

# Disaster Spiritual Care Standards and Procedures

## Disaster Cycle Services Standards & Procedures

*DCS SP Respond*



November 2015

## Change Log

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## Introduction

Since 1997, Disaster Spiritual Care responders deployed by the Red Cross have collaborated on scene with other American Red Cross responders in caring for people affected by natural and human-caused disasters. The Disaster Spiritual Care program respects the fundamental principles of the Red Cross movement, assuring the message of neutrality and impartiality in a way that supports our mission. This program provides consistent and reliable services in all regions, to all persons, regardless of faith tradition. The program is designed to be scalable, from a single-family house fire to a major mass casualty disaster. The Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care program represents excellent community care and best practices in the field.

## Historical Overview

### National Transportation Safety Board and Transportation Incidents

The American Red Cross has provided disaster spiritual care support for many years to families who have lost loved ones due to transportation incidents. In 1996, the American Red Cross entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) that stipulated the American Red Cross will support [Victim Support Task #3](#) as part of the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act passed by Congress.

“If deemed necessary, (Red Cross will) deploy a Spiritual Care Response Team (SRT) to coordinate on-site spiritual care. The Spiritual Care Response Team is trained to provide spiritual care to an array of faiths and will manage spiritual care for the victims and their families. If desired by the families, the Spiritual Care Response Team will coordinate the planning for a suitable interfaith memorial service within the first few days following the accident.” ([Victim Support Task #3](#))

In order to achieve this objective, the Red Cross developed agreements with several national chaplaincy organizations. Nationally, the cadre of Disaster Spiritual Care volunteers from these organizations responded to numerous transportation incidents, natural disasters and other mass casualty events. They coordinated spiritual care support and facilitated interfaith memorial services for countless survivors and their families and friends.

In response to terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, tornadoes in 2011, and many other disasters, the Red Cross deployed spiritual care responders to assist people who had lost loved ones. Along with providing spiritual care and comfort to survivors, spiritual care volunteer leaders coordinated with local and national faith-based organizations to connect clients with the faith tradition of their choice. In 2012, Disaster Spiritual Care responders participated in the Hurricane Sandy disaster response and provided vital spiritual care support to the Newtown community after the shootings at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. In March 2014, the Disaster Spiritual Care team partnered with Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health on integrated care teams in Eastern Washington after a devastating mudslide killed 43 residents. The Disaster Spiritual Care team participated in numerous other disaster responses as well.

## Regional Pilot Programs

In 2012, with the support of Red Cross national headquarters leadership, Disaster Spiritual Care volunteers at three chapters established pilot programs to develop regional teams. The pilot program in the Louisville region focused on creating partnerships with local faith leaders; the Cincinnati volunteers worked on recruiting professional chaplains; and the San Diego chapter developed a process to fully integrate Disaster Spiritual Care into their Disaster Action Teams and local response teams.

All three pilot programs achieved their goals and provided data that was used to develop a standardized program for national implementation. These programs have increased capacity through training members of partner organizations and provided support to local responses. In addition, these pilot programs have enhanced community engagement, preparedness and client satisfaction while maintaining alignment with Red Cross principles.

## Relationship with National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

As one of the founding members of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD), the American Red Cross has maintained representation on the Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee since its inception. This committee has been at the forefront of National VOAD committees in developing industry-wide standards for excellent disaster response and care. National VOAD ratified the Disaster Spiritual Care Points of Consensus in 2012 and the Disaster Emotional Care Points of Consensus in 2015. Members of National VOAD are required to agree to abide by approved Points of Consensus, which are minimal standards, ethical principles or operational principles. In 2014 National VOAD ratified the Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines. The Guidelines relate closely to the approved Points of Consensus document and represent expanded operational, behavioral and/or ethical recommendations.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the process activities, standards, responsibilities and authorities, and control mechanisms for Red Cross responders and employees fulfilling a role within the Disaster Spiritual Care function.

## Relation to Other Documents

This document is supported by the Concept of Operations Program Essentials, the Respond Framework, Respond Program Essentials, the Integrated Care Condolence Team Standards and Procedures, Guidance for Developing and Implementing Field Disaster Partnerships and the Mobilize the Community Framework .

## Audience

The audience for this document includes Disaster Spiritual Care responders, Disaster Mental Health responders, Community Partnerships personnel, ESF 6 mass care leadership, Disaster Action Teams, and the local, regional and divisional levels responsible for the spiritual well-being of disaster clients and the Red Cross workforce.

## Scope

This document relates to the roles, responsibilities and procedures of Disaster Spiritual Care responders on all disaster operations.

## Out of Scope

### Pastoral care

Pastoral care in community settings is the ministry of care and counseling provided by pastors, chaplains and other religious leaders to members of their church or congregation, or to anyone within institutional settings, with a focus on healing, reconciling, guiding and sustaining. Pastoral care is a broader practice than Disaster Spiritual Care. This document and the Red Cross program focus on Disaster Spiritual Care only.

## Definitions

### Disaster Spiritual Care

Disaster Spiritual Care facilitates the provision of services that meet the spiritual needs of individuals, families and communities, based on the understanding that all persons maintain values and beliefs which are impacted by traumatic events and are worthy of protection and culturally sensitive spiritual care in times of distress.

### Spiritual Care Provider

The role of the spiritual care provider is to assist people in drawing upon their own spiritual resources – values and faith – in the midst of their pain regardless of their faith tradition.

### Professional Chaplain

A professional chaplain is typically a faith community leader (e.g. priest, pastor, minister, ordained deacon, rabbi, cantor, imam, master, teacher, other member of the clergy) or another representative of a specific faith or belief, providing spiritual care services to a group of people who are not organized as a mission, church, or religious community. Chaplains receive specific training in order to provide spiritual care to everyone, outside the organized religious community, mission, temple, synagogue or church, regardless of one's spiritual affiliation (or lack of affiliation).

