

# You First Podcast Episode 63: Inclusive Disaster & Emergency Strategies

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**Maddie Crowley (00:00):**

You're listening to You First, the Disability Rights Florida Podcast. In this episode, we talk with the partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies directors, Shaylin Sluzalis and Germán Parodi about the need for implementation of disabled led emergency management and response. Hello, everyone. I'm Maddie.

**Keith Casebonne (00:36):**

And I'm Keith, and we're the host of You First. We're happy to be back with another episode of the podcast. Today, we are highlighting the importance and value of disability led disaster and emergency response, and to chat with us today about that are the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies co-directors, Shaylin Sluzalis and Germán Parodi. The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, or sometimes, we just refer to them as the partnership, is the only US disability led 501(c)(3) organization that prioritizes equity, access, disability rights, disability justice, and the full inclusion of people with disabilities, older adults and people with access and functional needs before, during, and after disasters and emergencies. It's pretty cool.

**Maddie Crowley (01:25):**

Yeah, they're awesome. And as they share on their website, Shaylin and Germán are not your ordinary co-executive directors.

**Keith Casebonne (01:33):**

Oh, no, no, no.

**Maddie Crowley (01:34):**

They are leaders together, equally in love with and dedicated to disability rights, equal access and independence for all. Shaylin and Germán both come from independent living movement and disability rights background. Germán acquired his spinal cord injury in 2001 and Shaylin has invisible disabilities and grew up alongside her disabled sister, Brittany.

Both their experience led them to work for Centers for Independent Livings, and evolve into disability rights activists with ADAPT, where they met and fell in love.

(02:07):

Shaylin and Germán's journey in inclusive emergency management began in 2017 when they were deployed to Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria as disabled first responders, meeting the needs of disaster impacted people with disabilities, which now fuels their dedicated and focused work in inclusive emergency management and community resilience as the partnership's co-executive directors since September of 2019. The pair are confident, together and with the unity of the disability community, we can change the world to be inclusive for all.

**Keith Casebonne** (02:39):

Yeah, I bet you didn't expect a love story on the podcast today, right?

**Maddie Crowley** (02:43):

I love it though. I'm here for it.

**Keith Casebonne** (02:45):

Yeah, it's so cool. And besides that, they're just so awesome to talk to, so knowledgeable on the topic. Real change makers and leaders, they're awesome. We also chat about how their work started, how Floridians with disabilities can stay safe during hurricanes, how other emergencies disproportionately impact people with disabilities, and resources to take precautions during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and flu season.

**Maddie Crowley** (03:11):

Yeah, this episode has tons of resources mentioned so be sure to check out the show notes for more information and direct links to helpful sites, so we hope you enjoy.

**Keith Casebonne** (03:22):

Hey there, Shaylin and Germán. Thank you so much for being on the podcast today. If you could introduce yourselves, provide a brief visual description, and just share a bit about who you are and your work that you do.

**Shaylin Sluzalis** (03:36):

Absolutely. Thank you so much. This is Shaylin. My name is Shaylin Sluzalis. I use she/her pronouns. As a visual description, I'm a younger White woman with long, brown, curly hair, and in my image, I am wearing a black top, sitting next to Germán.

**Germán Parodi (03:52):**

My name is Germán Parodi. I use he [inaudible 00:03:58]. I am wearing a turtleneck and sitting in my wheelchair, and have my long hair tucked back. I'm wearing glasses and we are with the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, the nation's disability and disaster hub.

**Shaylin Sluzalis (04:15):**

We are the co-executive directors.

**Maddie Crowley (04:17):**

Thank you both for being here. We're so excited to chat with you. Yeah, please tell us a bit more about the Partnership for Inclusive Disasters. How did it begin? What work you do? What are your services? Yeah, tell us all about it.

**Shaylin Sluzalis (04:32):**

Awesome. The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, and we'll go by the partnership in short as we know that is quite a mouthful, and we're also just, as Germán said, the nation's disability and disaster hub. It started the organization out of the need for a national advocacy and technical assistance center, really focused on the rights, needs and inclusion of people with disabilities throughout disasters and emergencies, and also in response to the immediate needs of the disability community in Texas and Louisiana after Hurricane Harvey in 2017, which is where our disability and disaster hotline was really stood up and continues to be a resource for people with disabilities, community, loved ones, and stakeholders across the country to access information, resources and assistance before, during and after disasters and emergencies.

