

# Establishing an Unmet Needs Coalition



# Table of Contents

---

Volunteer Florida	2
Acknowledgements	2
Purpose	2
Unmet Needs Coalition	3
Purpose of an Unmet Needs Coalition	4
Unmet Needs Coalition Offers Community-based Assistance	4
Identification and Recruitment of Local Organizations	5
Endorsement and Participation by County EM Professionals	7
Sharing the Vision	7
Collaboration among Partners	7
Establishing a Framework	8
Leadership	9
Scope of Services	9
Resource Development	10
Measuring, Evaluating and Reporting Coalition Accomplishments	11
Timely Start-up	11
Recovery Operations	12
Resource of Last Resort	13
Recovery Operations De-activation	13
Summary	14
Appendix – Sample Operating Guidelines	15
Organization	16
Pre-Disaster Operations	17
Post-Disaster Operations	18

# Establishing an Unmet Needs Coalition

## Volunteer Florida

Volunteer Florida was created October 11, 1993 to fulfill the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Florida Legislature enacted Volunteer Florida into law in 1994 (Florida Statute 14.29). The mission of the organization is to strengthen communities through volunteer service. In carrying out its mission, Volunteer Florida partners with community-based organizations, non-profits, businesses, government entities, and colleges and universities. A diverse, bipartisan board of citizens actively involved in volunteer service oversees the work of Volunteer Florida.

As Florida's lead agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) -15, Volunteers and Donations, Volunteer Florida works closely with the Florida Division of Emergency Management to plan for and ensure productive volunteer participation in disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. As your county develops strategies and procedures for addressing the unmet needs of disaster survivors during the long-term recovery phase, Volunteer Florida's Emergency Management staff will be available to provide technical assistance and insight into the process.

## Acknowledgements

This manual is a compilation of strategies and tools that have proven successful in many communities. Counties are encouraged to customize and adapt these materials for use by local ESF-15 organizations and resources. Many of the proven methods presented here are supported by the published materials of several experienced and dedicated disaster response and recovery organizations. The ideas are credited not to specific publications or individuals, but to the organizations from which the ideas came.



A sincere thank-you to all of the individuals and organizations whose concern for the well-being of Florida citizens contributed to this publication:

- Church World Service (CWS)  
[www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
- Florida Interfaith Networking in Disaster (FIND)  
E-mail: [jodyhill@floridadisasters.org](mailto:jodyhill@floridadisasters.org)
- Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)  
[Worldrelief.lcms.org/ldr.html](http://Worldrelief.lcms.org/ldr.html)
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org)

## Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to integrate the best and most unifying approaches to addressing the unmet needs of disaster survivors into one manual that can be used by all Florida communities, as they develop their own strategies for disaster recovery. It will offer guidance on setting up and operating an Unmet Needs Coalition, evaluating its effectiveness, and planning for its effective participation in future disasters. The manual's intended

audience includes:

- Anyone involved in helping a community to recover from the devastating effects of a disaster;
- Emergency management and not-for-profit organizations involved in planning to meet the long-term recovery needs of disaster survivors; and
- Human service organizations, interfaith groups and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) chapters committed to helping local disaster survivors to navigate their own recoveries.

### Unmet Needs Coalition

Many names have been given to the networks of community agencies that come together to help survivors recover from disasters. They have been referred to as Community Resource Committees, Unmet Needs Committees, Long-term Recovery Committees and Resource Coordination Committees. All are fitting names because the organization does coordinate community resources during the long-term recovery period to address the needs of survivors unmet through the standard assistance delivery sequence.

This network of organizations will be referred to in this manual as an Unmet Needs Coalition. Webster defines coalition as an "alliance of distinct parties, persons, or states for joint action." In a Presidentially declared disaster, "unmet needs" refers to the needs of survivors, that are unresolved at the time many agencies halt their services. The term is not intended as a commentary on the effectiveness of other response and recovery organizations. The Unmet Needs Coalition is not intended to offer its resources until the client has exhausted all other means of assistance. Coalition caseworkers might, however, guide a client through the process of accessing available resources. FEMA offers several real-life examples of unmet needs:

- A tornado struck, paralyzing Archie and destroying his mobile home. His medical bills exceeded \$80,000. Not qualifying for a federal loan, Archie received the maximum disaster grant toward replacing his home, but it wasn't enough. The local unmet needs coalition



helped to find him a used mobile home and made up

the difference between the grant and the cost of the home. Coalition volunteers added access ramps to make Archie's new home accessible.

