

The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Minute

March 25, 2026

Welcome!

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Message from the Chief



L. Vance Taylor recognizing Independent Living Center retiring Executive Directors Sheri Burns, Larry Grable, and Dolores Nason with challenge coins at the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers statewide meeting.

All,

As emergency management continues to evolve, so must the tools we rely on to serve the whole community. Innovation isn't just about creating something new, it's about continuously improving what already works and ensuring we keep pace with real-world needs.

This month, we're highlighting our commitment to integrating emerging technology and better data through several significant updates to the [AFN Web Map](#). While it has been a trusted tool for years, we're continuing to refine and enhance it so it remains relevant, responsive, and impactful.

As you read about these updates below, I encourage you to do so with the understanding that it's incumbent on all of us to continually adapt, evolve, and improve how we address the access and functional needs of the communities we serve.

Put simply, we must continue to stretch to better meet the needs of all Californians.

Thank you for being part of this work.

-Vance

L. Vance Taylor

Chief, Office of Access and Functional Needs

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

Enhancing Real-Time Shelter Visibility



Cots in a shelter with American Red Cross Blankets

One of the most important questions during any disaster is simple: Where can people go to be safe?

The latest update to the [AFN Web Map](#) strengthens how we answer that question.

The Active Shelter page has been enhanced to provide a clearer, more reliable view of open shelters across impacted areas. Users can now see shelter facility names and locations in a single, easy-to-navigate interface. More importantly, the system reflects shelter status in near real time.

As shelters open, close, or change status, updates are quickly captured and displayed. This allows emergency managers, partner organizations, and the public to make faster, more informed decisions during rapidly changing situations.

Each shelter listing includes key details such as whether it is a congregate or non-congregate shelter, along with precise location information that can be accessed directly through the map. The result is a more intuitive, actionable tool that supports both operational coordination and individual decision-making.

When time and clarity matter most, this update helps ensure people can quickly identify safe and appropriate shelter options.

Strengthening Planning with Updated Census Data



Hand holding a glowing group of people icons over a faint world map, representing global community or population data

Good decisions start with good data.

The [AFN Web Map's](#) Census tab has been updated with the latest [U.S. Census data](#), providing a more current and detailed understanding of the communities we serve.

This enhancement allows planners and partners to better identify and understand populations with access and functional needs, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency. With improved data and search capabilities, users can explore demographic information at multiple geographic levels and tailor analysis to specific incidents or planning areas.

These insights are critical for shaping everything from evacuation strategies, to shelter planning, to effective communication efforts. By aligning response strategies with real community demographics, we can move from a one-size-fits-all approach to more targeted, inclusive planning.

Ultimately, this update strengthens our ability to anticipate needs, allocate resources effectively, and ensure no one is overlooked during

emergencies.

Expanding Community Resource Data



Abstract illustration of people on pedestals at different heights, representing community data

In the coming months, the [AFN Web Map](#) will continue to grow as we expand data layers to provide a more complete picture of community resources across California.

Cal OES has been working in partnership with the [California Department of Social Services Disaster Services Branch](#), the [Community Care Licensing Division](#), and other partners to incorporate data on Residential Care Facilities and Adult Day Programs into the map.

These facilities play a critical role in supporting individuals with access and functional needs, particularly during emergencies. Integrating this data enhances visibility into key community resources, strengthens situational awareness, and improves coordination across state and local partners.

This update also strengthens community emergency planning partnerships by connecting information across agencies and systems, helping planners and responders deliver more targeted, inclusive support when it matters most.

We will continue to expand and refine the AFN Web Map to ensure it remains a relevant and actionable tool.



Pins in a Map

Esri recently highlighted the importance of making maps and GIS tools accessible, helping ensure people with disabilities can access and use critical information. Check out: [Mapping the way to digital accessibility.](#)

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