dialogue, thank you.

Thank you ACI and Somerset. I learned a lot, it was a great experience.

Those need to happen all across NJ and the world on a regular basis.

We need more of these. Thanks all involved in making this available.

This was a great learning experience glad to be a part of it.

Every county and state needs to do this, thank you.

Positive experience for first time.

I am glad to attend.

Everything is great.

Best regards.

Thank you.

Awesome.