- The home of Joe and Mary, an elderly couple living on their social security, sustained room damage and minor flooding during a storm. They did not qualify for a federal loan but received some assistance from FEMA for disaster housing/minor home repair and from the federal grant program. Volunteers making the repairs found that the entire roof needed replacing and, since lack of regular roof maintenance contributed to the storm damage, FEMA could not provide additional assistance. A local unmet needs coalition purchased the needed building materials and volunteers finished the new roof.
- Edna, an elderly widow whose home was destroyed by a recent flood, was eligible for temporary use of a FEMA/State mobile home but had insufficient income to either replace her site built home or purchase the mobile home. Cooperative efforts by the state and local unmet needs coalitions, in the form of assistance with lot rent, relocation, and set up of the mobile home, allowed Edna to purchase the FEMA/State mobile home.

In a non-declared disaster, where minimal federal assistance is available to survivors, the Unmet Needs Coalition should begin immediately to match needs with available resources.

### Purpose of an Unmet Needs Coalition

When a disaster strikes, whether it's a hurricane, a flood or a hazardous materials spill, a well coordinated recovery effort will ensure maximum utilization of local resources. As professional government and not-for-profit responders save lives and protect property, the community mobilizes to fill other needs. Church pantries are stocked as local congregations prepare to help. The food bank and United Way make public pleas for donations to help meet the needs of the community. Communities of faith generously offer their resources. If the magnitude of the event warrants state and federal participation, additional resources in the form of loans and grants become available to survivors.

When the danger is passed, critical services have been restored and the community is once again stable, the response and short-term recovery phases of the disaster come to an end. The lives of most of the survivors are returning to a state resembling normalcy. They have what they need to put their lives back together and they will thrive again someday. A few of those affected by the disaster, however, will be less resilient.

A variety of factors, including age, disability, language barriers, lack of personal documentation, distance from the Disaster Recovery Center and unfamiliarity with the disaster relief system, can limit some survivors' access to assistance. It is often those in most desperate need that are least able to get help.

### Unmet Needs Coalition Offers Community-based Assistance

A broad-based Unmet Needs Coalition, made up of representatives of governmental, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations, local service clubs, and businesses, serves as a clearinghouse for matching individual or family needs with available local resources. Unmet Needs Coalitions make the resources of all participating organizations available to survivors who are still in need and are ineligible for or are unable to access other resources. National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster



*Some survivors will  
be less resilient*



(NVOAD) advocates Unmet Needs Coalitions as empowering all member organizations to play a vital role in the community's recovery and to provide survivors the assistance they were unable to get anywhere else.

For example, the representative of a small church brought to the attention of an Unmet Needs Coalition an elderly woman whose roof sustained damage from a hurricane. Someone had come out the day after the storm and applied visquene to the roof but, because of the remote location of her home and the lack of wheelchair accessible transportation, she was unable to follow the prescribed procedures for requesting additional assistance.

One member of the Unmet Needs Coalition, a local building contractor, agreed to procure donated materials and to volunteer his time to complete the job. A case-worker scheduled a visit to the woman's home and arranged for assistance with several other disaster-related needs. The members of the church who first learned of her plight could not meet this survivor's needs alone. Their critical role in this case was to bring her situation to the attention of the Unmet Needs Coalition, tapping into a much larger pool of resources.

The sharing of information about cases not only makes possible the best use of community resources, but helps to prevent duplication of services, as well. The many safety nets that have been put in place by local, state and federal governments and non-governmental organizations to protect people from the devastating effects of disasters often overlap one another. Sharing information about services provided to clients will help to alleviate this duplication of services, ensuring the maximum utilization of resources.

### **Identification and Recruitment of Local Organizations**

If there is an existing network of disaster organizations, this group is a logical one to address the unmet needs within the disaster-affected community. This may be accomplished by:

- Adding this important function to their mission state-



## *The Unmet Needs Coalition is a larger pool of resources*

ment and operating procedures; and/or

- Convening a broader-based coalition to coordinate the effective use of all community resources for disaster recovery.

Any disaster or non-disaster-related organization, including the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, a faith-based association or the county social services department, could also serve as a coalition convener.

