



## Firefighters Serving People With Disabilities

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### I. Formative Evaluation – Planning

Oklahoma consistently ranks in the top 5 high fire death rate states in the US and has a higher rate of people with disabilities than the national average. A long term smoke alarm and home fire safety education project in Oklahoma reports that 78% of the homes of people with disabilities served by the project did NOT have working smoke alarms.

This risk assessment used USFA, NFPA, US Census, and the Fire Safety Solutions for People with Disabilities (FSSPD) data to assess the target audience: people with disabilities in Oklahoma.

The problem (risk): FSSPD ten year experience in Oklahoma did little to build capability in fire departments or in communities to continue the program with capable local smoke alarm installers and local educators. Most fire departments did not actively participate in the program. They only referred people in their communities to the state level managed program. This did not insure that the program could be sustained with local expertise and leadership.

Past practice demonstrated that providing smoke alarms and alert equipment for local fire departments did provide motivation for them to participate in installer training and the required reporting. This resulted in the project strategy: Participate in the training, commit to returning the installation reports and receive free smoke alarms and alert equipment for your community.

The intervention for the problem: 1. A. Develop and deliver training for local persons to build capacity to work with people with disabilities in the communities they serve and protect (a 4 hour training course). B. Develop and deliver smoke alarm and alert equipment installer training (a 2 hour training course). 2. Provide smoke alarms and alert equipment to persons/fire departments that successfully complete the training programs to be installed in the homes of people who are deaf or hard of hearing in their communities.

**Program Objective:** Build capacity at the local/fire department level to serve people with disabilities (a high fire death risk target audience). This includes installing smoke alarms and alert equipment that meets the needs of people with disabilities.

### II. Process Evaluation – Implementation

The two training courses were developed with input of content experts and a pilot delivery for each class attended by program partners that provided feedback about the course methods, materials and content. This feedback was used to produce the working draft of the courses for

delivery around the state. Some class activities were shortened to insure the instruction was appropriate for the time allowed.

After the grant funded deliveries the two courses will be revised to reflect the feedback of the program participants. The goal is to deliver the 4 hour class 8 times and train up to 200 firefighters and EMT's and to deliver the installer training class 6 times and train at least 60 firefighters and EMTs in Oklahoma. Some classes are presented in cooperation with Oklahoma Fire Service Training Regional Fire Schools. Some classes are organized with state wide organizations such as the Fire Marshals Association of Oklahoma and some are requested by individual fire departments and the classes scheduled to meet their needs.

The Firefighters Serving People with Disabilities (4 hour class) is approved for CEU's by the Oklahoma Council on Law Enforcement Training (CLEET), by the Oklahoma State Health Department Emergency Medical Services Division, and for volunteer firefighter training tax credit by the Council on Firefighter Training (COFT). COFT also recognizes the Smoke Alarm Installer Course (2 hours) for the Oklahoma volunteer firefighter tax credit program.

### **III. Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results**

Each course has a pre and post test to measure participant achievement of the instructional objectives.

Fire departments that receive equipment return reports and OSU completes the follow-up survey with the consumers. This captures behavior change and any alarm/alert activity with the end user/target audience.

### **IV. Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results**

Fire departments that receive equipment return reports and OSU completes the follow-up survey with the consumers. This captures behavior change and any alarm/alert activity with the end user/target audience. Past projects have a very high return rate of surveys.

### **Recommendations for others:**

Firefighters who have friends and family members with disabilities have provided local leadership to host the training and to install equipment. This was not anticipated by the program planners.

Fire service leaders are not the only change agents for programs like this one. Individual firefighters at all levels of the organization are demonstrating enthusiasm and leadership in implementing the training and smoke alarm installation for people with disabilities in their communities.

Organizations sign an agreement to follow program protocols including reports of home visits.

### **Conclusions:**

These training materials and the smoke alarm and alert equipment protocols can be easily adapted for use in other jurisdictions. The materials are available to download at IFSTA.org. Click on ResourceOne. Click on Student Resources.