Reviewer's report

**Title:** Responding to the Deaf in Disasters: Establishing the Need for Systematic Training for State-Level Emergency Management Agencies and Community Organizations

**Version:** 2 **Date:** 19 November 2012

**Reviewer:** Christine Urquhart

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Comments on Engelman: Responding to the deaf in disasters

Major compulsory revisions

1. The description of the methods requires more details about a) who the researchers conducting the telephone interviews (for example, were they trained telephone interviewers?) and b) the scope of the questions, as it is hard to assess whether it is fair to pull out three items separately for analysis and reporting.

2. There are no details about the type of analysis undertaken, although it seems that some statistical analysis was undertaken from the presentation of the results on the KI telephone interviews.

3. Similarly, CBO interview data analysis. There is very helpful detail on the construction of the test instrument but there is little on the content and nothing about the analysis approach – qualitative, quantitative or mixed? Presumably the CBO group was chosen for geographical convenience but it would be helpful to know whether the CBO distribution is likely to differ in other parts of the USA, or whether there are reasons to believe it might be representative.

4. Local law enforcement training evaluation – was the development of the attitude measurement instrument based on any other validated instrument? Authors should explain the derivation of the instrument used. This is important given the authors’ conclusions about the need for evaluation of training.

5. Require more details on training evaluation – e.g. timing of evaluation for pre and post surveys? How many participants were there in the pre-post survey and the focus group? Who conducted the focus group? How was the focus group organised? Some of these details are given in the results but it seems more logical to include them in the methods.

6. Results – literature review. Is it to be assumed that there was no literature on countries apart from the USA? Please clarify, as the focus of the submission is almost entirely on the US situation.

7. Results – a response to a question such as: “Have you or other staff attended any other trainings on serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing populations during
emergencies or disasters?" - was there any possibility of verifying this against other information collected? I’m not saying that the respondents would deliberately not tell the truth but finding the answers to this could be time-consuming. It seems that the KIs (some at least) were encouraged to research this problem in more depth but for the submission some acknowledgement of the likelihood of getting a truthful answer needs to be considered.

8. Conclusions – these seem at time to go beyond the stated aims and objectives of this submission. The concern over the problem is understandable, but the message for the policymakers in the USA may not need to be emphasised to the BMC audience. I think it would be helpful to highlight the main messages for policymakers elsewhere who have responsibilities for emergency planning, the messages for social care organisations that support the deaf and hard of hearing communities, and the messages for those who might wish to replicate this research and evaluate the success of measures put in place to improve services for the deaf and hard of hearing.

9. Conclusions – these should indicate the limitations of the current research, and the likely transferability of the findings to other settings.

Minor essential revisions
1. Literature review. The first two sentences seem contradictory: the first indicates that only peer-reviewed literature was included. The second sentence mentions that grey literature was sought.
2. Figure 1 needs some tidying up. Why two sets of percentages?
3. Figure 2 – does not reproduce well on my screen. In fact it looks dreadful!
4. The authors appear to be dividing up their work among several submissions – the situation is unclear. I think that greater transparency about what is being reported where is required.

Discretionary revisions
1. Tables could be neater –for Table 2, I might recommend putting the YES and NO information in one column. I see the problem about the different overall N numbers but it does seem a bit clumsy.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.