



PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY
IN THE AFTERMATH OF DISASTER

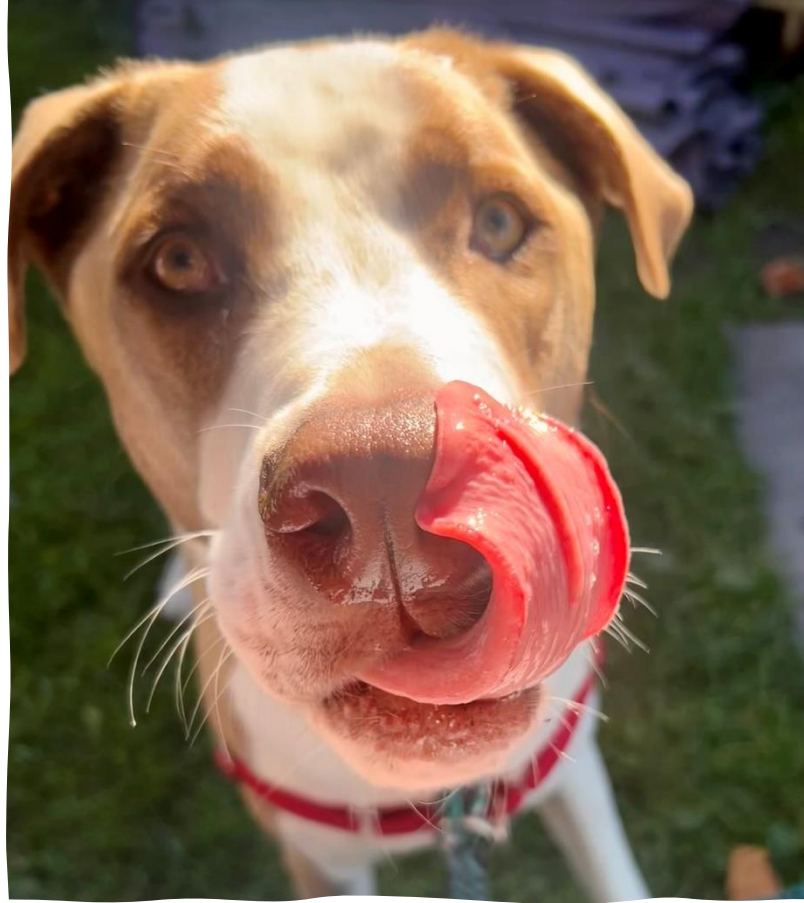
Preparing with the Whole Community: Integrating People with Disabilities into Planning, Response & Recovery

Vermont Department of Health &
Northwest Vermont Medical Reserve Corps

#PrepSummit25

San Antonio, TX
April 29-May 2, 2025





Introduction

Jacqueline Kelley (She/Her), MA

Vermont Department of Health

Emergency Preparedness Specialist &

Northwest Vermont MRC Unit Coordinator

Agenda

- ✓ Define AFN & CMIST
- ✓ Disproportionate Impacts
- ✓ Vermont Department of Health Organization
- ✓ Education, Training & Conferences
- ✓ AFN & CMIST in Health Department Emergency Operations Plans
- ✓ AFN in MRC Activities
- ✓ Questions, Comments, Stories





What Are Access & Functional Needs?

People with access and functional needs includes individuals who need assistance due to any condition, whether it's temporary, permanent or situational, that limits their ability to prepare for, respond to, or recover from an emergency or disaster.

What do Access & Functional Needs Look Like?

- People with permanent or temporary disabilities (including mental health)
- People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind
- Pregnant people
- People who do not understand, speak or write the primary language
- Older adults
- Infants and children
- People with limited access to transportation
- Unhoused populations
- Tourists/Visitors
- People with limited access to financial resources



