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Disability Advocates Call for Coordinated Response During Shootings

SACRAMENTO CA- In the wake of yesterday's horrific mass shooting at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, disability advocates are calling for integration of disability needs and resources into local emergency plans and exercises.

"As a leading agency advocating for the well-being of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we want first responders to be fully equipped to help everyone at a shooting scene, including people with disabilities," said Dr. April Lopez, chair of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD).

"Yesterday, guns shattered safe space," said Dr. Lopez. The Inland Regional Center primarily provides case management for approximately 31,000 people with developmental disabilities, including autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome. "First responders did a heroic job in San Bernardino. We are not aware of any issues with responders in dealing with our community. However, we want to ensure that critical law enforcement and public safety training specific to active shooter incidents includes specific considerations for people with cognitive and physical impairments."

On Monday, November 30, 2015 the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) addressed the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) regarding emergency preparedness and response for people with disabilities during fires, earthquakes, and floods. Cal OES is responsible for the coordination of overall state agency response to disasters and assists local governments with their emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

"We share in the grief and sadness of our friends at the IRC. While something like this could happen anywhere, the fact is that it happened here. Sadly, the new normal for disaster preparedness in California requires us to take the potential for mass shootings into account. Individuals with mobility issues and other challenges need to know how to respond in these situations and first responders need to be equipped to help," added Dr. Lopez.

"The Office of Emergency Services does fine work, and we applaud that," said Dr. Lopez after a call today between SCDD and Cal OES. "We continue to support Cal OES' lead as they equip first responders throughout the state to meet the unique needs of this population during this new kind of threat."

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) is established by state and federal law as an independent state agency to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need.

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