Developing interest and building momentum for a collaborative endeavor require strong interpersonal skills and belief in the importance of the work to be done and the value of the resources each prospective partner will bring to the table. This project can require a commitment of time and energy for a period of a year or more in order to solidly establish the new Unmet Needs Coalition as an effective participant in disaster recovery.

Successful conveners will first focus attention on the organizations to be engaged. A creative, open-ended list is key to fully tapping into the resources of the community. When a list of the conventional response and recovery organizations has been drafted, conveners should begin to think "outside the emergency management box." Local civic, educational, social and cultural associations, and even hobby-oriented groups could offer skills, products and donated time to provide aid that is outside the scope of assistance given by traditional responders.

For example:

- The instructor and students of the auto mechanics class at the local vocational school could make car repairs for a single mother whose vehicle was damaged by floodwater;
- A sewing club could make simple children's clothing for needy tornado victims;
- A church, a grocery store and a Rotary club with portable cooking equipment could pool their resources and provide meals for rural families temporarily displaced; and
- Members of a Hispanic-American Alliance could become trained caseworkers or interpret for English-speaking caseworkers.



These organizations may not consider themselves to have a role in disaster recovery. Successfully recruiting them will require helping them to recognize the resources at their disposal and their value to disaster survivors. Some groups may command resources that will only be needed in certain types of disaster events. The kinds of circumstances in which their services will be needed should be explained to them, so that they do not lose interest if they are not needed in other kinds of disasters.

Even organizations with no money or items needed directly by disaster survivors have resources that the coalition will need to operate. A local YMCA or recreation center could provide a meeting place. A private corporation could duplicate the forms to be used by the coalition, or donate postage or other operational needs. The more people and groups that become engaged in the recovery process, the more local resources will become available to the long-term recovery effort.

Establishing a database of organizations, the goods and services they bring to the table, and their eligibility criteria will make it easy to keep everyone in the communications loop and to contact members in an emergency. The Church World Service Emergency Response Program manual entitled "Managing & Operating The Faith-Based Disaster Recovery Organization" is a source of sample

forms that can help your Coalition to gather and maintain information on member organizations.

### **Endorsement and Participation by County EM Professionals**

The conveners of a new Unmet Needs Coalition will benefit from the input and support of the county's professional emergency management community for several reasons. Such endorsement can be instrumental in eliciting broad participation of response and recovery groups. The local EM director or a representative could provide insight about the county's emergency operations and recovery plans. This interaction will help EM planners to more fully understand the coalition's commitment to providing services and expedite the integration of the Unmet Needs Coalition into the recovery portion of the county's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

### **Sharing the Vision**

As the new Unmet Needs Coalition develops its role in disaster recovery, a committee of several members should continue the recruitment process on a year round basis. Inviting representatives of local government and non-member agencies to attend meetings will keep the community informed about the coalition's plans and services and will engage additional groups to participate.

An announcement in the local newspaper, thanking the organizations that have made commitments to the coalition will provide well-deserved community recognition and increase interest in the coalition's work.

Diversity will be an important focus of this committee. Emphasis should be placed on recruiting organizations of or serving seniors, youth, minorities and persons with special needs. Be sure to include organizations that have knowledge of and the trust of local populations at high risk for unmet disaster-related needs, such as churches, veterans groups, and Centers for Independent Living.

Local businesses are valuable resources to support the work of the Unmet Needs Coalition. Many businesses would welcome this opportunity for expanded community involvement, but are unaware of the need for pre-disaster planning and commitment.



The coalition can create a win-win situation by securing pledges from businesses to help survivors of future disasters and then providing public recognition in the form of media releases.

County emergency management departments could work with the local chambers of commerce to encourage businesses to make commitments to help in disaster recovery and to recognize those that do. A window decal identifying the business as a Disaster Recovery Partner or a certificate or plaque suitable for display in participating businesses can be effective in sustaining the business partnerships that your Unmet Needs Coalition establishes.

### **Convener Sets the Collaborative Tone**

Often the conveners of an Unmet Needs Coalition are employed by or associated with recognized disaster response organizations. By offering their organizations' unique strengths and resources to support the coalition's work and by providing an opportunity for each agency representative to do the same, the host organizations will promote the concept and stress the importance of partnership in the coalition. Partnership will enhance each member's commitment to the coalition and determine the spirit in which the future work of the group will be accomplished.



An individual not representing any recognized disaster response agency, however, can be equally effective in rallying inter-agency support for the initiative. In some situations, such a leader is better able to minimize the pattern of competition that can arise and more successful in promoting a healthy spirit of collaboration.

