

Walmart Foundation Commits \$500,000 to Improving Emergency Preparedness for the 54 Million Americans with Disabilities

Press Release:

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The Walmart Foundation has made a \$500,000 grant to further the work of the National Organization on Disability's (N.O.D.) Emergency Preparedness Initiative (EPI). N.O.D. is nationally recognized amongst emergency managers and the disability community as the only cross-disability organization with a fully dedicated emergency preparedness program and personnel experienced in emergency management and disability issues.

The grant from the Walmart Foundation will support EPI's mission to ensure that the needs of the 54 million men, women, and children with disabilities -- one-fifth of the U.S. population -- are taken into account in emergency planning and response. EPI's outreach, education and awareness efforts aim to position people with disabilities as a central component of emergency preparedness plans at all levels, while also ensuring that people with disabilities take steps to prepare themselves.

"We are honored to receive this grant from the Walmart Foundation," said Carol Glazer, N.O.D. President. "The aftermath of September 11th exposed an obvious vacuum in the emergency preparedness universe. We created EPI to address the critical need to educate a wide range of audiences about how to successfully implement emergency procedures for people with disabilities. With the help of generous funding from organizations like Walmart we can continue to expand our work and build on our success."

"At Walmart, helping communities is what we do every day, and when a crisis strikes, that charge becomes an even greater priority," said Margaret McKenna, president of the Walmart Foundation. "Our recent grant to the National Organization on Disability is evidence of our commitment to supporting local disaster relief efforts. We are proud to support the expansion and growth of this program."

The grant from the Walmart Foundation will enable EPI to:

- * Revise and improve educational and training materials;
- * Reach out to more states, counties and localities;
- * Expand its network of advocacy organizations;
- * Increase its outreach activities for people with disabilities; and
- * Increase awareness nationwide on this critical issue.

EPI has worked to bridge the divide between the disability and emergency preparedness communities through its award-winning "Partners in Preparation" outreach campaign, the establishment of the first-ever disability-preparedness "Technical Assistance, Outreach and Education Center" and individual-level training on preparedness for 4,500 people in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, among other programs.

EPI's work and the need for its expertise were highlighted during the response to Hurricane Katrina, when EPI deployed teams to the region to perform an unprecedented special-needs assessment in a live disaster zone. EPI's work following Hurricane Katrina influenced legislative changes in the Post-Katrina Reform Act, including the establishment of a National Disability Coordinator position at FEMA.

In 2006, the Department of Homeland Security's Nationwide Plan Review revealed that no state or large metropolitan area had emergency plans in place to adequately address the needs of people with disabilities. In its assessment of disability issues in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, EPI's team found that 85.7 percent of community-based service providers for senior citizens and people with disabilities did not know how to access the emergency management system before the disaster.

"Emergency preparedness for the disabled concerns all Americans, because anyone can join the disability community in an instant," said Hilary Styron, EPI National Director. "While we have come a long way in the past few years, the fact remains that individuals with disabilities and special needs are still the country's most vulnerable population for emergency preparedness. We're pleased that the Walmart Foundation has recognized this need with its generous grant, which will help us expand the reach and effectiveness of our program."