



Mass Care and Emergency Human Services Preparedness Guide Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What does mass care encompass in emergencies or disasters?

- Community shelter for displaced people
- Feeding
- Distribution of emergency supplies

Who is the lead for opening a community shelter in our jurisdiction?

- ***The senior elected official of the municipality in which a disaster occurs...***
 - has ultimate responsibility for disaster response in his/her jurisdiction (e.g., town board president, mayor, county executive, etc).
 - designates a lead agency for community shelter operations (usually the county human services authority at the county level).
- ***The lead agency designee...***
 - develops plans with partner organizations to operate community shelters.
 - can use the unified command approach of the Incident Command System (ICS) to share decision-making with partners.

Which partners should be part of our mass care team?

- ***Government representatives*** from agencies such as human services, public health, and emergency management
- ***American Red Cross (ARC)***
- ***The Salvation Army***
- ***Others that have expertise*** supporting people with access and functional needs, such as:
 - Managed care organization(s)
 - Aging and disability resource centers
 - Advocacy groups

Who is responsible for developing and executing mass care emergency plans?

- ***County Human Services Authority*** – or local counterpart
 - In tandem with the American Red Cross when available
 - In coordination with key planning and response partners

If the American Red Cross (ARC) is going to open community shelters, why does our county need its own plans for shelters?

- ***Local governments***
 - Have statutory responsibility for their jurisdictions' emergency management and response
 - Voluntary organizations do not

- **ARC**
 - Specializes in emergency community sheltering
 - Can be a primary partner with your agency.
 - However, might not be immediately available to your jurisdiction
 - may have already responded to another jurisdiction in its region
 - may have insufficient staff or resources in a large disaster
 - may encounter obstacles created by the disaster that keep volunteers from reaching your shelters
- **Your agency**
 - Might need to use local government personnel
 - Might need to provide them with just-in-time training to open and support a community shelter

I work in a small local public health agency/human services program. How will we be able to come up with all the necessary resources needed in a large mass care event?

- **Plan ahead**
 - Draft a plan with partners.
 - Keep your staff trained.
 - Keep contact and resource information current.
- **Engage “whole community” partners**
 - Know your partners who have access to resources needed during day-to-day operations.
 - Get to know your local Wisconsin Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WI VOAD) member groups.
 - Reach out to other nonprofit groups that could expand their missions to help during emergencies.
- **Know when to call for help**
 - Reach out to neighboring counties before an emergency occurs
 - Know how to contact regional and state resources

What is the difference between a county emergency plan, a mass care plan, and a continuity of operations plan?

County Emergency Plan	Mass Care Plan	Continuity of Operations Plan
Is a comprehensive document containing numerous sections	Is a single section in the county emergency plan	
Identifies the responsibilities of all lead and supporting agencies in providing all emergency services	Identifies the responsibilities of lead and supporting agencies in providing mass care	
	Helps the lead and supporting organizations assist the local community when it is affected by a disaster	Helps a single organization and its staff continue doing business if its location is affected by a disaster

What is the difference between a community shelter, shelter, and facility in the context of mass care planning?

Community Shelter	Shelter	Facility
A temporary non-medical facility that houses people displaced from their homes by a disaster	A permanent facility that supports people who are homeless, dealing with domestic abuse issues, etc.	A public location (e.g., mall or library) that gives people temporary relief during extreme weather conditions, (e.g. heat or cold).
May operate for an extended period of days	Operates year-round	Typically open during normal business hours (not overnight)
Provides sleeping quarters, food, hygiene facilities, and other living necessities	Provides sleeping quarters, food, hygiene facilities, and other living necessities	May or may not offer other services
Must accept any displaced people except those who are a danger to other residents or those who require acute medical care/supervision	Has eligibility criteria and is not available to the general population during a disaster	Is open to the general public
	If damaged during a disaster, would evacuate its residents to a community shelter if doing so is safe and secure for the individuals and for other community shelter residents	

Do we need to have Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with mass care partners?

While the state does not require MOUs, it is prudent to develop formal, detailed agreements between partners to minimize uncertainties and assumptions among the organizations.

What are the major differences between mass care operations with and without a presidential disaster declaration?

- The amounts and types of resources to which local government has access
- The types of assistance the community or individuals may be eligible to receive

Why do we need a long-term recovery team in our county?

- To meet the unmet long-term emotional and financial recovery needs of families after the response is over and many of the responders have left
- To provide a legitimate, accountable system for receiving and distributing certain types of funds, goods, and services to disaster survivors

Why is the Department of Health Services offering this guide now?

- This guide encompasses new laws and best practices gleaned from disaster experience and expanded partnerships that have evolved since our last guidance published in 2004.
- It is the product of an expanded workgroup with considerable experience with mass care and emergency human services, including representatives from:
 - Local and state agencies for public health
 - Emergency management
 - Human services
 - The Salvation Army, American Red Cross, and Wisconsin Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WI VOAD)