

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 837 (Reyes) – As Amended January 5, 2026

Policy Committee:	Aging and Long Term Care	Vote:	7 - 0
	Emergency Management		6 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires an Aging and Disability Resource Connections (ADRC) program to provide disaster and emergency preparedness training designed to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergencies.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires an ADRC program additionally provide disaster and emergency preparedness training specifically designed to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergencies and ensure their safety before, during, and after natural disasters and other emergency events.
- 2) Requires the training:
 - a) Utilize existing emergency preparedness and response tools developed by the Office of Emergency Services (OES), the California Department of Aging (CDA), the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), and relevant community partners.
 - b) Raise awareness of existing available resources and guidance, including, but not limited to, local alert systems, local emergency plans, information from the local fire department, information on emergency transportation and evacuation resources, and information related to utility services during emergencies and natural disasters.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) OES estimates General Fund costs of \$372,000 in the first year and \$247,000 ongoing thereafter to support implementation. This includes contract costs of \$125,000 per year for the Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) to include individuals with lived disability experience to review and develop new trainings, guidance, and other documents; and one position to collaborate with the ADRCs and OAFN, develop curriculum and online modules, and provide on-demand contract instruction for ADRCs.
- 2) CDA anticipates minor and absorbable costs to provide information to ADRCs on existing emergency preparedness and response tools but notes the potential creation of new tools may impose GF cost pressures on the department.

CDA also indicates GF costs of an unknown amount for ADRC programs to provide the disaster and emergency preparedness training required by the bill. The state provides an

annual \$10 million GF appropriation, administered by CDA, to the nearly two dozen designated ADRCs throughout the state. This bill adds additional training requirements to the ADRCs but does not provide additional funding likely necessary to develop and provide the training.

- 3) DOR anticipates minor and absorbable costs, to the extent that existing emergency preparedness and response tools are utilized (GF and federal funds).

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

The state has long been aware that individuals with disabilities and older adults face a disproportionate risk of death during natural disasters. A 2019 audit by the California State Auditor highlighted the critical gap in emergency management agencies' ability to support these vulnerable populations, revealing a lack of guidelines for assisting these individual in cases of emergency. Recently, wildfires in Southern California claimed the lives of several individuals with disabilities, many of whom were over the age of 70. Despite the longstanding dangers faced by this community, the state has repeatedly failed to take meaningful action. This bill aims to address this urgent issue and ensure that we prevent further tragedies.

This bill is supported by groups advocating for older adults and individuals with disabilities, as well as by Los Angeles County and the Orange County Fire authority. There is no registered opposition to the bill.

- 2) **Background.** In December 2019, the California State Auditor released an audit highlighting deficiencies in state and local emergency preparations for addressing the needs of people with “access and functional needs.” This population includes those with developmental, intellectual, or physical disabilities, chronic conditions or injuries, limited English proficiency, older adults, those living in institutional settings, and those who are low income or homeless, among others.

Emergency and Disaster Response. OES is responsible for overseeing the state’s response during all major emergencies and disasters. OES also supports local jurisdictions and communities through planning and preparedness activities, training, and facilitating the immediate response to an emergency through the longer-term recovery phase. OAFN within OES identifies the needs of individuals with disabilities and others with access or functional needs before, during, and after disasters and integrates them into the state’s emergency management systems. OAFN offers training and guidance to emergency managers and planners, disability advocates and other service providers responsible for planning for, responding to and helping communities recover from disasters.

ARDCs. CDA contracts with and provides leadership and direction to 33 area agencies on aging (AAAs), most of them nonprofits, that coordinate a wide array of services to seniors and adults with disabilities at the community level and serve as the focal point for local aging concerns. Overseen by DOR, independent living centers (ILCs) are nonresidential nonprofit

entities created and run by individuals with disabilities to help individuals with disabilities lead independent lives within a local community.

Existing law establishes the ADRC program, administered by CDA. ADRCs act as a "no wrong door" system to provide a single coordinated system for people seeking reliable information and access to long-term services and supports. California's ADRCs are led by a core partnership between ILCs and AAAs and include extended partner organizations.

Advocates assert that when a disaster occurs, traditional emergency response and recovery methods may not effectively meet the needs of individuals with access and functional needs. By requiring ADRC programs to provide disaster and emergency preparedness training for older adults and individuals with disabilities, advocates contend this bill will help address the gap between local emergency management teams and organizations that work with and on behalf of community members.

Master Plan for Aging (MPA). California's senior population is growing faster than any other age group. By 2030, over 25% of the population in California will be 60 and older. In January of 2021, the Governor released his MPA, which prioritizes the health and well-being of older Californians and the need for policies that promote healthy aging. This bill advances the goals of the MPA regarding the needs and wellbeing of older Californians.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** The September 5, 2025, version of SB 352 (Reyes) included the contents of this bill. SB 352 was subsequently amended on the Assembly Floor for a different purpose.

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