### **Establishing a Framework**

Some Florida counties have already established Unmet Needs Coalitions, their structures varying as widely as the combinations of local organizations found in those counties. Some are very structured, meeting on a year round basis to develop the relationships between their organizations that will facilitate a smooth long-term recovery operation. Many coalitions encourage their partners to enroll in disaster training offered by traditional voluntary disaster organizations, the Florida Division of Emergency Management or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Some Unmet Needs Coalitions are more loosely organized, coming together only during the disaster recovery period and disbanding when the coalition has done all it can do to meet the needs of survivors.

A short discussion of two existing Florida coalitions will help to clarify how an Unmet Needs Coalition can be formed:

#### **VOAD – Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster**

The state VOAD and most local VOAD chapters meet regularly throughout the year to share their plans for response and recovery. VOAD encourages members to train during non-disaster times for effective partnership in disaster response and recovery. Members convene in anticipation of and in the wake of disasters to share their resources, to coordinate their roles, and to facilitate communication with government emergency management agencies.



#### **FIND – Florida Interfaith Networking in Disaster**

FIND is a coalition of faith-based organizations, partnered with allied agencies and each other, which promotes networking to prepare Florida’s communities for the effects of disaster and, in the aftermath, facilitates spiritual and long-term practical aid. Church World Service explains that local interfaith disaster recovery organizations use the resources of existing church, community social service, and volunteer programs to meet specific needs of survivors not provided by loans, grants or other sources.

The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) describes VOAD, FIND and Unmet Needs Coalitions as three separate groups with distinct functions, some of whose areas of responsibility overlap. An Unmet Needs Coalition might form separately from either of the other two organization; an interfaith group might become the Unmet Needs Coalition; or VOAD members might become the core and catalyst of a Coalition. Regardless of the way an Unmet Needs Coalition comes about and who convenes it, the coalition will tap into the unique assets and strengths within the community and coordinate with non-local groups to help survivors recover from the trauma of disaster.

“Partners in the Unmet Needs Coalition will be most effective if they maintain a flexible, fluid attitude about the organization’s structure, and focus instead on effectively using available resources to meet the needs of survivors.” (NVOAD)

## Leadership

The Coalition's leadership will play a key role in promoting the networking process. During non-disaster periods, when members' day-to-day organizational missions take priority, sustaining commitment to the preparation functions of the Coalition can be challenging.

The position of president, chairman or coordinator of the coalition could be a permanent one, or might rotate from one year or event to another. Either way, NVOAD stresses that a president should be chosen based on such attributes as impartiality; skill in leadership, organization and communication; a problem-solving attitude and ability to facilitate meetings. A vice president should have similar skills, and both should feel comfortable promoting the coalition to the community and networking with the leaders of Unmet Needs Coalitions in other areas.

The person selected as Secretary of the Coalition should have strong organizational skills and attention to detail. The secretary's responsibilities could include recording minutes of all meetings, maintaining records of donations and commitments to provide assistance, and maintaining the Coalition's client files.

The position of Public Information Officer (PIO) is another that the Coalition should consider. Information provided to the public about the services of the Coalition should be clear, concise and consistent. A PIO with good writing and public speaking skills can help to ensure that disaster survivors and those with the resources to help them learn about the Coalition's work and plans.

## Scope of Services

Each county's Unmet Needs Coalition will develop its own mission statement and scope of services. If the mission is simply to identify and assess individual and family disaster-related unmet needs, and to apply the resources of coalition partners to meet those needs, the coalition's operating guidelines will be fairly simple. A basic Scope of Services outline might include the following:



- Actively seek out individuals and families with unmet disaster-related needs;
- Assist them to develop personal recovery plans and to identify their specific unmet needs;
- Report cases for consideration and voluntary commitment of resources by coalition members;
- Maintain the maximum confidentiality of client information possible; and
- Maintain accurate records of clients, agency commitments to meet needs, and services provided.

The broader the scope of services, the more detailed its operating guidelines must be in order for the Coalition to function smoothly and effectively. Appendix 1 of this manual will provide a sample Operating Guidelines document that can be customized by local or regional coalitions.

