

Basic CMIST Guidelines

Access & Functional Needs

“Access and Functional Needs” is a phrase and a Whole Community approach being used for inclusive emergency preparedness and response. Instead of labeling “vulnerable populations,” the access and functional needs approach suggests that there are things that everyone needs to be able to do (functions) and get (access) during emergencies, regardless of who we are.

Some groups of people accomplish these functions and access differently. We should build our systems to support everyone achieve access and functional needs.

The CMIST acronym names five Access and Functional Needs that are present in emergencies irrespective of specific diagnoses, statuses, or labels.

We list those 5 functions below with examples of what you might observe at an open Point of Dispensing (POD):

C – Communication –

- Staff are prepared for communication with non-English language speaking or signing (interpreters on site or virtual, materials in other languages, picture-based communication, support from language organizations, other strategies)
- Information is available in different formats
- Information is written in simple, easy-to-understand language
- Instructions and processes are explained well or are familiar to community members
- Staff are patient and respectful of sensory or cognitive communication differences

M- Maintaining Health –

- Staff are briefed on what medications or medical conditions or populations may interact with POD-dispensed medications.
- Accommodations are made for durable medical equipment or medical supplies that people may need to bring along with them (i.e. oxygen tanks)
- Medical and/or behavioral health staff are available for ongoing or acute health concerns that might occur at an open POD - behavioral health, psychiatric and cognitive conditions, pediatric support, etc.
- Staff or instructions are prepared for challenges to medication adherence after leaving the POD

I – Independence –

- POD set up accommodates individuals who come with service animals, service providers, or other assistive devices

S- Safety/Support/Services –

- POD staff or resources are prepared for single parent families or caregivers who need to bring their children or dependents with them
- POD staff are prepared for distress, disturbances, hassling of particular groups, weapons policies

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T- Transportation/Mobility –

- PODs are at locations that are accessible by public transportation
- POD routes inside the location accommodate assistive mobility devices
- POD staff may have different service formats or locations within the POD for individuals with mobility difficulty.

*The examples offered are not exhaustive

In general, “capacities and resources” for any of these five functions might include

- Different formats for information or materials
- Staff who demonstrate training, or whose roles are designed, for supporting access and functional needs at the POD
- Other resources or services that prevent or manage challenges that people with access and functional needs might experience.

Isolation (whether geographic, social or culture) and **Economics** are two influencers that impact all 5 of the CMIST functions that should also be considered when preparing for access and functional needs during emergencies.

Link to Preparing For Your [Access & Functional Needs](#)