

Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak

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Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Americas

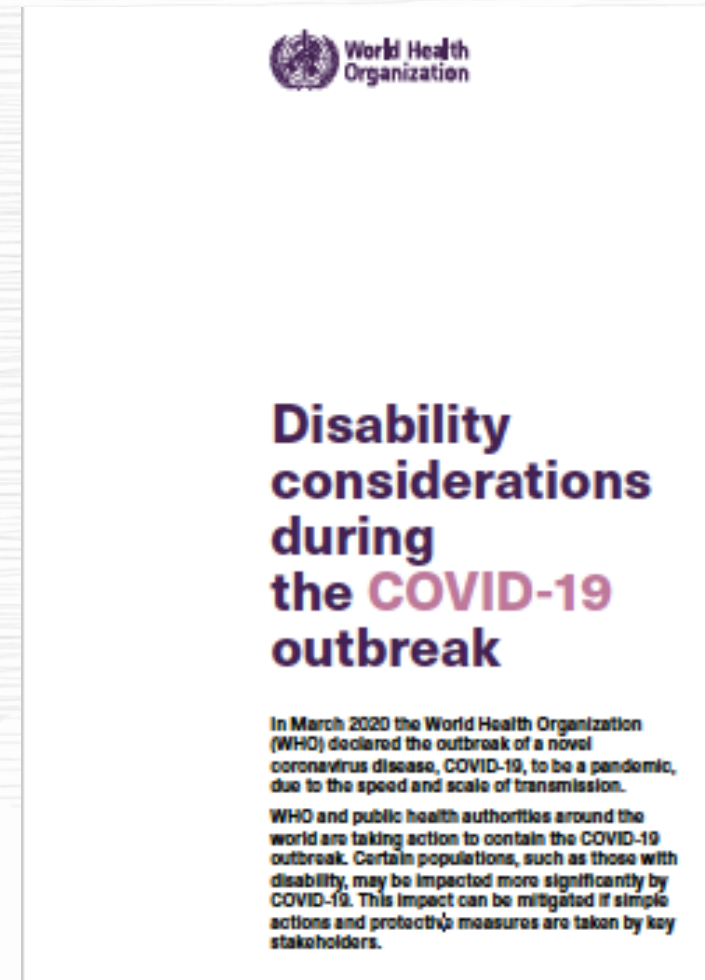
Disability in the Americas



- **12-15%** of population
- **33/35** countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (+UK, Netherlands, France).
- **Article 11** Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies:
 - *“all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk”*
- **Article 25** Health:
 - *“right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination”*

Disability and COVID response

- Emerging concern over people with disability
- Recommendations and statements from organizations, agencies
- WHO considerations document (version 1) launched – 23rd March
- Translated to Spanish and Portuguese - 25th March



People with disability and COVID-19

May be at greater risk of contracting COVID-19:

- Barriers to accessing public health information.
- Barriers to implementing basic hygiene measures, such as hand-washing
- Difficulty in enacting social distancing
- The need to touch things to obtain information from the environment or for physical support;

May be at greater risk of developing more severe cases

- exacerbating existing health conditions, particularly those related to :
 - *respiratory function,*
 - *immune system function,*
 - *heart disease or diabetes;*
- Barriers to accessing health care.



”This impact can be mitigated if simple actions and protective measures are taken by key stakeholders”.

Actors Targeted in the Document



1.

**People with
disability and
their
household**

2.

Governments

3.

**Health-care
workers**

4.

**Disability
service
providers**

5.

Community

People with disability and their household



- 1. Reduce your potential exposure to COVID-19**
- 2. Put a plan in place to ensure continuation of the care and support you need**
- 3. Prepare your household for the instance you should contract COVID-19**
- 4. The mental and physical health of household members and caregivers**

Governments



- 1. Ensure public health information and communication is accessible**
- 2. Undertake targeted measures for people with disability and their support networks**
- 3. Undertake targeted measures for disability service providers**

Health care workers



- 1. Ensure COVID-19 health care is Accessible, Affordable and Inclusive**
- 2. Deliver telehealth for people with disability**

Disability Service Providers



- 1. Develop and implement service continuity plans**
- 2. Communicate frequently with people with disability and their support networks**
- 3. Reduce potential exposure to COVID-19 during provision of disability services**
- 4. Provide sufficient support for people with disability who have complex needs**

Community



- 1. Basic protection measures to be adopted by the general public**
- 2. Flexible work arrangements and infection control measures to be supported by employers**
- 3. Increased access to stores to be provided by store owners for vulnerable populations**
- 4. Extra support to be provided by family, friends and neighbors for a person with disability**

5 practical messages for health community:



1. Coordinate actions with Disabled People's Organisations and disability leaders.
2. Plan now and prepare – engage sign language interpreters, closed captioning providers and other disability expert providers for inclusive messaging.
3. Ensure facilities are accessible, staff are trained and will not discriminate against people with disability.
4. Ensure COVID-19 testing for people with disability, household and caregivers.
5. Where possible, collect data on people with disability within surveillance.