



National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION

MASS CARE GUIDELINES

Purpose

Mass care services are typically the first assistance provided following a disaster. These services are intended to minimize the immediate, disaster-caused suffering of people through the provision of food, clothing, shelters and supplies. Based on the community, culture, economy and geography of the affected region and the scope of the disaster relief operation, service providers will determine the most effective service delivery strategies for meeting the needs of those affected. This service is provided regardless of ethnicity, religion, citizenship, age, gender, disability, economic status, or sexual orientation. Fundamental to the responsibilities of providing assistance is listening to and observing the needs of the community, individuals, and families and facilitating referrals for other activities such as health services and emotional and spiritual care services.

Services

Service provision is made available through one or more of six integrated elements:

- (1) Individual or congregate temporary shelters
- (2) Fixed or mobile feeding operations
- (3) Distribution of emergency supplies
- (4) Family reunification
- (5) Health and/or emotional and spiritual care services
- (6) Information on recovery assistance

Process

Immediate needs are characterized as physical, emotional and informational. The first priority is to determine when and where mass care services are to be provided. The first stage of the response usually begins at the community level. At a minimum, those involved undertake the necessary activities to accommodate the immediate needs in the earliest hours and days until additional help arrives. This requires coordination at all levels, and a concerted effort is needed to maintain communication prior to, in the event of and post disaster.

These immediate needs may include any or all of the following:

Physical needs

- shelter, including protection from harm and physical safety
- space and materials for sleep
- food
- water
- health assessments and first aid
- durable medical equipment/medical supplies
- dietary needs
- recovery and clean-up supplies
- toiletries
- baby supplies

Emotional needs

- emotional and spiritual support and assistance
- psychological first aid from trained staff
- establishment of structured routines
- opportunities for individuals, including children, to participate in their own recovery
- opportunity to communicate their situation

Informational needs

- status of disaster and relief efforts
- status of family members
- types of available assistance
- process of obtaining assistance
- appropriate language and accessible formats