(05:29):

Some of the other work that we do in addition to supporting directly disabled disaster survivors is also supporting organizations and communities in their disaster response. When disasters are imminent or in the aftermath of a recent disaster, we offer technical assistance and support and guidance to disability and aging network organizations and community-based organizations, especially fellow disability led organizations, in assisting

them to responding to the needs of their communities. Things like helping them navigate the emergency management systems like working with FEMA, Red Cross and local emergency management, to bringing stakeholders together to identify problems and work towards solutions collectively and filling those gaps in the traditional humanitarian response, really focused on the needs of the disability community.

(06:25):

And throughout what we call blue sky times and throughout our everyday activity, we work to strengthen community resilience across the country. We act as a convener for local disability organizations, advocates, emergency managers, public health officials, federal, state territorial and local government agencies and first responders, and allies across the country. We bring together weekly on a national basis, we hold a national weekly stakeholder call that brings those key stakeholders together to really focus in on the systemic barriers that people with disability face in disasters and emergencies, as well as highlighting the local rising issues that folks are facing and responding to their needs following disasters and emergencies, as well as really sharing tools and information and resources and good and promising practices across the country and continuing to support local emergency management agencies in their ongoing work to ensure they're prioritizing the needs of our community.

(07:32):

And we also work to really increase the education and awareness of the disproportionate impact that people with disabilities face in disasters. People with disabilities are two to four times more likely to die or be injured in a disaster than non-disabled people, and that's largely due to the lack of access to resources and accessible information and support before, during, and after disasters and emergencies. And we also provide customized trainings and exercises and gap analysis and continuity of operations plans, and inclusive emergency management conferences and other technical assistance to organizations, businesses and government agencies in their ongoing work around inclusive emergency management.

(08:20):

And we use all of this that we do throughout our everyday activities to influence our advocacy, policy and systems change on a national level and really utilizing our local partners to amplify the needs on a systemic level, and advocating for systems change that really create better outcomes for disabled disaster survivors, and driving those program and policy changes to proactively assure compliance with our civil rights obligations before, during, and after disasters and emergencies.

**Keith Casebonne (08:53):**

Well, first of all, thank you so much for the work that you guys do. It's incredible and impressive and something that so many people I just don't think would have the courage or wherewithal to accomplish. So again, we are really honored to have you here, share space with you here, and just thanks again. So talking about the beginning of your story, so on your website, you share that you guys were first deployed to help in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria to meet the needs of people with disabilities that were impacted by the storm. Can you tell us a little bit about that experience? How it kicked things off to what you guys do now?

**Germán Parodi (09:33):**

Thank you for asking. I'm originally from Puerto Rico and I moved to Philadelphia a couple of years after acquiring my injury, looking for more access and to get away from hurricanes as they were surely to come. This is back in 2004. When Shaylin started the conversation, the partnership started as a result of the need to support people with disabilities after Hurricane Harvey. 2017 was a very busy hurricane season. We supported folks in Florida and throughout the East Coast after Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria.

(10:15):

We deployed three weeks right after Hurricane Maria to Puerto Rico. Another team deployed to the US Virgin Islands and we were supporting remotely. The organization was supporting remotely Centers for Independent Living and the Protection Agency and people with disabilities in Florida, Texas and throughout the country, and we've continued to. Sheila and I were in the Puerto Rico team, and within three weeks, we achieved many accomplishments. We were able to establish a relationship between the Centers for Independent Living and the Protection Advocacy Agency and the Developmental Disability Council with FEMA, and their Puerto Rico Emergency Management agency, which was non-existent prior, as a resource that continues to this day through a lot of collaborations and projects throughout the years.

(11:08):

Shaylin and I also, and the rest of the team, were going into the interior of the island primarily to support in the delivery of essential aid and discovering the needs of the disability community to connect them to the disability resources already existent in relation to the Centers for Independent Living and the rest of the Independent Living Network. We saw the extremely firsthand of preparation of accessible transportation and shelter needs, of taking into the account of the access and functional needs of people with

disabilities that were not, that were being ignored. And to the federal systemic level of hundreds of thousands of people evacuating to the mainland and many needing Medicaid to continue receiving the healthcare and long-term services and supports, and needing to restart those services when they relocated to Florida or Massachusetts or across the country, which is a problem that continues to this day and we have since supported in the development of federal legislation to mitigate this problem.