### Professional Board Certified Chaplain

A professional Board Certified Chaplain has met qualifications set forth by the Council on Collaboration, a group of professional chaplaincy organizations, with respect to training, experience and affiliation with a recognized faith tradition. Chaplains may become Board-certified through the Association of Professional Chaplains; the National Association of Catholic Chaplains; Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains; or College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy.

### Endorsed Spiritual Care Provider

Endorsement is a professional credential that affirms to an agency or employer (American Red Cross) that the spiritual care provider has met the basic requirements of the faith group to provide ministry in a specialized setting, and that the individual is a member in good standing of that faith group. Endorsement creates a covenant of mutual commitment, accountability and support between the spiritual care provider and the faith group. Endorsement states a level of connection and a standard of excellence to the deploying agency.



## Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs)

## Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs)

VOADs and COADs are nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organizations that build resilience in communities nationwide. VOADs and COADs serve as the forum where organizations share knowledge and resources throughout the disaster cycle to help disaster survivors and their communities. VOADs may be organized at the community level, the state level or the national level.

## Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities

### Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead

The Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead is appointed by the Regional Disaster Officer or designee. The Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead is responsible for leading, supporting and developing Disaster Spiritual Care teams in the region, and for providing appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care to clients in the community. The Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead collaborates closely with other direct services leads, including disaster mental health, health services and casework and recovery planning responders. The Regional Disaster Spiritual Care Lead is responsible for management of local teams but may delegate tasks to local Disaster Spiritual Care responders.

(For specific qualifications and responsibilities, please see the position description on the [Volunteer Position Descriptions Index](#) on The Exchange.)

### Disaster Spiritual Care Responder

Disaster Spiritual Care responders are professional chaplains or local endorsed disaster spiritual care providers who have been screened by the Disaster Spiritual Care lead at their regional chapter or the Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor (if a Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead is unavailable.) All Disaster Spiritual Care responders are responsible for provision of appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care to disaster-affected clients in the community and the disaster workforce. The Disaster Spiritual Care responder reports to the local Disaster Spiritual Care Lead or the Disaster Program Manager or designee. Disaster Spiritual Care responders collaborate closely with other direct services providers, including disaster mental health, health services and casework and recovery planning responders.

(For specific qualifications and responsibilities, please see the position description on the [Volunteer Position Descriptions Index](#) on The Exchange.)

### Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor

The Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor is responsible for mentoring and providing support and guidance to the Disaster Spiritual Care regional leads and responders. The Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor is appointed by the Division Disaster Executive in the respective division as a subject matter expert and consultant to division leadership on issues related to disaster spiritual care. The Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor takes direction from the Division Disaster Executive and serves on the Respond Capability Work Group. The Disaster Spiritual Care advisor collaborates closely with the other division advisors, including Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Staff Wellness Consultants. The advisor also works closely with the Division Disaster Directors and the Division Disaster State Relations Directors, whenever necessary.

## Disaster Spiritual Care Volunteer Partner

The Disaster Spiritual Care Volunteer Partner is appointed by and reports to the national headquarters liaison. He or she is responsible to provide subject matter expertise and guidance to program development staff responsible for the Disaster Spiritual Care program. The Volunteer Partner is responsible for convening and mentoring Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisors and other Disaster Spiritual Care leadership. During nationally administered disaster relief operations, the Disaster Spiritual Care Volunteer Partner is responsible for providing subject matter expertise, guidance and consultation to national headquarters staff regarding the provision of disaster spiritual care services during the operation.

## Disaster Spiritual Care National Headquarters Liaison

The Disaster Spiritual Care National Headquarters Liaison is appointed by and reports to the Director of Response Services in Program Development. The Disaster Spiritual Care National Headquarters Liaison is responsible for administrative and programmatic support to the Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisors and Volunteer Partner and for the creation, dissemination and continuous improvement of doctrine related to the Disaster Spiritual Care program.

# Disaster Spiritual Care Program Standards and Procedures

## Overview of Standards

The Disaster Spiritual Care program is made up of local endorsed disaster spiritual care providers and professional chaplains who are Red Cross responders and who support the full disaster cycle of Preparedness, Response and Recovery. All Disaster Spiritual Care responders are trained to provide appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care aligned with the Red Cross fundamental principles of impartiality and neutrality. The Disaster Spiritual Care program provides consistent and reliable services that can scale from small local disasters to large multi-state events.

## *Appropriate and Respectful Disaster Spiritual Care*

The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD) Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee developed guidelines for the provision of disaster spiritual care by its member organizations. As an organizational member of National VOAD, the Red Cross has agreed to endorse the guidelines and adhere to them in disaster operations. These guidelines define “appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care” (p.44):

“In harmony with the National VOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Points of Consensus 1 and 5 we believe that disaster can disrupt spiritual experience and that spiritual care can help rekindle hope and resilience. Spiritual care takes a variety of forms, including words of comfort and encouragement, use of prayer, sacred writings, ritual, written materials, worship services, and so on. The privilege of using spiritual and religious resources in disaster spiritual care, however, involves certain responsibilities as stated in Points of Consensus 8 and 9; among them are:

- Recognizing the right of each individual and faith group to hold to their existing values and traditions.
- Refraining from manipulation, disrespect or exploitation of those impacted by disaster and trauma.