Access and Functional Needs Resource Framework

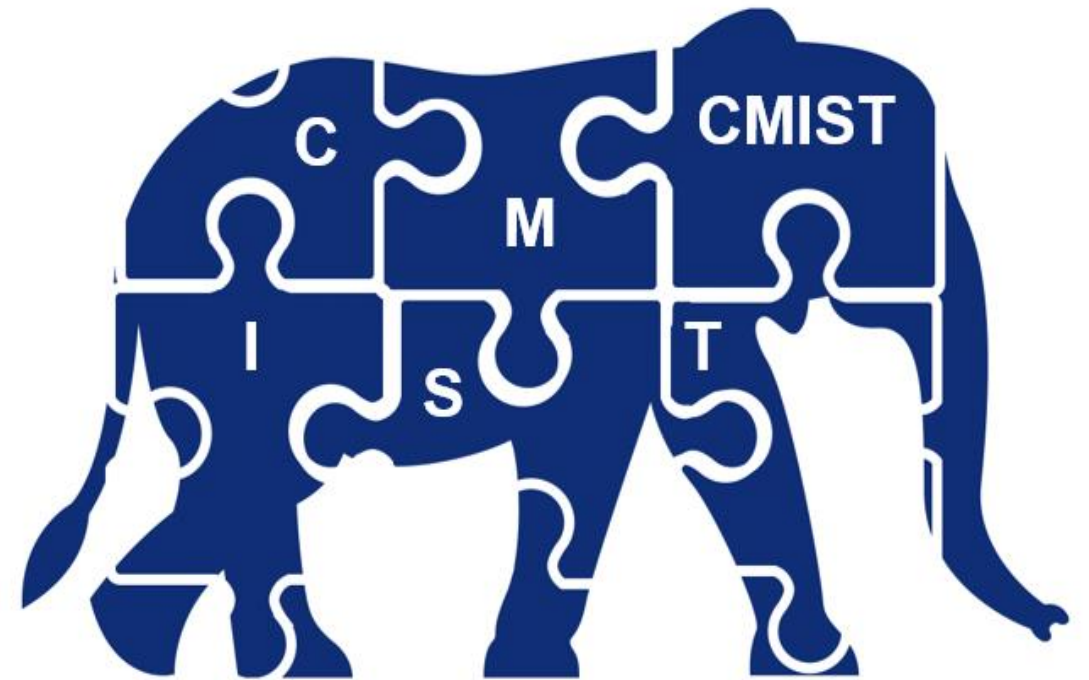
Championed by the Disability community

The Access and Functional Needs resource framework suggests there are resources everyone needs during emergencies regardless of who we are. This means that everyone needs **access** to resources to **function** during and after emergencies.

CMIST

CMIST is a memory tool to help people remember and include the 5 functional resource needs

- **C**ommunication
- **M**aintaining Health/Medical
- **I**ndependence
- **S**upport/Safety/Self-Determination
- **T**ransportation



Misty the C.M.I.S.T. Elephant

Disproportionate Impacts on Disabled People

“Disabled people with disabilities are still 2 to 4 times more likely to be injured or killed in a natural disaster than those who are not disabled” – National Council on Disability

2022 Census Bureau Report shows emergencies and disasters often end the independence of disabled people.

5 years after Sandy, this woman still worries about being left behind because of her disability

A court ruling after Hurricane Sandy forced New York City to develop a more inclusive emergency plan. Advocates say it hasn't happened.



An abandoned expensive electric wheelchair sits inside the main doors of the Hynes Public School 22 August 2007 in Lakeview, a suburb of New Orleans, almost two years after the flood surge from Hurricane Katrina, 29 August 2005. *Paul J. Richards/AFP/Getty Images*

Vermont Department of Health

- Centralized health department
- No AFN specific funding
- AFN work led by staff who are passionate about disability & equity
- Health Department AFN workgroup
 - Made up of staff across divisions/offices in department
 - Includes Healthcare Coalition, Vermont Emergency Management, Agency of Human Services, FEMA Region 1 Disability Integration Specialist



Education & Training

Staff Public Health Emergency Preparedness Training Series

- Focuses on three major principles of disaster planning – all-hazards approach, whole community engagement, disaster health equity.
- Specific training on disaster health equity and access & functional needs.



Education & Training Cont.

MRC Training

- Intro to DAFN
- Working with DAFN Populations
- MRC AFN Kits
- Personal Preparedness for AFN Populations



Education & Conferences

Partner Education

- EMS
- State Rehabilitation Council
- Community partnership groups
- Rotary Clubs

Conferences

- State emergency management
- National Public Health/MRC
- Conferences specific to priority populations
- Healthcare/EMS





Health Department Emergency Operations Plan

AFN & CMIST in Base Plan

Situation Overview → Vermont Profile

Vermont demographic landscape, including priority populations disproportionately impacted by disasters

Situation Overview → Planning Assumptions

“Vermont residents with access and functional needs reside in all areas of Vermont, and their needs will be incorporated into all phases of disaster planning.”