(12:30):

We'll talk about that more later, but that's in a nutshell the beginning of our involvement, and seeing the need prior to joining Emergency Management, we worked with Centers for Independent Living and did a lot of organizing with ADAPT, advocating for the rights and needs of people with disabilities and the institutionalization, and seeing firsthand the dire need to include people with disabilities in emergency management. It's the biggest problem facing our community with climate change taking on, so it's our clarion call to action and we've been into it ever since.

**Shaylin Sluzalis (13:12):**

And this is Shaylin. Just to add to that, I think one of the biggest pieces that really continue to drive Germán and I to be in this space of an inclusive emergency management work was really seeing that as being people with disabilities, responding to the needs of other people with disabilities impacted by disasters really opened doors in ways that maybe otherwise wouldn't have happened as we were deployed, and that people with disabilities are assets in responding to our communities and not liabilities as we're often portrayed throughout the response mechanisms. That continued to fuel us and continues to each and every day.

**Maddie Crowley (13:51):**

Yeah, I love that motivation, and it is so true that the people that are most impacted are the ones that have all the solutions and they're the ones that know the best course of action to take. And I am very grateful for your work. I'm so excited to see how you all continue to grow and make such a great impact as you have since the conception of your work, just as activists but also through the partnership, so it's awesome to hear more about how this all has gotten started. And I know you mentioned Puerto Rico and Hurricane Maria, and Germán's moved out of Puerto Rico to the states. And especially as you mentioned climate changes, all of these things that are impacting the disability community that's continuing to get worse with climate change. And also like you mentioned, it impacts beyond Central America and the Islands, and impacts Florida and continues to impact where people go to live.

(14:54):

We could talk about the impact, broader impact for hours, but just honing in a bit on how climate change, as things start to get more dangerous, what that might mean for some of our territories and some of the different states, especially in the south like Florida. As Disability Rights Florida, it's concerning that these storms are getting stronger and stronger with the proposal of even making a category six and expanding the threshold for what hurricanes are even categorized as. So with all of that in mind, as Florida is starting to be at a higher risk for stronger hurricanes and storms, could you talk a little bit about that, and what needs to be done in Florida and other states and areas to make sure that people with disabilities stay safe and are protected during disasters?

**Germán Parodi** (15:52):

And that's a great question. We all need to be thinking about it, talking about it, problem solving in our close networks, in our neighborhoods, in our places of worship, at work, with friends. It needs to be a conversation that we integrate, just like we ask and we talk about how's the weather? We need to talk about what are we going to do about the weather? And all types of situations. Not the most extreme, but all those on the way there. We had tornadoes in January. Tornadoes are going to be something that happens more often in your northern areas, but it can happen all the way down in Orlando. Extreme heat is another problem that is fueling, and will continue to, all these other extreme weather events. We need to think broadly about all this, but honing in what can we do?

(16:54):

I started with having conversations and that's paramount. Individuals having plans, signing up to their local emergency alerts at social media accounts of local emergency management agencies or local news stations is very important, because weather can be sudden and increase dramatically at a very local level. And even when you are traveling, making sure that you are signed up to those local weather alerts when you're in different places. Having a plan, at least of what you're going to do, what do you need to be able to survive three days is critical because we don't know when that sudden disaster will happen. These are all things that we hear every day, and it's not easy, especially as people with disabilities. Many of us are on fixed incomes and getting all these extra things are not feasible that are recommended. I'm not going to go through the list of things. We all know them, but what's most important is for the government and the systems to understand their obligations to people with disabilities throughout disasters.

(18:08):

And older adults. Because of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Older Americans Act, people with disabilities and older adults have specific rights protections during disasters, and local governments and federal state governments need to be adhering to this. All shelters need to be accessible to everyone. All alerts need to be accessible to everyone. All transportation, if it's provided to the public, needs to be accessible to people with access and functional needs.