- Respecting the freedom from unwanted gifts of religious literature or symbols, evangelistic and sermonizing speech, and/or forced acceptance of specific moral values and traditions.
- Avoiding the exploitation of the imbalance of power between Disaster Spiritual Care providers and those being served in any way, including:
  - Not using position, influence, knowledge or professional affiliation for unfair advantage or for personal, organizational or agency gain.
  - Not using disaster response to further a particular political or religious perspective or cause.
  - Carrying out all activities according to the need of individuals, families and communities.
  - Not tying assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed.” ([NVOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines, 2014](#))

### *Maintaining Impartiality and Neutrality*

The Disaster Spiritual Care program is consistent with the Mission, Vision and Fundamental Principles of the Global Red Cross Network especially as it relates to the fundamental principles of Impartiality and Neutrality. Below are the principles as they apply to Disaster Spiritual Care in the American Red Cross.

#### Impartiality

Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responders make no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, sexual orientation, gender identity or political opinions. They endeavor to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

#### Neutrality

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Red Cross does not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

### *Protecting Confidentiality and Privacy*

#### Standard: Confidentiality

The foundation of all care and support is grounded in trust. Responders serving in the role of Disaster Spiritual Care use the utmost care and respect with information related to the delivery of support to those in need. Safeguarding the trust of both disaster-affected clients and the Red Cross workforce is an important part of our obligation to the people and communities we serve. All Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responders must safeguard client confidentiality in obtaining, using, storing, and releasing client information following the [Red Cross policy on protecting personal information](#).

Specific information regarding a client’s situation is only shared with other Red Cross responders on a business need to know basis. If information needs to be shared outside of the Red Cross, clients are asked to give permission to share such information by signing a [Client Consent to Share Information](#) form. However, if there is imminent danger to the client or others, Disaster Spiritual Care responders may be mandatory reporters in situations of abuse and harm according to local, state or national laws.

### Procedure: Protecting Privacy Policy

All disaster responders are required to comply with the [Red Cross policy on protecting personal information](#) in obtaining, protecting and releasing information about people, recognizing that such information is given to them as representatives of the Red Cross and is to be used only for the purpose of providing Red Cross services. No more information should be requested by the Red Cross than will be needed for the service that may be given.

For complete confidentiality and privacy information, see the [Protecting Personal Information](#) policy on The Exchange.

### Procedure: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Disaster responders follow the organization's policy pertaining to confidentiality and privacy, as previously stated. The Red Cross Office of the General Counsel has concluded that the Red Cross is not a covered entity within the regulations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and HIPAA provisions are not applicable to Red Cross services. However, you should be aware that HIPAA 45 C.F.R. § 164.510(b) (4) covers entities such as hospitals and medical practices we may ask to disclose personal health information to the Red Cross. In the relevant part, this provision states the following:

***“Use and disclosures for disaster relief purposes.***

*A covered entity may use or disclose protected health information to a public or private entity authorized by law or by its charter to assist in disaster relief efforts, for the purpose of coordinating with such entities the uses or disclosures permitted by paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section. (HIPAA 45 C.F.R. § 164.510(b) (4))”*

Disaster Spiritual Care responders rely on professional principles of confidentiality when sharing client information. If communications about a client needs to be gathered from or shared with health care providers, use the [HIPAA clarification letter](#) located on the Health Services Toolkit on The Exchange. Please reproduce this letter on Red Cross organization letterhead.

### Readiness: Recruitment, Selection and Training

In order to provide effective disaster spiritual care, the recruitment, selection and training of disaster spiritual care responders is a crucial component of the Red Cross disaster spiritual care program. The Red Cross disaster spiritual care program aligns with the National VOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines which provide a foundation for the evaluation and development of disaster spiritual care responders.

#### *Standards for Disaster Spiritual Care Providers: National VOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Responder Competencies*

The National VOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines describe basic competencies that must be exhibited by every disaster spiritual care responder. These include attributes of the person, knowledge and skills. These basic competencies are reproduced in the table below.

Table 4.4

COMPETENCY DETAIL for Local Disaster Spiritual Care Providers in Shared Settings	
<b>PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES</b> Attributes that facilitate healing and positively shape the perception of an effective local Disaster Spiritual Care provider include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitivity, openness and respect for others;</li> <li>• Spiritual maturity;</li> <li>• Ethical approach to living in general, and especially within helping relationships;</li> <li>• Trustworthiness;</li> <li>• Respect for the integrity of relationships and maintenance of professional boundaries (emotional, spiritual, physical) with those being served;</li> <li>• Awareness of the potential power imbalance in helping relationships and refraining from exploitation of that imbalance - such as any form of sexual misconduct, harassment or assault in relationships, as well as any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation or otherwise abusive words or actions in relationships with those served;</li> <li>• Truthful representation of training and credentials, working within the scope of their abilities, making referrals as needed;</li> <li>• Respect for confidentiality, not disclosing information (unless required to do so by law);</li> <li>• Avoidance of conflict of interest or seeking personal gain;</li> <li>• A personal manner that inspires confidence, including personal attire and personal hygiene;</li> <li>• Evidence of appropriate self-care, including a healthy lifestyle to build/retain resiliency, and attention to ensuring fitness and care of self before, during and after deployment.</li> </ul>	
<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> Effective local Disaster Spiritual Care providers know the following as an essential <sup>10</sup> foundation for understanding and action in the skills section to follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with and basic understanding of the National VOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Points of Consensus;</li> <li>• The value of intentional emotional and spiritual presence and how such presence is established and utilized;</li> <li>• An understanding of basic disaster spiritual and emotional needs;</li> <li>• Basic helping skills in Disaster Spiritual Care and how to use them (e.g. listening, appropriate use of religious resources);</li> <li>• Essential principles for providing sensitive and appropriate spiritual care in multi-cultural and/or multi-faith environments;</li> <li>• Basic principles of ethics in spiritual care, including privacy and confidentiality standards, respect for boundaries in relationships, etc.;</li> <li>• Site operations and the authority, ethics and accountability structures of the agency having jurisdiction over the shared setting;</li> <li>• Operational and referral resources (e.g. referral to other faith providers, food-clothing-shelter needs, mental health) and how to refer/connect people with those resources;</li> <li>• Basic local emergency management/disaster response procedures.</li> </ul>	
<b>SKILLS</b> The essential skill-set of effective local Disaster Spiritual Care providers includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to provide disaster spiritual care to their faith community;</li> <li>• The ability to establish intentional emotional and spiritual presence;</li> <li>• The ability to understand basic needs and respond appropriately;</li> <li>• The ability to listen effectively and use other helping skills;</li> <li>• The ability to utilize spiritual/religious interventions;</li> <li>• The ability to respond to the diverse multi-cultural needs – whether through direct provision, referral or facilitation by others;</li> <li>• The ability to care ethically, including respecting confidentiality and boundaries;</li> <li>• The ability to assess needs and make referrals when indicated.</li> </ul>	

