

RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON  
**Independent Living**



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### **Hurricane Katrina Impact Study on People With Disabilities**

LAWRENCE, KS--The Research and Training Center on Independent Living (RTC/IL) recently was tapped by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research to assess the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on persons with disabilities with a one-year \$162,000 grant.

This University of Kansas research group, which has investigated how people with mobility and other disabilities fare in disasters in previous research, will examine the experiences of emergency managers and the staffs of centers for independent living in meeting the needs of people with disabilities before, during and after the recent storm-related disasters.

Centers for Independent Living are non-residential, private, non-profit organizations that provide core services and advocate for persons with all types of disabilities on issues such as access to housing, employment, transportation, health and social services.

CILs are typically not prepared to offer emergency service and relief," said Glen White, RTC/IL director, "but now many centers in Gulf Coast states find themselves in that role and are overwhelmed trying to provide services for thousands of Katrina evacuees," White said.

"The goal of this study is to collect empirical data that will guide future policies regarding disaster preparedness and emergency response for people with disabilities," White said.

The RTC/IL is completing its earlier grant, the Nobody Left Behind study, that investigated a random sample of 30 U.S. federal disaster sites to determine if disaster

plans and emergency response systems included the needs of persons with mobility impairments.

A series of reports from this study will be released at <http://rtcil.org/findings.htm>. Archives of the experiences of survivors with mobility limitations are at <http://www.nobodyleftbehind2.org/>.

White will co-direct the Hurricane Katrina study with Michael Fox, associate professor of health policy and management, and Tony Cahill, director of the Center For Development and Disability at the University of New Mexico.

The Research and Training Center on Independent Living's new Hurricane Katrina-related project was covered in the media, including the Kansas City Star, the Belleville (Illinois) News-Democrat and on KATC Channel 3 in Acadiana, Louisiana.

The RTC/IL organized as an official Kansas University research center in 1980 with a \$2.5 million grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. Since its inception, the center has promoted disability advocacy, and influenced public and media policy.

The RTC/IL is one of the 14 centers and more than 100 programs at KU's Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies that offer research-based solutions for the problems of human and community development, disabilities and aging.

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