(18:50):

During the time in shelters, dietary needs need to be provided and planned for. Service animals need to be allowed and not be questioned by their owner, and the support throughout the disaster, right? Immediate need to account for the mental health of the survivors. Everyone has gone through a traumatic experience and very little attention is taken to the survivor's mental health. And the responders as well. In the immediate thereafter of sheltering, the services for transportation, equitable transportation to needs, healthcare needs and others need to be accounted for, and their recovery allows for a space for the rebuilding to be accessible and not go back to just worsening the situation. And be not only accessible, but increase the resilience. Not just build back better, but build better for the climate disasters that will be in the future.

(20:01):

Most of our plan statistics were not taking into account the increase of climate change, and that is critical for the recovery for the next disaster that will be sure to happen. Not leave a great impact, that's the next one. Puerto Rico is a very difficult situation. Maria destroyed its electric grid, and just a couple of years ago during Ian in Florida, in Puerto Rico, we saw Fiona, a category one that turned the power out for weeks throughout the island. The island's resiliency, it's much lower now than it was in 2017, and that's the problem. We're not building back with the necessary standards and understandings that climate change deems.

**Shaylin Sluzalis (20:52):**

The only thing I would just add quickly to that is that really, the need to include community-based organizations in the planning, in the mitigation, in the response, in the recovery efforts, and throughout all phases of the emergency management cycle. And especially disability led organizations like Centers for Independent Living, like other organizations that focus specifically on people with disabilities like Disability Rights Florida and others. Making sure that these key stakeholders are really involved throughout and not just as a

token or in a one-time meeting or a listening session, but really embedded throughout as a partner and key stakeholder in these activities.

**Germán Parodi (21:35):**

I'll finish by adding, if you're an advocate, you look up your county emergency management agency. Google it, they have phone numbers. Call them, email them, invite yourself to their meetings. They are open for input. They want to learn the needs of their communities. They don't know people with disabilities exist, and that is a problem, a systemic problem. And by inviting yourself to their tables, you open the opportunity to let them know of your needs, of the needs of your community, and invite them to your tables.

**Keith Casebonne (22:14):**

Yeah, that's really good advice, and sadly, we agree that a lot of these agencies do overlook the needs of persons with disabilities so often. One thing that is unique about Florida is that there is something called the Special Needs Registry, and I believe every county in Florida, the emergency management organizations have a registry that you can sign up for, and that way, if you have a disability and do have specific needs that you have to have met, you need to have power, you need to allow for a service animal and so on, you can register for that. And I don't know what it guarantees but it at least is better than nothing, so it's worth registering. So again, same advice, to contact your local county emergency management service and ask about that and get yourself on that list.

(23:06):

So pivoting a little bit away from the natural disaster side of things, we've talked about hurricanes and climate change. Of course, the effects that they can have are devastating, but there's many other types of disasters and emergencies out there, and we can look at things like war, cyber attacks, gun violence of course, unfortunately way too prominent here, but there's also nuclear explosions and of course pandemics. Can you talk a little bit how these situations in general, what the impacts are to people with disabilities?

**Germán Parodi (23:42):**

Of course, and I do want to quickly add on, Florida is the only state with a special needs registry by state law, and it offers that they will attempt their best at having power and providing transportation to shelters, and we have seen it work in different disasters. We also encourage people to advocate for all shelters to be accessible. We could go on problems that can arise from segregating services, and things like service animals are allowed into all public spaces that the general public are allowed to, to additional

disasters and public health emergencies, manmade occurrences and events. The impacts on people with disabilities are sadly always disproportionate to those without disabilities because we live in an ableist world, because the systems have been made by able-bodied people without collaboration with people with disabilities.

(24:53):

Just as a blanket statement, we saw throughout the pandemic that they used the term comorbidities, in other words, people with disabilities. We saw more than a million people, and just today, we are seeing guidelines changing and not being done with full collaboration with people with disabilities that are the most affected. Not only potentially as the medical field will see or think about that it's a medical reason, but just so many social reasons that expose us as the medical model forces us into, and the social model pushes back against. And involving ourselves with the planning of emergency management, and I mean the emergency management plans themselves, including areas that explain how the services for people with disabilities will be, because you don't need at the moment of the disaster to start figuring out what to do. That is not the best moment to do this, and detailing all that will happen and in collaboration with those that will be provided to, which if we make the work spaces accessible, there will also be people with disabilities developing the plans to make sure that we are thought of.

(26:23):

Regardless of the type of disaster, the problem is that the plans exclude us or segregate us in the way that they are going to serve us, and it needs to be all-inclusive because we are all impacted in the disaster and we all need needs.