**Trained Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responders meet these basic competency requirements. Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care training is designed to enhance and strengthen these competencies and to fill gaps in these competencies when necessary.**

### *Eligibility Criteria and Screening Procedures*

The Disaster Spiritual Care program is composed of responders who are either professional chaplains or local endorsed faith-based providers. Active, engaged leaders of local faith-based organizations are encouraged to become Disaster Spiritual Care responders. All new volunteers are screened by either their Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead or the Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor. Below are the categories of eligible candidates:

- A disaster spiritual care provider from a National VOAD member organization;
- A professional or Board-certified chaplain;
- An endorsed leader in a local faith community.

A person who would like to join the Disaster Spiritual Care program is first vetted through the organizing and approving body of his or her particular faith tradition or professional credentialing organization.

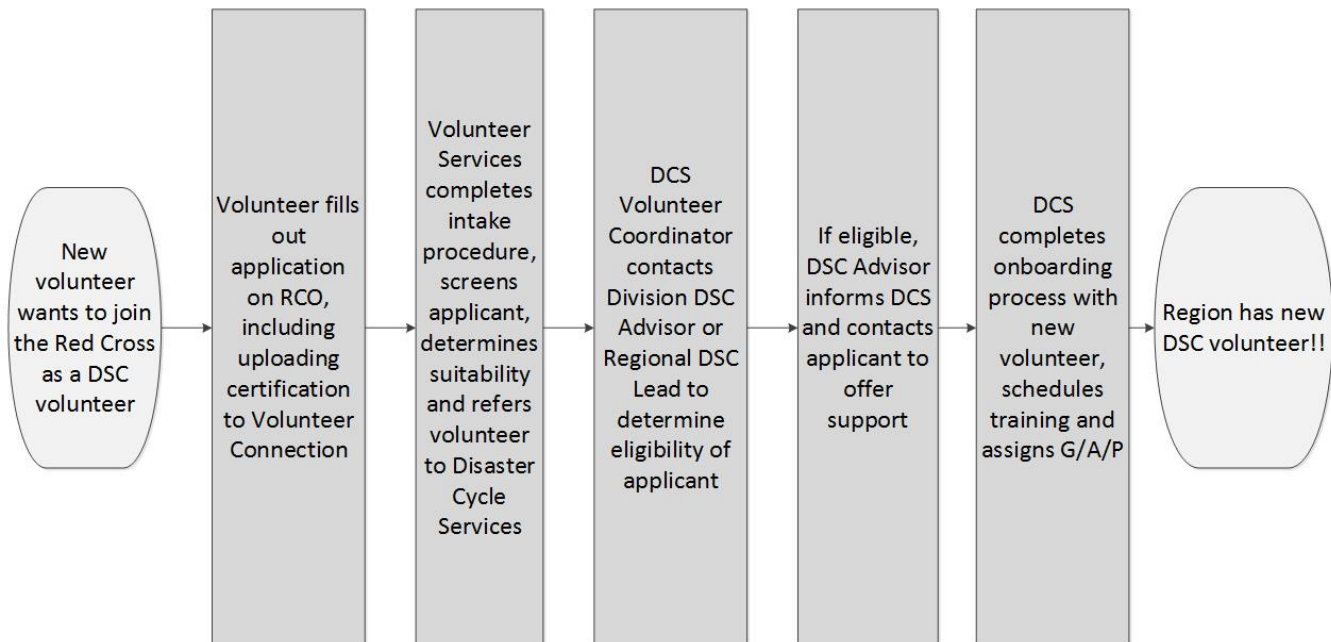
The endorsing organization must fulfill at least one of the following requirements:

- Be a National VOAD member organization;
- Be a professional chaplaincy organization;
- Employ professional chaplains (e.g., the military, hospitals, fire or law enforcement organizations);
- Represent a local faith-based community.

The screening process consists of the following steps:

- The interested candidate applies to become Red Cross disaster volunteer (see intake procedures below.)
- The interested candidate uploads a letter of endorsement or certification to their Volunteer Connection profile from their faith community, employer or professional chaplaincy organization.
- The Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead or Disaster Spiritual Care Division Advisor reviews the letter, interviews the candidate and approves or rejects the application.
- The candidate finishes onboarding by completing the required trainings and orientation (see below.)

## **Intake and Onboarding New Disaster Spiritual Care Volunteers**



### *Recruitment Procedures*

Regional leaders can identify several different populations for recruitment for the Disaster Spiritual Care program. The list below contains some suggestions for agencies and organizations that may have appropriate potential volunteers.

