

SENATE, No. 3659

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED APRIL 26, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator LINDA R. GREENSTEIN

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Senator NELLIE POU

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Lagana, Diegnan and O'Scanlon

SYNOPSIS

Establishes permanent unit in Office of Emergency Management to address access and functional needs of residents related to disasters and emergencies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/16/2021)

1 **AN ACT** concerning the provision of disaster and emergency related
2 assistance to State residents with access and functional needs and
3 supplementing chapter 9 of Appendix A.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastation to the State
10 of New Jersey, with hundreds of thousands of positive cases, high
11 levels of hospitalization, and a tragic number of deaths.

12 b. The pandemic has had profound economic impacts across the
13 State, including to government entities, non-profit organizations,
14 businesses of every size across all industries, families, and
15 individuals.

16 c. Heavily affected have been residents of New Jersey with
17 disabilities, older adults, and other at-risk groups, many of whom are
18 particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as the consequences of
19 other types of emergencies and disasters.

20 d. In 2018, the CDC estimated that 24.6% of New Jersey adult
21 residents had a disability, which is a sizeable portion of the State's
22 population.

23 e. The economic impact on people with disabilities and their
24 families, as well as the burden on individual health from the
25 pandemic are an existential threat to the Disability community.

26 f. Protection of the State's vulnerable populations from the
27 COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters or emergencies that may
28 take place in the future is a matter of urgency.

29 g. It is therefore in the public interest for the State to engage in
30 comprehensive planning and coordination within the northern,
31 central, and southern regions of the State to support residents with
32 access and functional needs.

33

34 2. a. The State Office of Emergency Management shall establish
35 a unit in the office to serve the needs of State residents with access
36 and functional needs. The unit's responsibilities shall include:

37 (1) determining the needs of residents with access and functional
38 needs, before, during, and after disasters and emergencies;

39 (2) determining the Statewide availability of relevant resources
40 and assistance;

41 (3) assessing and addressing the ability of residents with access
42 and functional needs to access available resources and assistance; and

43 (4) coordinating with county and local offices of emergency
44 management and relevant resource providers to determine, expand,
45 and implement best practices to be utilized in support of residents
46 with access and functional needs.

47 b. The unit shall consist of one full-time supervisor and a staff of
48 three full-time planners to assist with the needs of the South, Central,

1 and North Jersey regions in serving State residents with access and
2 functional needs.

3 c. For the purposes of this section, a “resident with access and
4 functional needs” means:

- 5 (1) a person with a disability;
- 6 (2) an older adult;
- 7 (3) a person with limited English proficiency;
- 8 (4) a person with limited access to transportation that would
9 enable the person to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and
10 mitigate the effects of a disaster or emergency; and
- 11 (5) a person with limited access to financial resources that would
12 enable person to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate
13 the effects of a disaster or emergency.

14
15 3. This act shall take effect on the first day of the fourth month
16 next following the date of enactment, except that the State Office of
17 Emergency Management shall take any anticipatory action in
18 advance as shall be necessary for the implantation of this act.

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21 STATEMENT

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23 This bill requires the State Office of Emergency Management to
24 establish a permanent unit in the office to serve the needs of State
25 residents with access and functional needs. The COVID-19 pandemic
26 has had a profound effect on residents of New Jersey with disabilities,
27 older adults, and other at-risk groups, many of whom are particularly
28 vulnerable to COVID-19, as well as the consequences of other types
29 of disasters and emergencies.

30 In 2018, the CDC estimated that 24.6% of New Jersey adult
31 residents had a disability, which is a sizeable portion of the State’s
32 population. The economic impact on people with disabilities and
33 their families, as well as the burden on individual health as a result
34 of the pandemic are an existential threat to the Disability community.
35 Accordingly, it is in the public interest for the State to engage in
36 comprehensive planning and coordination within the northern,
37 central, and southern regions of the State to support residents with
38 access and functional needs.

39 Under the provisions of the bill. The unit’s responsibilities are to
40 include:

- 41 (1) determining the needs of residents with access and functional
42 needs, before, during, and after disasters and emergencies;
- 43 (2) determining the Statewide availability of relevant resources
44 and assistance;
- 45 (3) assessing and addressing the ability of residents with access
46 and functional needs to access available resources and assistance; and
- 47 (4) coordinating with county and local offices of emergency
48 management and relevant resource providers to determine, expand,

1 and implement best practices to be utilized in support of residents
2 with access and functional needs.

3 The bill provides that the unit would consist of one full-time
4 supervisor and a staff of three full-time planners to assist the needs
5 of the South, Central, and North Jersey regions to in serving the State
6 residents with access and functional needs.

7 The bill defines a “resident with access and functional needs” as:

8 (1) a person with a disability;

9 (2) an older adult;

10 (3) a person with limited English proficiency;

11 (4) a person with limited access to transportation that would
12 enable the person to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and
13 mitigate the effects of a disaster or emergency; and

14 (5) a person with limited access to financial resources that would
15 enable the person to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and
16 mitigate the effects of a disaster or emergency.