**Shaylin Sluzalis** (26:41):

And we are one in four of the US population and 27% of the US is people with disabilities, so that is a large segment. And certainly, it's also not really the full encompassing number that we well know, that the need for really further data collection is always vital in all activities but also throughout disasters and emergencies.

**Maddie Crowley** (27:17):

Yeah, thank you. Thank you both for speaking to that. I think as Keith mentioned, as you both elaborated, sometimes I think people think as disasters as just natural disasters, but these things have, like you said, unfortunately major disproportionate impacts on people with disabilities. And I'm wondering if you could speak just a little bit about maybe what you would recommend for disaster management or emergency management coordinators,

beyond, yes, getting people with disabilities involved, but say for example gun violence or an attack of some kind. If people with disabilities have never been included, they might not know what might be the best way to advocate. What would you recommend in some of these examples if they are to attend meetings or get more involved in their local emergency management planning and start these conversations? What kind of things would you recommend people to offer as ideas of how to better protect people with disabilities?

**Germán Parodi (28:27):**

I would say right after the event, information happens for the community, and having plans ahead that detail how those press conferences, that immediate information thereafter for the public will be accessible for all needs, including captioning and American sign language. If there's a need for recovery or reunification centers, that there are plans ahead of time that detail how there will be ASL interpreters present there, because there will be a need because there are people with disabilities that need access and functional needs in every community and how the reunification centers will be accessible throughout all spaces that the public will be allowed into.

(29:28):

That evacuation plans strongly take into account the egress of people that use mobility aids. And there are education campaigns that happen throughout that they represent people with disabilities, so the general population gets used to seeing people with disabilities in just mainstream. We can't know exactly what will happen, to say every life matters when it's a moment of a gunshot, of a terrorist attack. We're not going to put one life in front of another, but in the immediate thereafter, we can make sure that the whole community is aware, is informed, and is provided actions to do that are accessible for everyone.

**Maddie Crowley (30:30):**

Yeah, thank you so much for elaborating on that, and I'm sure after we chat a bit more, we'll have plenty of resources for folks that are listening, whether you're a member of the disability community or hopefully some emergency and disaster managers will tune into this podcast, and we can point them to some of these inclusive solutions that they should be aware of and start implementing. Now that we've talked a little bit about natural disasters, climate change, other types of violence, I was wanting to take some time in the podcast to talk about something that people think is over as far as the spread of COVID, the existence of COVID, and the very real impacts that it has on people with disabilities. But also just whether you have a disability or not, whether you have a health condition or

not, COVID can really impact you and a loved one, and is still very much something that we need to keep in the forefront of our mind to keep our community safe.

(31:41):

And just as a personal note and disclosure, I developed long COVID in the past couple of months and it's compounding maybe with other things that I have, like conditions and disabilities. But as a person with a disability and someone with long COVID, it's very isolating to watch the entire world just say that there's no more isolation periods, that you don't have to get a vaccine, that people are expected to go to school and work while testing positive. There's just all of these things that are really disheartening, and I'm hoping we can talk about it a bit more and talk about the impact that it has on the disability community. So I just threw a lot at you, but could you speak a little bit about the intersection and what has happened up until this point with COVID and its impact on the disability community?

**Shaylin Sluzalis (32:40):**

Absolutely, and I think we could spend many hours on this topic alone and many podcasts in itself. So this is an ongoing topic that we at the partnership, actually for the past four years, just marking it a couple of days ago, we started bringing folks together on February 28th 2020 to really discuss this as a national level discussion on the disproportionate impact we knew was to come on the disability community throughout COVID's outbreak. So we really came together initially to call attention to the needs that needed to be prioritized for the disability community, especially at local government and state and federal levels, to really prioritize continuity of operations planning and making sure planning was inclusive of people with disabilities as folks were really starting to learn more about COVID and its impacts.

(33:35):

So we started this call to action that was released only a few days after we started coming together, and from there, we said, let's continue to come together as we need to, as a group and as a community to support each other, to really share the ongoing information that continued to really develop and change over the course of those first several months. But then certainly throughout these past several years, the information continues to change.