#### From the community

- Professional chaplains who work with local first responders (fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services) – In some communities, chaplains from these organizations have formed associations that could be approached.
- Hospital chaplains – Even if the local hospital chaplains are not Board-certified, they are trained to work with grieving families from a variety of backgrounds.
- Local interfaith organizations – Providing disaster spiritual care training for these organizations to provide interfaith support may be important for members of these groups and a potential volunteer pool for the local Red Cross chapter.
- Local faith-based organizations, such as churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other organized groups – Providing disaster spiritual care training for these organizations to provide interfaith support may be important for members of these groups and a potential volunteer pool for the local Red Cross chapter.
- University and colleges – professional chaplains at local educational institutions may be potential volunteers.

### From professional organizations

- Board-certified professional chaplains who are members of national cognate conferences (e.g., Association of Professional Chaplains, American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Association for clinical Pastoral Education, National Association of Catholic Chaplains, National Association of Jewish Chaplains, Canadian Association for Spiritual Care).
- Members of National VOAD organizations who provide disaster spiritual care.

### *Training Procedures*

*Disaster Spiritual Care Fundamentals* training is offered by the region to ensure Disaster Spiritual Care responders are trained and fully understand the Red Cross and Red Crescent fundamental principles that must be adhered to at all times. The *Disaster Spiritual Care Fundamentals* training reviews the standard Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care procedures and processes so that service provision is consistent throughout the country.

The additional required Red Cross training is as follows:

- Disaster Services: An Overview;
- Disaster Spiritual Care Fundamentals;
- Psychological First Aid;
- Disaster Action Team Fundamentals.

The following courses are recommended Red Cross training for Disaster Spiritual Care responders:

- First Aid;
- Adult CPR/AED;
- Casework and Recovery Planning Fundamentals;
- Sheltering Fundamentals;
- Other trainings as interested or as required by region.

Other trainings that are not official Red Cross trainings may also be helpful for Disaster Spiritual Care responders, such as cultural diversity and self-care trainings.

## Disaster Spiritual Care Procedures in the Division

### Appointment and Supervision of Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisors

Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisors are appointed by the Division Disaster Executive of each division. They receive administration supervision and direction from the Division Disaster Executive. They collaborate with and provide subject matter expertise to the national headquarters liaison. The Disaster Spiritual Care Volunteer Partner is the technical lead for the advisor group.

### Support for Division and Regional Leadership

Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisors provide subject matter expertise and guidance to division leadership, including Division Disaster Directors and Division Disaster State Relations Directors. When national partners are involved in a disaster, the Division Disaster Spiritual Care Advisor acts as the liaison and consultant. When



there is no regional Disaster Spiritual Care Lead, the division advisor provides advice and guidance to regional leadership on disaster spiritual care issues.

### Support for Regional Disaster Spiritual Care Volunteers

Advisors also provide support to the regions by building disaster spiritual care capacity and mentoring regional leads. Advisors may schedule trainings, attend exercises and drills and act on the behalf of the region. When new volunteers apply to become Red Cross volunteers, advisors are responsible for determining eligibility and mentoring the new volunteer if no regional lead is available.

## General Standards and Procedures of Disaster Spiritual Care Services

### Overview of Standards

Disaster Spiritual Care responders are first and foremost Red Cross responders. Provision of spiritual care services is determined by the needs of the clients, available resources and the constraints of the situation. All Disaster Spiritual Care responders must maintain the fundamental principles of impartiality and neutrality and provide appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care, as defined earlier in this document by the National VOAD Spiritual Care Guidelines.

Disaster Spiritual Care responders may be deployed to a disaster site under the following conditions:

- A client may request spiritual care services specifically;
- Another Red Cross responder may request spiritual care services on behalf of a particular client;
- Disaster Spiritual Care may be deployed to the disaster operation based on the nature of the event or perceived potential need;
- Disaster Spiritual Care may be deployed to a transportation event as part of the Red Cross Memorandum of Understanding with the National Transportation Safety Board.

Disaster Spiritual Care responders follow Red Cross procedures that apply to all responders. For instance, Red Cross identification is worn and clearly visible at all times while working with Red Cross disaster clients. Below are the general procedures that are followed by all Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responders, whether they are working at a local, regional, division or national disaster operation. As in all Respond activities, the basic process of providing disaster spiritual care starts with assessment of client's needs which then leads to provision of services and results in a client whose disaster-related spiritual care needs have been addressed. For the purposes of this document, "client" refers to an individual, a family, household or other social unit.

### Assessment of Client's Spiritual Needs

In order to assess the spiritual needs of a client, a typical sequence of steps includes:

- The Disaster Spiritual Care responder is given information from another responder.
- The Disaster Spiritual Care responder approaches the client and inquires about the situation and the individual's needs.
- If the client does not want to speak with the Disaster Spiritual Care responder, the responder offers information for later support.
- If the client wishes to engage with the Disaster Spiritual Care responder, the responder assesses the client's spiritual needs by asking questions such as:

DCS RES SP Disaster Spiritual Care Standards and Procedures V1.0 2015.11.03

Owner: Disaster Cycle Service

Author: Respond Process

- Do you have a faith tradition that supports you through crisis? Can you call on that tradition to support you now?
- Is there a local clergy person or faith representative that you would like to be connected with?
- Do you have family or another support system available to provide emotional and spiritual support?
- How might the American Red Cross respond to your spiritual care needs at this time?
- In all cases, the Disaster Spiritual Care responder uses his or her professional skills and experience to determine the most effective provision of care.

## Provision of Disaster Spiritual Care

Based on the client's stated needs, the Disaster Spiritual Care responder may provide spiritual care support immediately or may make a referral to another Red Cross service provider or a service provider from another agency.

The Disaster Spiritual Care provider's first responsibility is to mitigate acute distress by administering psychological first aid and ensuring that the client's basic needs are being met (e.g., food, water, safety).

