

Access and Functional Needs in Local Response Plans: Are We There Yet?

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Background

- Response plans have been around since the inception of emergency management.
- Limited research has been done on emergency response plans.
- Practitioners are given conflicting and limited guidelines on how to include access and functional needs in plans.
- There have been many lawsuits against emergency management offices for their failure to comply with the American with Disabilities Act.
- People with access and functional needs are more impacted by disasters.
- Emergency management is morally obligated to serve those with access and functional needs.

Research Question

To what extent do local emergency response plans reflect consideration of access and functional needs?

Specifically, to what extent were the following seven components included in the plans:

- Definition
- Goals
- Fact Base
- Participation
- Internal Coordinated Actions
- Strategies and Tactics
- Implementation and Monitoring

And how comprehensively did the plans treat the topic of AFN in the included sections?

Methods

- **Sample Criteria**
 - County in one of the top ten states with the most disaster declarations from 1953-2020 with population $\geq 300,000$.
 - Plan was prepared for single county and single jurisdiction.
 - Base plan and annexes available.
- **Data Collection**
 - Download from website, follow-up email, FOIA.
 - **n=33 from seven states.**
- **Data Analysis**
 - The evaluation tool from Berke et al. (2010) was adjusted to be specific to response plan and access and functions needs.
 - Content analysis was independently performed by two coders.
 - Intercoder reliability SPSS, Cross tabs, Cohen's kappa, 0.81–1.00

Results: Key Findings

1. **Before the treatment of AFN is considered, response plans do not consistently reflect the seven components that characterize high quality, implementable plans, according to planning research.**
2. **Both inclusion and comprehensiveness are overall very low.**
 - Inclusion**
 - Possible range 0-7
 - Actual range 0-6
 - $\mu=3.30, m=4$
 - Comprehensiveness**
 - Possible range 0-35
 - Actual range 0-15
 - $\mu=5.85, m=5$
3. **Inclusion tended to be higher than comprehensiveness meaning they tended to include these content components but did not address AFN within them.**
4. **Participation and strategies and tactics were the worst, and these are basis on which lawsuits are lost.**
5. **Plans from California represented most of the use of the AFN terminology and the treatment of it— even though the plans were far less than comprehensive in addressing AFN.**

