



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

Jack McGuire, President and CEO  
American Red Cross  
National Headquarters  
430 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. McGuire:

On behalf of the Emergency Preparedness Task Force of the Consortium Citizens for Disabilities (CCD), I want to express our appreciation for the meeting held at the ARC on April 25, 2006 to discuss issues relating to disability. Many of the Task Force members attended the all day meeting and feel that critical first steps to open an ongoing dialogue were taken. We appreciated the presence of senior management as well as key volunteers for the entire duration of the meeting. We were especially pleased that you recognized the need for a culture change at the ARC regarding services to people with disabilities. We were also pleased that the discussion dealt with the whole range of services of the ARC in the event of any type of disaster – large or small.

We believe that the following issues were addressed and pledge to continue to work with your staff and volunteers to assure that there is full implementation throughout the organization

Legal Status;

We were very pleased that Mary Elizabeth Cisneros from the Office of General Counsel forthrightly described the legal obligations under which the ARC must operate. She stated that as recipients of some federal funds, ARC would be bound by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In all other activities, the ARC is an ADA Title III entity and subject to the requirements of that Act.

Single Point of Contact for Disabilities:

A strong plea was made by various attendees from the disability community for the ARC to create a disability office within the hierarchy of the ARC. In the interim, we look forward to working with the Vice President for Corporate Diversity, Mori Taheripour. We are very anxious to share our knowledge about the variety of needs of the members of the disability community.

At the same time, we would like to work with you as soon as feasible to establish a regular line and schedule of communications and information-sharing so that the entire disability community can not only know what the ARC is doing and has to offer our constituency, but can be ready and equipped to be part of the process and to assist with the work of the organization at national, state and local levels.

### Preparedness

A variety of suggestions were laid out for the ARC to incorporate in their preparedness planning, including site selection of shelters that are accessible, contracts with providers of interpreter services and other necessary specialized services.

### Shelter Issues

There was extensive discussion on the policies and implementation for sheltering of people with disabilities including assuring shelter for their service animals, access to their medications, accommodations for the blind and hearing impaired, as well as accommodations for individuals with cognitive and mental disabilities and access to assistive technology and mobility devices.

Significant attention was also devoted to the need to resolve outstanding issues with and finalize the disability Disaster Operations Guidance (DOG) that the Department of Homeland Security prepared for the ARC. This is important since it would enable the ARC to ensure that shelter operators and other relevant personnel have the information they need to know how best to meet the needs of persons with disabilities as they carry out their responsibilities.

Also the role of families and caregivers was identified as a issue to be addressed.. We look forward to working with Lynn Crabb, Manager of Shelter Operations.

### Mental Health

The needs of the mental health community were also explored. We look forward to working with Susan Hamilton, Senior Associate, Disaster Mental Health Preparedness and Response.

### Recovery

We discussed the role of the ARC in the long term recovery process and how the disability community and the ARC can work together on these issues.

### Implementation and Training of Volunteers

We understand the unique structure of the ARC and its heavy reliance on thousands of dedicated volunteers. We know that this structure poses a special challenge to the organization to assure that established national policy filters down to the daily operation

of the chapters and their cadre of volunteers. It is appreciated that the Red Cross is now interested in obtaining the lists of affiliates of disability organizations with state and local chapters. We will work closely with the ARC and our affiliates throughout the country to ensure a comprehensive, appropriate, and timely implementation of the national policies affecting persons with disabilities.

We request that you let us know if these issues are consistent with your understanding of the outcomes of the meeting and/or if there are other, or additional, matters you would like to ensure we have on our agenda.

Very truly yours,

Curtis L. Decker and sign-ons