Spiritual care interventions typically include any or all of the following:

- Discussing the client's values and beliefs;
- Participating in the client's choice of spiritual or religious ritual (e.g., prayer, meditation);
- Facilitating access to religious supplies for people who request them (e.g., written materials, prayer beads, candles, religious symbols, etc.);
- Connecting clients to other Red Cross services (e.g., Casework and Recovery Planning, Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health) or another Disaster Spiritual Care provider whose faith aligns with the client's faith;
- Connecting clients to spiritual and religious resources in the community.

## Referral to Community-based Spiritual Care Providers

The Disaster Spiritual Care responder is responsible for identifying resources and providing referrals to other agencies or community resources. If possible, the Disaster Spiritual Care provider gives the appropriate contact information to the client and allows the client to make the contact directly. If necessary, the Disaster Spiritual Care provider can contact the other agency on behalf of the client. In that case, if client information is discussed with the other agency, then a [Client Consent to Share Information](#) must be completed to protect the client's right to privacy. Only information that is necessary for an effective referral will be shared.

In some cases, the Disaster Spiritual Care provider may not have readily accessible resource information. In that instance, the Disaster Spiritual Care provider gives the client their Red Cross contact information, researches available resources and follows up with the client. Disaster Spiritual Care responders also research and recommend items needed for the client's spiritual care and recovery.

The Disaster Spiritual Care provider must make an effort to follow up with the client within a week to determine whether the referral resulted in a successful resolution of the spiritual care needs.

## Performance Characteristics of Successful Disaster Spiritual Care Provision

Successful provision of disaster spiritual care includes sensitivity and awareness of the varied expressions of faith and belief systems and traditions. The expertise of all available resources is used to meet the needs of the client. The client experiences a compassionate presence which is non-discriminatory, appropriate and respectful, and culturally sensitive. The client feels heard and supported. The spiritual care needs have been acknowledged and resolved, either through direct intervention or by referral to another resource.

## Support for Red Cross Staff

The Red Cross workforce may also have needs for spiritual care support. When requested, Disaster Spiritual Care responders are available to provide emotional and spiritual support for other responders using the same procedures outlined above. In addition, a Disaster Spiritual Care responder may create an interfaith reflection space in a Red Cross service delivery site for those who wish to have a quiet place for prayer, meditation and contemplation.

## Relationship to Disaster Mental Health

Disaster Spiritual Care is a force multiplier and a partner with Disaster Mental Health. There are similarities between the two groups and they collaborate with each other, each bringing different skill sets and professional knowledge to the disaster setting. Some clients prefer to talk with disaster mental health providers; some prefer to share their concerns with a Disaster Spiritual Care provider. It is crucial that both groups recognize when the client needs what the other provider can offer and be willing to refer to the other specialty.

## Disaster Spiritual Care Procedures at the Local or Regional Level

### Overview of Standards

The Red Cross recognizes the necessity and the incredible value of faith-based organizations and their constituents and spiritual leaders before, during and after a disaster. The Red Cross strives to provide appropriate care and relief to those affected by disasters as part of a whole person and whole community response. This includes providing services to address the spiritual needs of Red Cross clients via the utilization of specialized responders within Disaster Spiritual Care who have developed the necessary skills and gained their faith traditions' appropriate accreditations and credentialing to be considered a trusted spiritual care provider.

The local Disaster Spiritual Care responder is the available faith subject matter expert for Red Cross leadership and the Disaster Cycle Services workforce to help navigate the nuances of faith communities where we conduct service delivery.

Disaster Spiritual Care provides two avenues of service:

1. When the Disaster Spiritual Care responder's faith tradition coincides with that of the client's, the spiritual care responder interacts with them according to what is appropriate, considering the particular disaster situation and faith tradition.

2. When the Disaster Spiritual Care responder and client's faith traditions do not align, the spiritual care responder's primary role is to provide basic, appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care as outlined above. In addition, the spiritual care responder serves as a connection between the specific religious tradition of the client and an appropriate religious or spiritual care provider in the larger community. The Disaster Spiritual Care responder is responsible for facilitating meeting the spiritual needs of the client within their stated faith tradition. This bridging component is one safeguard to ensure appropriate and respectful provision of disaster spiritual care services.

At the regional level, Disaster Spiritual Care is critical in smoothly transitioning preparedness actions into the disaster response and recovery phases, returning to a non-response relationship. This strengthens the steady state interaction between the Red Cross and individual and community-wide faith components.

### Involvement in Local Activities

Disaster Spiritual Care responders are expected to participate in routine or regularly scheduled sheltering meetings and/or trainings defined by their regional lead. There may be other meetings and activities involved in preparedness or recovery initiatives that would also benefit from participation by Disaster Spiritual Care responders. The regional lead facilitates the inclusion of Disaster Spiritual Care responders in relevant activities in all Red Cross business lines.

### Working with Disaster Action Teams

#### *Time Commitment and "On-Call" Calendar*

Disaster Spiritual Care responders are expected to be available to respond to local events, such as house fires or community disasters. As a member of the spiritual care activity, Disaster Spiritual Care responders are engaged as needed to respond to clients' requests for spiritual care in daily disasters or perceived need by other Red Cross responders. This 'as needed' response is facilitated through an "On-Call Calendar" that can be set up in Volunteer Connection or in another format designated by the chapter.

Disaster Action Teams use the contact information in the "On-Call Calendar" for 24/7 access when on-call responders are needed. Disaster Action Team leads provide an overview of the situation, the assessed need and client contact information for immediate action or for a call the next morning. The Disaster Spiritual Care team member provides the appropriate disaster spiritual care to the impacted clients.