(34:01):

Even to today when we're recording, new updated guidance is going out, and it became a place where folks gathered each and every day, and that means weekends, holidays,

birthdays. Every day of the week, seven days of the week, we have been coming together for four years now as a disability community with allies from across the country and from different levels of life and work, from folks at the CDC to folks at Red Cross to individual advocates across the country and community-based organizations responding to the needs, and being a place for information sharing and gathering to peer support, and really amplifying, discussing and tackling systemic barriers that we all face throughout the pandemic and continue to, and especially during concurrent disasters.

(34:51):

COVID did not stop when Hurricane Ian hit. It does not stop as tornadoes continue to hit across the country just this week. It continues to impact people with disabilities more than the general population, and that started also seeing that from its impacts in nursing facilities and congregate settings where largely, the folks that are in those settings are people with disabilities and are even at more risk than folks living in the community due to the congregate living settings.

(35:19):

So regardless of the disaster or the emergency type, there are always going to be disproportionate impacts, as Germán mentioned, due to the ableist society that we live in and the systemic barriers that we have developed throughout our society, and that certainly is no exception to COVID or the concurrent disasters that happen at the same time. So ensuring things moving forward that are in place when we are talking about emergency planning is also making sure that we're thinking about public health planning in connection and in the same conversations. How are congregate shelters, mass shelters going to be safer and ensure there's better airflow and more space for people to have social distancing, that masks will be available at sites, encouraging vaccinations in the planning stages, and making sure that these entities, which are really emergency management and public health, are communicating and cross sharing information that best supports and meets the needs of our communities before, during, and after disasters.

**Keith Casebonne** (36:26):

Yeah, I would also say too that folks shouldn't forget that, get the booster. Even if you were vaccinated, continue to keep up with those, the newer vaccinations and boosters and so on. Because yeah, it's still out there. Regardless of what you're hearing or seeing, there's a lot going on and it's sometimes surprising what the numbers show each and every month. And we see a lot of climbing of illness. We really can't forget. So to provide some resources for people with disabilities, what's out there? What options are there for people with

disabilities who may be impacted by COVID or even other viruses such as the flu that you can share with us? Spotlight for us ways that people can get the medicines or help they need?

**Germán Parodi (37:16):**

Thank you for asking, Keith. And the current data shows that 95% of COVID hospitalizations nationwide are where people that did not have an updated vaccines, a booster dose I think. So people need to, as much as they can, consult with their healthcare professional and keep up with the COVID doses. They are expected to be annually. We are used to the flu vaccine changing annually. COVID is something that changes more rapidly than the flu. We expect to see a new COVID vaccine this fall, and just this week, people who are over 65 and some people who are immunocompromised are allowed to receive a new dose. So if you are any of those people who may be over 65 or be immunocompromised, check with your doctors to see if you should get a new COVID dose. It's what's best to protect you from being hospitalized and worse from COVID.

(38:28):

And while you're in the healthcare setting, asking for people to wear masks and checking on the air circulation. Wearing masks, keeping up with hygiene, social distancing when possible, and if you feel that maybe you've gotten it, testing, seeking treatment if you have it as soon as possible, Paxlovid and others if Paxlovid has not worked for you. And staying home when sick is very important.

(38:58):

Surely, people can also dial the Disability Information Access Line at 888 677 1199. They have a website as well. I'll share that in a moment, and people can chat online, they can email. They're open Monday through Fridays, eight to 9:00 PM, and their Spanish line as well and American style language.

(39:40):

People can also contact their Centers for Independent Living. If they have no knowledge of how to contact any of these, they can also contact the Protection Advocacy Agency, Disability Rights Florida. And as I started at the beginning, having conversations around emergency management, having conversations around why you are still wearing a mask and looking for support groups where you can access masks if it's not something you can do, why people still need in-home vaccinations, why vaccination sites need to be accessible to the whole community, and that includes equally effective communication

and thinking of the whole community. And if the whole community is not present, if there's a member that cannot access a service, how can we bring them in and how can you include yourself in the spaces so they can be made accessible for everyone?

**Maddie Crowley (40:45):**

Yeah, thank you for listing out a whole wide variety of things that folks can do. And I think something that often can go not discussed as much is the need to just think through the kind of messaging you're getting about COVID. Is it trying to invoke a fear response? Is the message that you're getting trying to make you scared, trying to get you to do a certain thing? Because sometimes, it can be found that messaging is actually false information trying to get you to feel a certain way. And what we're trying to share with you all is not intending to scare you or make you feel a certain way. It's more just to give you as much resources as possible so that you stay safe and make the best choices for yourself and for your community.