Definition

- Incl: 18/33
- Comp: 3 items
- $\mu= 1.15, m= 0$

Goals

- Incl: 11/33
- Comp: 3 items
- $\mu=.30, m= 0$

Fact Base

- Incl: 25/33
- Comp: 7 items
- $\mu= 1.84, m= 2$

Participation

- Incl: 7/33
- Comp: 3 items
- $\mu=.21, m= 0$

Internal Coordinated Actions

- Incl: 25/33
- Comp: 3 items
- $\mu=1.06, m= 1$

Strategies and Tactics

- Incl: 16/33
- Comp: 9 items
- $\mu= 1.24, m= 0$

Implementation and Monitoring

- Incl: 1/33
- Comp: 6 items
- $\mu= 0, m= 0$

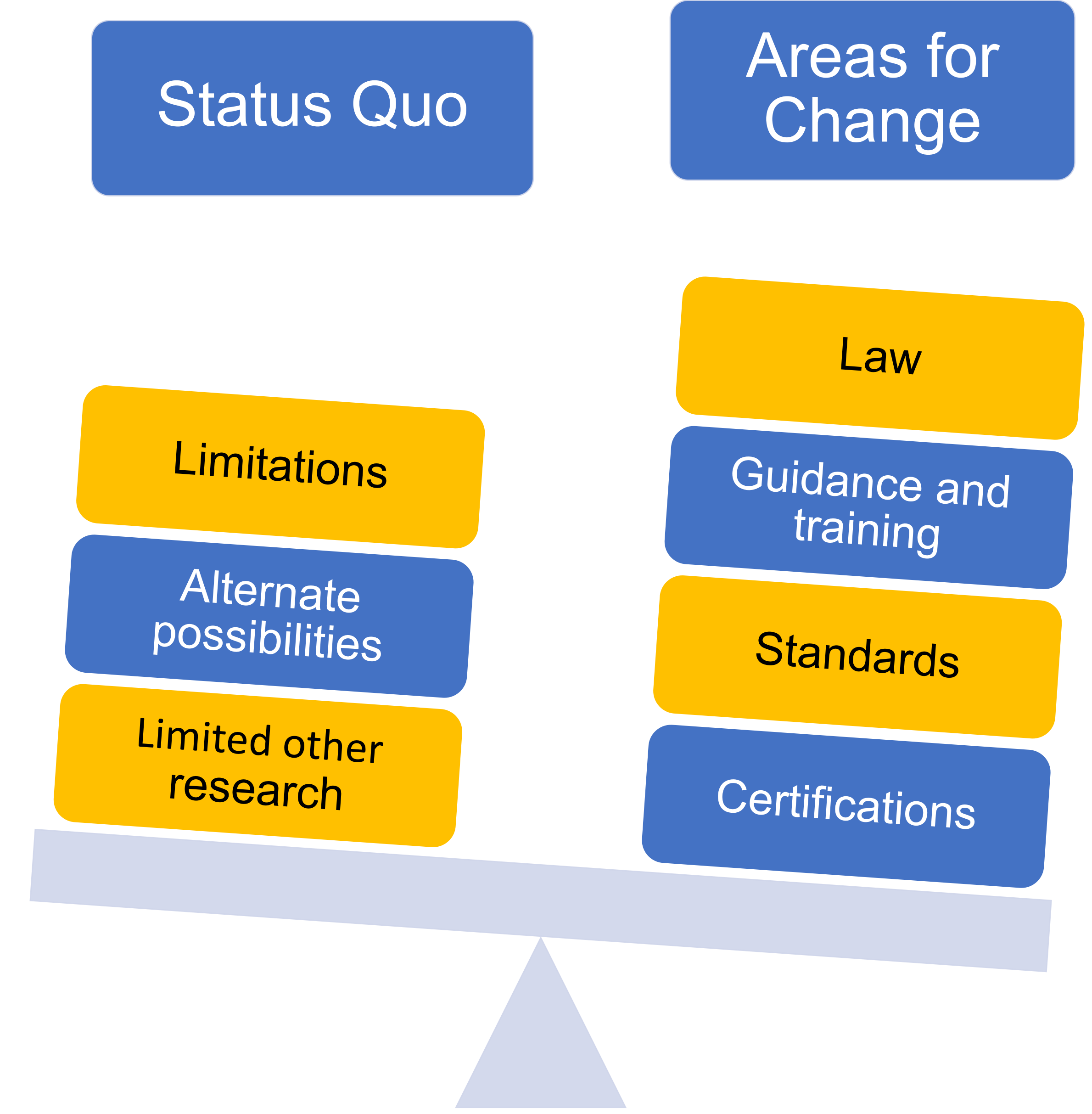
Secondary Analysis

Given the lack of treatment of AFN in plans, secondary analysis was conducted to see if terms related to special needs and disability were being used instead of AFN to ensure nothing had been missed.

6. **We were not missing anything.**
7. **Florida plans accounted for most of the phrasing around special needs. California plans accounted for most of the phrasing around disability. However, the treatment of the topic was no better when the use of alternate terms was analyzed.**

Discussion

A major takeaway is that emergency management is not supporting counties in understanding how to address access and functional needs. Were there to be lawsuits today, this research suggests they would be lost. There are clear limitations of the research including sample size, fairness of evaluation tool, and city over county plans.



How is this poster meeting access and functional needs?

- Accessible colors.
- Sans serif font.
- Larger text size.
- Alternative text and formatted lists used for screen reader compatibility.
- PDF, Power Point, and captioned video versions available.