#### *Support of Families with Missing, Injured or Deceased Loved Ones*

In the event of fatalities, the on-call Disaster Spiritual Care responder coordinates with the Disaster Action Team in assessing need, and providing immediate and appropriate comfort to the family, coworkers and staff, as needed. These services may be provided as part of an Integrated Condolence Call Team or may be separate from other services.

When asked to support families with missing, injured or deceased loved ones, the Disaster Spiritual Care team member promptly consults with and reports to the Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead. The Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead collaborates with governmental agencies and faith-based communities as requested by the

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client and collaborating staff. The support provided by Disaster Spiritual Care responders at a Family Assistance Center (FAC) opened after a transportation disaster is in accordance with the [Victim Support Task # 3, Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act](#).

The Disaster Spiritual Care Regional Lead may provide additional support, in-person or by phone, with the Red Cross workforce engaged in the disaster operation.

## Working with the Community

### *Developing Partnerships*

Disaster Spiritual Care responders participate in outreach and development of relationships with all faith traditions, individual religious leaders and houses of worship and the Red Cross. Meeting with leaders and congregations strengthens the ability of the Disaster Spiritual Care program to facilitate spiritual requests from clients in a timely manner. Regions connect on a regular basis for recruitment and training with their local faith-based groups that have expressed an interest in partnering with the Red Cross. The Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responder is an appropriate delegate to the local VOAD or COAD group on behalf of the region.

### *Creating Resource Lists*

The Regional Disaster Spiritual Care Lead is responsible for assessing community faith-based resources and making contact with local organizations. The list of potential resources below is used to create a local regional resource list:

1. Mapping local faith-based communities and houses of worship;
2. Local faith-based community leaders – contact and point person;
3. Professional chaplains;
4. Government responders - police and fire chaplains;
5. Military facilities and veteran agencies – professional chaplains and collaborators;
6. Local professional chaplains – institutions, hospice and healthcare facilities;
7. Library of specialized material and readings for client use;
8. Local community and not-for-profit humane organizations;
9. Members of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD).

More information on working with partner organizations can also be found in the [Guidance for Developing and Implementing Field Disaster Partnerships](#) document found on the Community Partnerships Topic Hub on The Exchange.

## Preparedness Activities

The preparedness phase of the disaster cycle allows faith-based groups to become better acquainted with their local Red Cross. Faith leaders recognize the potential to provide for their own congregants and expand their neighborly relationships. This opens the door to join whole community preparedness efforts and empower the

processes to speed recovery across diverse congregations. This program can enhance the coordinated and collaborative readiness of the whole community.

### *Community Based Training*

Disaster Spiritual Care collaborates with regional community partnerships, volunteer management, and preparedness leads in defining outreach offerings and strategies that meet congregation needs, e.g., First Aid and CPR, International Humanitarian Law, or Shelter Management. This collaboration also fosters connections among congregations in the community, and among the volunteers who attended.

Combining trainings for multiple congregations can maximize the volunteer instructors' time and allows smaller congregations to participate without the undue pressure of needing to fill an entire classroom. Also, by combining trainings, deeper connections are developed among neighbors and congregants, and it helps to better equip that neighborhood to respond to a disaster.

As an example of a promising practice, in San Diego, the small Lutheran Church joined the training that took place at the neighboring large Islamic Center. While the Lutheran Church is not a potential shelter site, the Islamic Center is. Should The Islamic Center be used in a disaster response, their neighbors will be ready to respond as well, and clients may seek shelter in a now familiar location. These connections also strengthen the volunteer base for the American Red Cross.

### *Home Fire Program*

The Home Fire Program is an excellent opportunity for an opening conversation between Disaster Spiritual Care and the faith-based community. The Home Fire Program gives faith leaders an opportunity to recognize the value for enhancing safety of their congregants as well as opening avenues for trust and integration.

For the region, Disaster Spiritual Care providers tend to share a natural rapport with faith leaders and have proven successful in understanding the unique community profile and building trust into the Red Cross relationship. Some ethnic populations and refugee groups are suspicious of uniforms and outsiders, and will not respond to a stranger. By gaining the trust of faith leaders with a program such as the Home Fire Program, and allowing them to advise their congregants, gives access to previously under-served populations. This trust may lead to a broader, deeper relationship and more opportunities to conduct faith-based humanitarian work.

### **Recovery Activities**

Recovery begins at the time of the response. Disaster Spiritual Care collaborates with caseworkers by accepting referrals for spiritual care support. Disaster Spiritual Care responders may also be a liaison with local faith-based organizations who wish to be involved in response activities by providing supplemental material or human resources.

# Disaster Spiritual Care Standards and Procedures on a Disaster Response Operation

## Overview of Standards

Individuals impacted by disaster have more than just physical needs. People often rely on their faith and spiritual resources to cope with the disaster and move toward recovery. Trained Disaster Spiritual Care responders are available to compassionately and impartially talk with individuals and assist in meeting their spiritual needs. This type of care can be apart from, or in addition to, disaster mental health services and casework provided by the Red Cross.

## Disaster Spiritual Care Responder Tasks

### *Shelters and Other Service Sites*

Disaster Spiritual Care responders are assigned to shelters and service delivery sites when requested. They assess the spiritual needs of clients, make requests for additional spiritual care services of all faiths, and meet one-on-one with clients to assist in providing prayer or other methods of meditation or worship. Disaster Spiritual Care responders also provide representation in district and job headquarters to meet the planning and reporting needs of the disaster operation.