(41:42):

So just a couple of things I'd love to build on what Germán said. Disability Rights Florida along with other disability groups across the country, but specifically in Florida, we're collaborating with various disability service providers, like you mentioned, the Centers for Independent Living, the areas on aging across the state to do accessible clinics with healthcare providers. And we have a variety of clinics that are available and listed on our website, so if folks are interested in attending one of those, we have a variety scheduled for the next couple of months.

(42:21):

But also, Germán, like you mentioned, some folks can't get to a clinic or can't get to the doctor's office or would just prefer to mitigate risk of getting COVID, and you can actually get your vaccines at home or get help with transportation to a clinic. So we have some resources about that on our website, so if that sounds like it would be helpful for you, you can contact Disability Rights Florida. And we also have a phone number that I'll read related to our COVID and flu vaccine access program. It's 800 722 8142, or Telecommunication For The Deaf, which is 800 346 4127. And then also just flagging that depending on the clinic that we're helping host or promoting, there's sometimes giveaways or backpacks with some of that emergency toolkit supplies that we touched on a little bit earlier in our conversation. So if this sounds interesting to you, head over to our website.

(43:33):

We also have tons of resources related to flu and COVID as far as knowing your rights. If you're at a... Again, like Germán mentioned, you have a right to healthcare, you have a right to get your vaccines and things. So we have know your rights information regarding that as well so that you're able to advocate for yourself if you ever face a barrier in healthcare. So yeah, I wanted to just highlight a couple of those because we do have a lot of great information, and I just want to toss it back to you all if there's anything else that you'd like to highlight related to COVID and the flu, or just broadly in disaster and emergency awareness.

**Shaylin Sluzalis (44:17):**

This is Shaylin. I think one of the biggest takeaways that I would like to share with the audience, if you take anything, is that disability rights are never suspended in disasters or emergencies, and that certainly includes public health emergencies. And if you ever feel your rights are being violated, speak up, speak out, reach out. People and many resources are out here to support folks in mitigating.

**Germán Parodi (44:42):**

Throughout disasters, if you need disability specific support and can't find it, local lines are [inaudible 00:44:51] and you cannot reach your local services, we have a Disability and Disaster Hotline. That's 800 626 4959. People can leave voice messages. We call people back within 24 hours or as soon as possible, and if it's a high during disasters, we have a team of operators constantly calling people back. You can also text us or email us at [hotline@disasterstrategies.org](mailto:hotline@disasterstrategies.org). We collaborate with Disability Rights Florida and the Centers for Independent Living and the Statewide Independent Living Council in Florida. Throughout disasters, we've helped hundreds of people just during Ian recently and during Idalia, and are here to support any way we can.

**Keith Casebonne (45:40):**

Well, that's wonderful and it's a pleasure to work and collaborate with you guys, and like we mentioned in the beginning, the work you do is unique and needed and specialized, that we're thrilled that you're out there doing that stuff and that we can partner with you guys on this stuff. So Shaylin and Germán, thanks again so much for being on our episode today, and thanks for sharing all this great information with our audience. We really appreciate your time.

**Germán Parodi (46:07):**

Thank you, Keith. Thank you, Maddie.

**Shaylin Sluzalis (46:09):**

Appreciate you all. Take care.

**Keith Casebonne (46:12):**

Thanks again to Shaylin and Germán for being on today's episode. We had such a great time chatting with you.

**Maddie Crowley (46:17):**

Yes. And to learn more about them, the partnership and all the things we mentioned in this episode, check out the show notes.

**Keith Casebonne (46:25):**

Yeah, and take a moment to subscribe to the podcast wherever you're listening so you'll get notifications when new episodes drop. We're on all the podcast platforms and you can also listen and read the transcript of each episode on our website at [disabilityrightsflorida.org/podcast](https://disabilityrightsflorida.org/podcast).

**Maddie Crowley (46:41):**

Be sure to like, share this episode with your friends and share it widely and help us reach more folks. And as always, thanks for listening and please feel free to email any feedback question or ideas about the show to [podcast@disabilityrightsflorida.org](mailto:podcast@disabilityrightsflorida.org).

**Announcer (46:59):**

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