Living Safely
with disabilities and special health needs

Guidance Document
Accessible Safety Resources

S — Situation

- People with disabilities encounter barriers to accessing functional safety resources that would assist in making informed decisions.
- Safety resources offered to people with disabilities are typically not developmentally or age appropriate, are inaccessible, outdated, and irrelevant to support their needs.
- Access to reliable safety information and instructions is inequitable.

B — Background

- Maintaining safety involves understanding dangers and preventing injuries. Safety resources provide information and instructions to support safety in daily activities. Understanding and practicing safety improves overall health and well-being by preventing injuries and reducing stress.
- Safety literacy involves the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic safety information, services, and supports to live safely, prevent hazards, prepare for emergencies, and respond to emergent situations. Generally, safety resources are not designed universally to support safety literacy for the broadest range of individuals.
- Access to safety resources is critical to health. It is essential for injury prevention.
- Lack of access to understandable and relevant safety resources is associated with higher levels of injury as it limits a person's safety knowledge and reduces the capacity to effectively use the information to practice safe behaviors or respond to safety warnings.
- Safety resources are often provided to parents, caregivers, and service providers rather than directly to the person with a disability. When resources are provided directly, the content might not be relevant, understandable, or accessible to those with disabilities.
- Creators of safety resources may be unaware of the functional and accessibility needs of disabled people or may perceive financial or other barriers for adapting resources.

A — Assessment

- Accessible safety resources provide information and instructions to reduce the risk of injury to a more expansive group of people.
- Safety resources can be developed or adapted to be more accessible, understandable, relatable, and functional for those with varied cognitive, communication, developmental, sensory, mental health, and mobility needs.
- Most safety tools and resources are developed without the input of disabled people. Safety resources are most effective when developed by, with, and for people with disabilities.

R — Recommendations

- Involve people with disabilities in the conceptualization and development of safety resources.
- Design safety resources to respect and empower people with disabilities. Ensure the applications are age appropriate and consider diverse perspectives. Accessible safety tools and resources should encompass all aspects of safety including community safety, emergency preparedness and response, fire safety, health and health care, home safety, internet and technology, law enforcement, personal safety, recreation safety, school safety, transportation safety, water safety, and workplace safety.
- Incorporate methods to identify understanding, utility, and generalization in different environments and scenarios.
- Develop and offer a choice of formats to improve learning access such as text only, audio only, text with images, picture stories, narrated picture stories, videos, and technology.
- Using an accessibility checker to review website and written materials may be helpful.
- Improve safety literacy by ensuring safety resources are easily accessible and logically organized, relevant to the realities of the lives of disabled people, self-directed, and empowering. Use clear and consistent terminology and symbols. Use guidelines for plain language (online resource for plain language guidelines); Use basic lists and tables to simplify complex material. Take care to avoid using inaccessible wording such as watch, look, speak, talk, listen, and walk.
- Identify and implement methods to increase the availability of safety resources to those with disabilities whose race, ethnicity, language, income, and/or gender identity may increase their level of safety risk and marginalization.
- Identify ways to bridge the use of advancing technology as a resource for safety education.
- Ensure resources are maximally disseminated including but not limited to use of social media, PSAs, press articles, government, non-profit, and private websites.
- Because it may take more time, expertise, and effort to create safety resources that are accessible and that incorporate input from disabled people, resource developers may need incentives such as tax relief or funding. Access to a wider new customer base may also be an incentive.