Allan Loudell: Dr. Guinivan, tell us how this works. How are you providing this outreach and trying to help people during these stressful times?

Phyllis Guinivan: Well, the Center for Disabilities Studies recognized that there was a need in the community to assist people with disabilities in preparing for an emergency and also in helping first responders know how they could effectively assist people with disabilities when they are responding to an emergency. So we’ve developed three tools. One is a helpline, that number is 855-READY-DE (855-732-3933). And people can call that helpline and we will help them develop a personal readiness plan that looks at their unique challenges that they face on a daily basis and how they might address them during an emergency, such as a snow day. So we might, for instance, look at the medications that a person might be on and talk to them about thinking in advance about getting some medicine and what the storage capabilities might be in case the power goes out, that kind of thing. And then another tool is a new website we have. It’s allreadyde.org. And in that tool, there is an interactive website where people can actually go online and go through step by step in developing a personal readiness plan. And there are also numerous tools that they can use, such as they can download communications tools that people who are non-verbal or who have autism or who may be deaf can use to assist in communication during emergencies.

Allan: So far during this winter have you had any try-out of some of these systems?

Phyllis: Well, we have had people calling on the helpline and also asking about accessing the website. And we have been working with the Medical Reserve Corps on a new web app we have called delawaretips.org. And the Newark Police, they are also interested in including the web app and allreadyde.org in training for their police. So we’re looking at training there.

Allan: Can you give us any story in the past, something that may illustrate how people in need do need this help?

Phyllis: Well I know that, for instance, when we started the program there was a person who was using a health aide. And during a storm, the agency was not able to provide that assistance. So what we’re encouraging now is for people to think through their needs and if they know there is a storm approaching, then to find alternative assistance or go over the protocols for the health agency that is providing the assistance in advance so they won’t be, kind of, left alone and trying at the last minute to find resources.

Allan: A few seconds, what is that website again?

Phyllis: The website is allreadyde.org.

Allan: Allreadyde.org?

Phyllis: Yes.

Allan: Okay. Good luck with everything during the season and thank you Dr. Phyllis Guinivan, Emergency Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities Project. All the best.

Phyllis: Thank you.