If a coalition chooses to be a vehicle through which monetary donations can pass from donor to disaster survivor, additional planning and a more formalized structure are required. If a temporary, disaster-specific Unmet Needs Coalition chooses to handle monetary donations, it can use one of its member agencies or an outside organization as its fiscal agent. This will provide tax exemption, a system for receiving, disbursing and accounting for contributions, and association with a reputable community organization.

Church World Service recommends that a recovery organization planning to continue operations after it completes its disaster work or a recovery organization facing church-state issues related to charitable giving should consult an attorney regarding the advisability of seeking its own 501c3 not-for-profit corporation status. Forms for filing not-for-profit Articles of Incorporation can be downloaded from the website of the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations ([www.dos.state.fl.us/doc/corp\\_form.html](http://www.dos.state.fl.us/doc/corp_form.html)).



### Resource Development

While all coalition members will secure the resources of their own agencies, a committee can be designated to develop financial and in-kind resources from outside the Coalition. Committee members could specialize in soliciting and managing in-kind donations or in procuring financial contributions from individuals, businesses and other organizations.

An effective coordinator of in-kind donations will have the skill to gratefully accept needed items and graciously decline unneeded ones. The in-kind donations coordinator can work with member agencies to arrange for local storage of the donated items.

The State Volunteers and Donations Hotline, operated by Volunteer Florida in times of disaster, helps to streamline the donations management process by actively seeking sources of needed items and by preventing unneeded goods from being shipped to the impacted area.

Florida has in place an agreement between the State Division of Emergency Management (DEM) and Adventist Community Services (ACS). Through this agreement ACS, in a major disaster, will manage the receipt of goods from other areas, storage of donated items in a regional relief center near the impacted area, and dissemination of the goods to local organizations. Unmet Needs Coalitions have access to these goods by

making a request through the county ESF-15 facilitator.

Coalition members involved in securing financial contributions can create effective presentations by tailoring them to meet the needs of their specific audiences. Beyond the obvious the tax benefits of donating:

- Businesses will be interested in how their contribution to disaster recovery will strengthen their image in the community and enhance company pride;
- Community non-profits might be interested in learning about grants for which they may be eligible to apply by developing a disaster recovery program; and
- Individuals might appreciate receiving information (available from many financial institutions) on how to set up a charitable trust to address unmet disaster-related needs in their communities.

The more prepared your presenters are, the more successful they will be in achieving your fundraising goals.

The Church World Service Emergency Response Program manual entitled "Managing & Operating The Faith-Based Disaster Recovery Organization" is a source of sample forms that can help your coalition manage donations and commitments for donations.

### Measuring, Evaluating and Reporting Coalition Accomplishments

If your Unmet Needs Coalition chooses to remain active in a preparation mode throughout the year, setting some specific objectives toward overall goals is important. Measurable goals and objectives can help to maintain the interest and commitment of members and to promote cohesiveness within the Coalition, as representatives from several agencies work together to achieve Coalition objectives.

For example, if one goal is to increase membership, your Membership Development Committee might set an objective to make a presentation to one human service agency, one church and one civic club each quarter and

to successfully recruit three new members the first year. If one of your goals is to raise \$10,000 seed money from outside the Coalition, the Resource Development Committee might set an objective to conduct a presentation for one business, one church and one individual per quarter, and to raise 25% the first year.

It is important to review your accomplishments periodically and at the end of each year. Such reviews allow your Coalition to:

- Feel pride in improving your community's capacity to recover from a disaster;
- Make necessary adjustments to your procedures and set the next year's goals; and
- Report your accomplishments to community leaders so that member agencies may be recognized by the community for their commitment to disaster recovery.



### Timely Start-up

If a new Unmet Needs Coalition is being formed in response to a disaster, getting started immediately is important. To effectively serve disaster survivors, even an established Unmet Needs Coalition should meet as soon after the event as possible. While no resources will be offered by the Coalition until after survivors have exhausted all other available sources of assistance, NVOAD recommends that coalition members meet to re-familiarize themselves with the operating guidelines of the Coalition.

This review might reveal the need for some minor modification of the guidelines in order to meet the community's needs effectively in a particular disaster. Many Florida coalitions recognize the advantages of and advocate for meeting regularly on a year round basis.

## Recovery Operations

An effective Unmet Needs Coalition will begin immediately to marshal its resources, confirming pre-disaster donation commitments and securing additional needed items. Understanding the disaster's impact on your community will help the Unmet Needs Resource Development Committee to anticipate the kinds and quantities of items that will be needed.