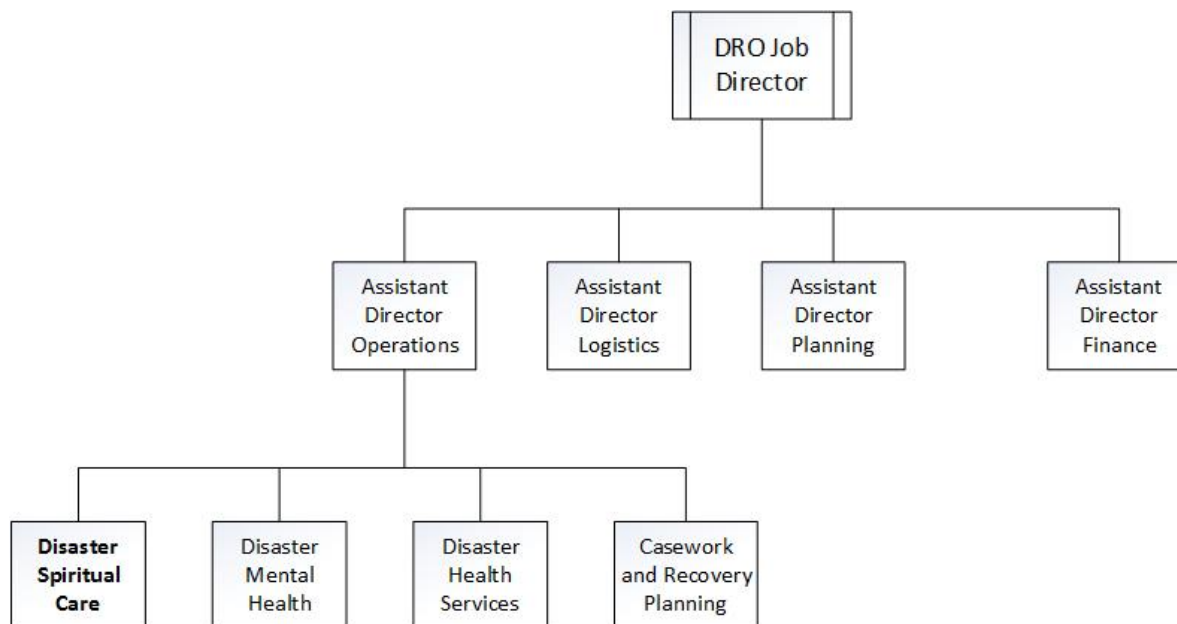
### *Mass Casualties and Transportation Incidents*

During mass casualty and transportation incidents, Disaster Spiritual Care responders facilitate memorial services, assist in making funeral arrangements, and accompany family members to meet with funeral directors. They may also attend memorial services and funeral services if requested by families, assess needs in advance of memorial and funeral services, and work with community partners to meet the diverse faith based needs for services and follow up. Disaster Spiritual Care responders may be asked to accompany authorities when making death notifications. In such cases, the Disaster Spiritual Care responder does not make the notification, but provides support to the families and to the notifiers.

### *Integrated Care Condolence Teams*

Integrated care condolence teams are used to provide support to families whose loved one is seriously injured, missing or deceased as a result of the disaster. When Disaster Spiritual Care responders are deployed to an integrated care condolence team, Disaster Spiritual Care responders do not notify families of the death of their loved one, but may be asked to accompany and support responders from other agencies who are providing death notification. Integrated care condolence teams can consist of any combination of Disaster Spiritual Care, Disaster Mental Health, Disaster Health Services and Casework. These teams go to hospitals, morgues or homes to provide support to individuals and families whose loved one is missing, deceased or injured. If next-of-kin are not located in the area of the disaster, the integrated care condolence team may facilitate a meeting of family members with an integrated care condolence team from the chapter in their area.

## Organizational Structure on a DRO



### Disaster Spiritual Care Lead Tasks

The Disaster Spiritual Care Lead on a disaster operation staffs, supervises and assigns Disaster Spiritual Care responders to work sites on the operation. The Disaster Spiritual Care Lead reports to the Assistant Director of Operations and collaborates closely with Disaster Health Services, Disaster Mental Health and Casework and Recovery Planning. The Disaster Spiritual Care Lead on a disaster operation also maintains records of service provision and number of spiritual care contacts on a daily basis.

The Disaster Spiritual Care Lead is expected to complete tasks in the following areas:

#### *Staffing*

- Works with the Assistant Director of Operations to assess staffing needs as determined by Incident Action Plan and the Service Delivery Plan.
- Develops, signs and submits staffing request to Staff Services.

#### *Administrative*

- Provides staff at job headquarters as needed to attend planning and other meetings as needed.
- Submits plans to meet tasks and objectives as stated in the Incident Action Plan.
- Aggregates and reports numbers as needed for the 5266 on a daily basis.
- Reports achievements of the day for the Situational Report.
- Provides updates as needed to the Assistant Director of Operations.



### *Partnering with other Red Cross Functions*

- Assigns Disaster Spiritual Care staff to shelters, client casework, service delivery sites, bulk distribution sites, Emergency Aid Stations, emergency response vehicles/feeding crews, district and job headquarters.
- Collaborates with other functions whenever necessary and provides support to staff as requested.

### *Connecting with the Community*

- Works with local region to identify pre-existing partnerships.
- Assists local region in reaching out to VOAD/COAD partners and faith-based community to attend meetings.
- Reaches out to local resources to provide support in their response with emotional and spiritual recovery and seeks trained volunteers to work as event-based volunteers.

## External References

- [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster \(National VOAD\), 2014. Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines.](#)
- [National Transportation Safety Board, Aviation Family Disaster Assistance Act](#)
- [National Transportation Safety Board, Federal Family Assistance Plan for Rail Passenger Disasters](#)
- [Memorandum of Understanding between the National Transportation Safety Board and American Red Cross](#)

