

NJ Office of Emergency Management



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NEW JERSEY HAS “GAINED” AN ADVOCATE FOR DISABILITY PREPAREDNESS

Kelly Rouba, is Named New Chair of “NJ Group for Access and Integration Needs in Emergencies and Disasters”

TRENTON N.J. – Today the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management announced that Kelly Rouba, a Communications and Emergency Management specialist for the NJ Department of Human Services, was selected as Chair of NJ GAINED, the “NJ Group for Access and Integration Needs in Emergencies and Disasters.” The committee was formerly known as the New Jersey Special Needs Advisory Panel (NJSNAP), but members determined the name did not accurately reflect its mission.

“The term ‘special needs’ is a misnomer and was exclusive in its definition,” said Major Dennis McNulty, Assistant State Director of the NJOEM. The NJ Office of Emergency Management, the NJ Department of Human Services and all of our collaborative partners are advocating that individuals with access and functional needs be proactively and appropriately integrated into state and local emergency plans. It’s simply the right way to manage whole-community emergency response, in contained and broad-scale situations.”

Individuals with access and functional needs (AFN) may have issues related to communication, medical care, supervision, transportation and/or maintaining independence before, during and after disasters. NJ GAINED was formed to identify issues likely to affect AFN populations as they prepare to respond to a large-scale emergencies or disasters, as well as emergency management personnel as they attempt to assist persons with AFN before, during and after adverse conditions.

The group is made up of representatives from various state and federal agencies, service providers, advocacy groups and consumers. Members make recommendations, develop solutions, review policies, and launch products and programs to increase the level of inclusive emergency preparedness in all of New Jersey’s communities.

The new Chair, Kelly Rouba, works for DHS’ Division of Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Rouba has juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, and has been involved in the field of emergency management as a preparedness spokesperson, Community Emergency Response Team member, FEMA Disaster Assistance Employee, member of the International Association for Emergency Manager’s Special Needs Caucus, and employee of an emergency management consultancy that focused on AFN populations.

For more information about emergency planning for access and functional needs populations, visit:

NJOEM Website (www.ready.nj.gov) AFN Page: - <http://bit.ly/w8XgnM> - contains information and links for consumers, agencies, first responders and government agencies.

FEMA READY.GOV AFN Page: <http://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs>

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