It is important in the first few weeks after the disaster to prepare materials to be used by the Coalition's caseworkers as they canvas the impacted area to interview survivors, and to help them identify unmet needs and develop personal recovery plans. Each member agency accepting responsibility for the Coalition's casework can use its own procedures, criteria and forms for gathering client information and release of confidentiality.

Packets containing all available FEMA, state or local resources relating to the disaster can be assembled to pass out to survivors. Descriptions of the resources and programs of local agencies and contact information will also be helpful to caseworkers in referring survivors.

The nature and scope of the disaster will determine how many caseworkers will be needed. Additional caseworkers can be requested from a neighboring Unmet Needs Coalition, or volunteers can be recruited from other Coalition agencies for casework and trained by an experienced local agency. Some Unmet Needs Coalitions have hired one or more caseworkers for the duration of the recovery period. For caseworkers from other areas, the Coalition can prepare a briefing on local standards, mitigation strategies and community issues that may impact survivors' recovery plans. An agency that does not normally conduct casework may find helpful the Church World Service Emergency Response Program manual entitled "Managing & Operating The Faith-Based Disaster Recovery Organization" as a source of sample forms.



*Respect for the privacy of survivors should be a priority and the highest level of confidentiality possible should be maintained, as unmet needs are brought before the Coalition.*

If your membership includes a large number of community organizations, businesses and civic groups, it might be advisable for caseworkers to meet prior to the Coalition meeting, in order to share information about needs and to prevent duplication of requests for assistance. Caseworkers can then present cases and verification of need to the Coalition without revealing the names of the survivors. When a member agency expresses an interest in meeting that need, the caseworker can provide confidential client information as needed.

Maintaining complete and accurate records of all assistance provided to survivors is crucial to the Coalition's accountability to donors and to the community. Client files, including verification of the need, description and value of the assistance provided, and the agency or outside source involved, should be maintained by both the service - providing agency and by the Coalition in a common repository.

Each coalition will develop its own procedures for prioritizing cases and allocating resources. Generally, priority will be given to survivors with the fewest resources to solve their own problems. This often includes seniors and the disabled, however a very-low-income two-parent family could receive priority over a middle income senior or disabled survivor.

The Table under Case Management in the sample Operating Guidelines in the Appendix may be helpful as your Coalition establishes its assistance priorities.

Caseworkers should work closely with clients, helping agencies and contractors to ensure that the resources being allocated restore as many clients as possible to pre-disaster conditions. While the Coalition's resources are not intended to improve a client's pre-disaster condition, the work should be adequately completed to protect the Coalition's investment. For example, new construction and repairs should be painted, even if the old structure was not protected by paint.

To ensure that all work agreed upon by contractors or vendors has been completed, checks for final payment for services rendered to survivors can be made payable to both the vendor and the client, requiring endorsement by both.

The Church World Service Emergency Response Program manual entitled "Managing & Operating The Faith-Based Disaster Recovery Organization" is a source of sample forms that can help your coalition manage its casework and follow-up functions.

### **Resource of Last Resort**

Major disasters get major press coverage and can elicit donations made through the State Volunteers and Donations Hotline. The Volunteer Florida Foundation, a not-for-profit support organization for Volunteer Florida has a contractual agreement with the Florida Department of Community Affairs and the Division of Emergency Management to disburse these funds to Unmet Needs Coalitions.

An unmet need, for which the local Coalition can document a lack of sufficient community resources, can be presented to the Volunteer Florida Foundation for consideration. The Foundation will review requests with a representative of the Florida Division of Emergency Management to ensure that the funds are used to help as many people as possible and those in the most desperate need. Should a disaster occur for which Florida receives donations for disaster recovery, application forms will be available during the long-term recovery period from the Volunteer Florida Foundation.

### **Recovery Operations De-activation**

The coalition should include in its operating guidelines general procedures for ending activation periods. Purposefully winding down your operations after a disaster is an important part of any recovery process. Allowing the activities of the Coalition simply to taper off can leave participants wondering just what they accomplished. A well-planned de-activation, on the other hand, can be an important part of the healing process.

It is important to measure the disaster-related achievements of the Unmet Needs Coalition. At the beginning of each activation, the coalition should set a specific date on which it will conduct a preliminary review of its accomplishments. The preliminary review serves as the first step in the de-activation process and prepares the recovery workers for the transition from disaster to non-disaster mode. In a major event requiring a year or more to address all of the unmet needs, a series of quarterly or semi-annual reviews is recommended. The preliminary review is also a good time to schedule the Coalition's final de-activation date.