Health Department Emergency Operations Plan Continued

AFN & CMIST in Base Plan

Concept of Operations → Overview

- Department strategic plan prioritizes equity
- Department priority to meet the AFN of all Vermonters
- Health Equity Advisor role in Health Operations Center
- Whole community engagement in training and exercise program

Concept of Operations → Access & Functional Needs

Defines CMIST



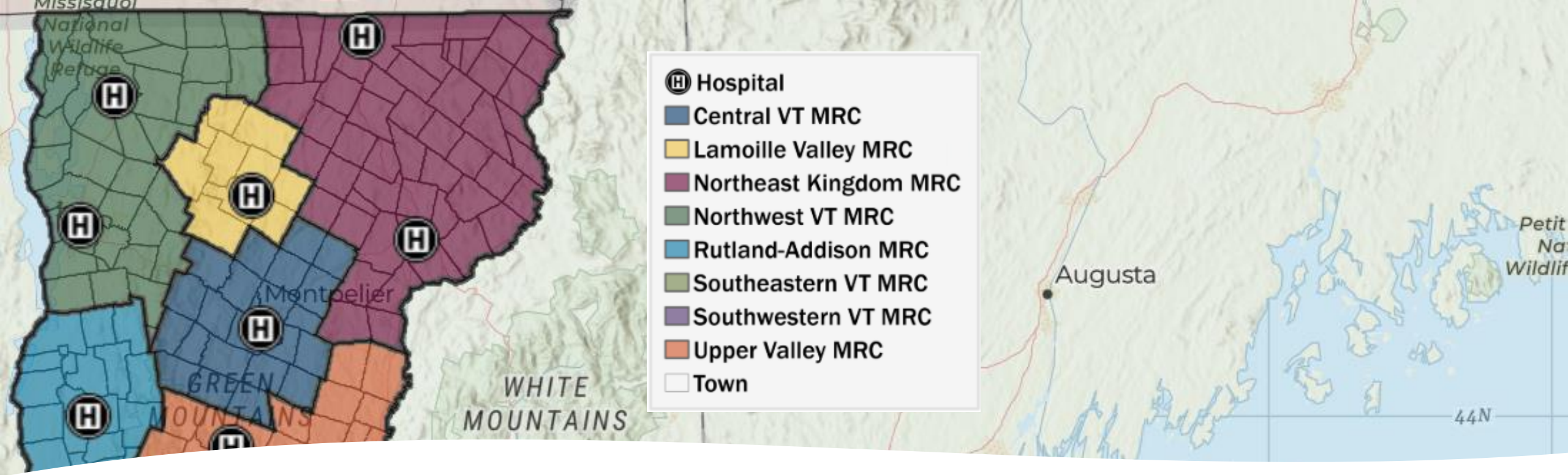
Emergency Operations Plan AFN Annex

Project Purpose

Address each CMIST resource category and how the Health Department can address them during public health emergencies.

Project Members

- Agency of Human Services
- Vermont Emergency Management
- Department of Health



Northwest VT MRC Background

- ~250 Volunteers (Largest unit in VT)
- Serve Chittenden (~171,000), Franklin (~51,000) & Grand Isle (~7,500) Counties – Urban, Suburban, Rural

Unique Characteristics

- Persons 65 & Older: 20.3%
- Disability & Under Age 65: 9.6%
- Poverty Rate: 8.8%

Northwest VT MRC

Activities

- Health Screening Clinics
- Footcare Clinics
- Infant Comfort Stations
- Vaccination Clinics
- EMS for Children AFN Kits



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- Bring to emergency response activities (shelters, PODs, etc.)
- MRC STRONG grant funded
- Items chosen based on VT needs and information from federal partners and other states

2025 Operational Readiness Award

Go/Stay kits for families with children with special health needs

- Consulted Health Department Family Child Health Division, Home Health providers, families

Family/personal emergency planning

- 1 on 1 and workshops
- Referrals from Home Health agencies, CARE, WIC, EMS, etc.



2025 Operational Readiness Award Cont.

Be Bright at Night

- Reflector/reflective vest distribution
- Night-time pedestrian, cyclist, driver safety education
- **Audience:** Children, unhoused populations, people with limited/no access to sidewalks



Key Take Aways

You can do this work with limited or no funding

- Utilize MRC volunteers, partners, dedicated staff
- Utilize MRC funding
- Incorporate AFN into MRC activities
- Make AFN a priority at your department and in your MRCs



Resources



2025-NACCHO-Prep-Summit-
Whole-Community-
Presentation-Resources -
Google Drive



OnCall For Vermont |
Vermont Department of
Health



Contact

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Jacqueline.Kelley@vermont.gov



Thank You

Questions, Comments, Stories

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