



Adam J. Bello
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

News from the Office of

ADAM BELLO

MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**Monroe County Department of Public Health to Receive
National Emergency Preparedness Award**

ROCHESTER, NY – Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and Commissioner of Public Health Dr. Michael Mendoza are excited to announce that the Monroe County Department of Public Health has received national recognition for its **Accessible Preparedness Training Program**, developed to help area residents with disabilities be better prepared for emergencies.

“This award recognition is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of the staff at the Monroe County Department of Public Health and shows just how committed they are to the public health and safety of our community. The Accessible Preparedness Training Program is a perfect example of how government should respond to the needs of their constituents, regardless of ability,” said Bello.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is giving the Department of Public Health a 2020 Promising Practice Award, the organization’s highest honor for replicable and exemplary programs that are poised to become model practices nationwide. Monroe County will present its award-winning program during the virtual 2020 NACCHO Preparedness Summit next week.

“Preparing for emergencies is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Our team recognized the need for more targeted planning and worked in tandem with local residents who have disabilities to identify and address their specific concerns,” said Dr. Michael Mendoza, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health. “We are committed to serving everyone in our community, and I am incredibly proud of this initiative and those who helped make it happen.”

The program sought to help participants:

- Learn the reasons why people need to be prepared.
- Understand the unique ways individuals need to prepare.
- Learn how to develop and practice individual emergency plans.

- Design and build an emergency kit that meets individual needs.
- Train others with a disability to prepare for emergencies.

“When we started this project, we found a huge gap in information on how to help people with disabilities prepare for an emergency. Yet they are often the most vulnerable when disaster strikes,” said project leader Aaron Cignarale, Sr. Public Health Emergency Preparedness Specialist in the Public Health Department. “Imagine if you cannot hear an alarm, or you have to cross broken glass in a wheelchair. These are a few of the many challenges we needed to consider.”

The Department of Public Health partnered with Rochester Institute of Technology and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, the University of Rochester, the Center for Disability Rights and other community organizations to implement the project. It was funded through a grant from NACCHO.

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