Upon de-activation, a more thorough evaluation of the unmet needs cases identified and assisted by the coalition will provide a sense of accomplishment for members and will provide an educational tool to use in preparing for future events.

If there are still unresolved cases when the de-activation date arrives, the individual agencies working with those cases can accept responsibility for closing them out when the issues are resolved.

The community as a whole also needs to achieve a sense of closure on the event. A public ceremony recognizing and thanking the recovery assistance organizations provides validation of their efforts and can serve as a signal to the community, a sort of psychological permission, to let go and move on.

## Summary

The development of an Unmet Needs Coalition will build your county's capacity to recover from all types of disasters. Whether you establish a new network or expand the scope of an existing coalition, Volunteer Florida is available to provide technical assistance as you integrate these ideas into your own Operating Guidelines.

The Sample Operating Guidelines in the Appendix condenses the ideas in this manual into an easy reference format that can be used as is or adapted to the needs of your coalition.

The investment of time and energy in this important process will reap many ancillary benefits. Some counties and multi-county areas report that, through enhanced mutual awareness, local organizations also discovered new ways in which they could collaborate throughout the preparedness and mitigation phases of disaster, as well as coordinate their non-disaster related services for the benefit of their communities.



## Appendix

# Sample Operating Guidelines



# Unmet Needs Coalition Operating Guidelines

## Organization

### Mission Statement

To help disaster survivors address serious, disaster-related needs that cannot or have not been met through the established disaster relief sequence of delivery, by matching those needs with available resources.

### Scope of Services

The coalition will:

- Actively seek out individuals and families with unmet disaster-related needs;
- Assist them to develop personal recovery plans and to identify their specific unmet needs;
- Present cases for consideration and voluntary commitment of resources by coalition members;
- Maintain the maximum client confidentiality and keep accurate records of clients, services provided and agencies involved.

The geographical service area of the coalition is \_\_\_\_\_ County. The nature or scope of a specific disaster, however, may require expanding to a multi-county service area or creating multiple Unmet Needs Coalitions to serve within the county. The Unmet Needs Coalition will offer support when possible to other Florida Unmet Needs Coalitions in disaster recovery.

### Membership

Any organization willing to offer its human, financial or in-kind resources to alleviate disaster-caused human needs is encouraged to participate. Membership in the Coalition commits an organization only to a willingness to cooperate for the benefit of survivors. All participating representatives and their designated substitutes must have decision-making authority for their organizations.

To ensure that each member receives current, first-hand information, representatives are expected to attend Coalition meetings regularly or to send a substitute.

### Leadership

The following positions will be elected annually in February by the membership and will perform the corresponding functions:

President – Will conduct meetings, promote the activities of the coalition in the community and support the work of the coalition's committees as needed.

Vice President – Will conduct meetings in the chairman's absence. Will establish regular communication with Unmet Needs Coalitions in neighboring counties to share ideas and improve the planning and services of the Coalition.

Secretary – Will record meeting minutes, including the commitments made by member agencies. Will mail minutes to all member agencies 10 days prior to each monthly meeting and five days prior to each weekly meeting, as reminders about agency commitments and meeting dates. Will maintain meeting attendance rosters and emergency contact information.

### Training

The American Red Cross (ARC) will be the primary source of recovery training for Coalition members. Training not offered by the ARC may be obtained through the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Members may complete training application forms available on Division's web site: [www.floridadisaster.org](http://www.floridadisaster.org), have them signed by the Coalition President and submit them to the County Director of Emergency Management for approval. The Emergency Management Department will submit the applications to the Division and students will be notified of their acceptance into classes.

## Pre-Disaster Operations

### Meetings

The Coalition will meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. The meeting place will rotate among Coalition members and will be determined two months in advance.

### Pre-disaster Goals

Pre-disaster goal of the Unmet Needs Coalition is to build capacity to address unmet needs by:

- Strengthening the existing network of member agencies through mutual awareness;
- Securing commitments to the Coalition from three additional businesses each year;
- Engaging two additional human service, faith-based, corporate, civic or educational organizations in Coalition membership each year; and
- Engaging members of four additional human service, faith-based, corporate, civic or educational organizations in training offered by the American Red Cross or the Florida Division of Emergency Management each year.

### Standing Committees and Functions

*Program Development* – Will coordinate member agencies' hosting of meetings and schedule agency awareness presentations. Will arrange for guest speakers. The focus of this committee will be to strengthen the coalition network via communication and mutual awareness.

*Membership Development* – Will develop presentations for recruiting not-for-profit, faith-based, corporate, civic and educational organizations. Committee will conduct recruitment presentations ensuring inclusion of diverse organizations.

*Resource Development* – Will develop presentations to secure financial and in-kind donations and commitments for donations. Will write letters of appreciation and press releases to thank donors. Members securing donations or commitments for donations will complete a Resource Commitment Form, provide a copy to the donor, keep a copy and turn in the original to the Secretary.

*Public Information Officer* – This individual will have public information experience or will enroll in the PIO training offered by the Florida Division of Emergency Management. In the event of a disaster, the PIO will serve as the sole source of information to the media. In non-disaster periods, the PIO will support the efforts of the Resource Development Committee.

### Annual Evaluation and Report

At the January meeting each year, the Coalition will evaluate its success in achieving the four goals, discuss the highlights of the year's operations and provide input for the Coalition's annual report. The Secretary will:

- Compile the achievement evaluation and members' input into a short report;
- Present the report for member approval at the February meeting; and
- Submit to the County Director of Emergency Management and to the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners the approved report, along with a membership roster and a list of the pre-disaster commitments made by community organizations.

If a disaster occurred for which the Unmet Needs Coalition was activated during the year, a summary of the Coalition's actual recovery work on that event will be included in the annual report.

## Post-Disaster Operations

### Meetings

The President will convene the first post-disaster Coalition meeting within one week after a major event or as soon as the need is identified during an on-going disaster, such as a fire or draught. Members will evaluate available information and determine an appropriate location and schedule of weekly meetings. After a Presidentially declared disaster, unmet needs are considered to be those needs unmet at the time disaster response agencies cease their operations for that disaster. In a non-declared disaster, coalition members will begin immediately to match needs with available resources.

### Disaster-Specific Scope of Services

At the first post-disaster meeting, a Scope of Services addendum, specific to the disaster, will be written and maintained with the permanent records of that event. By reviewing initial damage reports and coordinating with neighboring Coalitions, the Unmet Needs Coalition will:

- Determine its **geographical area** of service for the disaster;
- Review its **scope of services** to ensure that the Coalition will meet the needs of survivors while working toward measurable, attainable, event driven goals; and
- Set a date for its **preliminary review of accomplishments**.

If the Coalition determines that it can best cover the impacted area by splitting the Coalition into two or more groups, the leadership of all groups will meet weekly to discuss needs and share knowledge of resources.

## Post-disaster Goals

The Coalition will attempt to meet the unmet needs of survivors by:

- Identifying and assisting clients to access all federal assistance to which they are entitled,
- Offering the resources of member agencies, such as food, clothing, rent, bills, construction or repair; and
- Securing additional resources from non-member organizations.

## Preparation for Post-disaster Operation

During the period immediately following the disaster, the coalition will:

- Confirm the resources available from coalition members;
- Confirm prior commitments of financial, in-kind and volunteer assistance from outside sources;
- Tap local resources that have not yet made a commitment to provide assistance;
- Compile resource kits for caseworkers containing:
  - One copy of all available FEMA, state or local handouts relating to the disaster; and
  - Descriptions of the resources and programs of local agencies and contact information;
- Establish a common case file repository; and
- Prepare for non-local caseworkers a briefing on local customs, standards, mitigation strategies and community issues that may impact the survivors' recovery plans.

Volunteer Florida  
401 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
Telephone: 850-921-5172 (voice/tty)  
Facsimile: 850-921-5146  
Web Site: [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org)

### **Preliminary Review of Accomplishments and De-activation Date**

On the date designated for a preliminary review, members will review the cases presented to the Coalition. Based on the number of cases presented but still unresolved, and on estimates of cases still to be presented, members will set a date for the next review or for de-activation of the Coalition.

### **Final Evaluation and Report to the Community**

At the time of de-activation the Coalition will prepare a report including:

- Summary of the cases successfully resolved and cases still in need,
- Summary of the aspects of the recovery work that went well,
- Suggestions for improving procedures for future disasters, and
- Suggested goals for improving preparedness for future disasters.

