STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR STATE OFFICES IN TIMES OF DISASTER

Disaster Services Unit & Office of Field Liaison

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for State Offices Following Disaster

Disaster services is a strategic focus area of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and State Offices are essential partners in ensuring that National Service programming is able to meet and track emergency needs across the country.

When a disaster strikes, the pace is fast and the community affected as well as the disaster community relies on pre-staged partnerships to establish paths of communication and action. The CNCS Disaster Services Unit (DSU) encourages State Offices that are new to the field of disaster to focus on building small, but purposeful expansions that are well within their capabilities and comfort level. In disaster work, building a reputation for dependability in even the smallest function will out-value broad, but sub-standard expansion across the disaster continuum, every time.

In the event of a disaster within any given State Office's borders, the following procedure should be followed to ensure the delivery of high quality, safe and efficient national service disaster response.

Step 1: Pre Disaster (Primary things CSOs should do before disaster)

1. Know your office and building's preparedness plan. If you do not have one, create one.
2. Be familiar with your projects' capacities to respond to disasters in your state. (I.e. which Senior Corps projects have volunteers who have disaster training or experience?)
3. Make a plan for who will contact who (grantees) in an event of emergency. Share plan with grantees and the DSU. Include in this plan how grantees will contact your office in an emergency.
4. Know your state emergency plan and know who is in charge of volunteers and donations management.
5. If available, participate in any local training about disaster management in your state. This is valuable for training content as well as networking with the disaster response community in your state.
6. If available, provide any training to projects regarding working with clients in times of disasters.
7. Set an expectation for communications. Keep in mind that throughout the response and recovery, we need national service projects to share all related member activities to help us coordinate cross-stream cooperation and efficient media and intergovernmental reporting. In particular, we would like programs to keep track of the number, location, and activities of national service members in affected areas. It is helpful to set that expectation in advance. The message should emphasize that we want to be able to coordinate and recognize national service, and programs should expect the CSO to follow up with requests for information.

Step 2: Disaster Strikes – Immediate Actions

1. Ensure the safety and security of yourself, and your colleagues by following all office and building disaster preparedness plans that pertain to your location.
2. Contact your supervisor to report your safety and status.
3. Contact Kelly DeGraff @ kdegraff@cns.gov or 202.355.2014 to report on the situation in your state.
4. If the disaster affects multiple states, connect with the relevant adjacent State Offices to ensure effective resource coordination.

Step 3: Disaster Response – Once the safety and security of you, your colleagues, and your family is assured you will be asked to gather and feed information directly to the DSU.

1. Contact all grantee programs in affected areas to ensure that all service members are safe and that all program capabilities are intact.
2. Reach out to all AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Corps grantees statewide to ascertain whether any national service participants will be assisting with the response or recovery effort.
    a. Throughout the response and recovery, share all related member activities with the DSU. The DSU may provide a reporting template. State Offices are the primary conduits for information about Senior Corps and VISTA, and understanding their latest disaster operations is essential to cross program cooperation, and efficient media and intergovernmental reporting. The following data points are the most essential for State Offices to report on:
        i. Numbers, hours, and activities of Senior Corps members in disaster affected areas.
        ii. Numbers, hours, and activities of VISTA members in disaster affected areas.
    b. After consultation with the DSU and Area Manager to determine if VISTA deployment is appropriate, ensure the proper guidelines for VISTA participation in disaster response are met:
        i. VISTA members cannot travel more than 50 miles to respond to a disaster. Exceptions to this rule exist for VISTA members serving in certain geographic circumstances. Any deployment in excess of 50 miles must first be approved by VISTA headquarters.
        ii. VISTA members cannot participate in disaster response activities for more than 30 days. Work beyond 30 days requires an approved alteration of a member's VAD.
        iii. VISTA members may not cross state lines to participate in a disaster response. Exceptions to this rule exist for VISTA members serving near state borders. All cross-state deployments must first be approved by VISTA headquarters.

c. Ensure that Senior Corps projects are familiar with the most current polices that may allow for some flexibility and additional support for Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions serving in federally declared disaster areas. (See: Senior Corps Projects Operating in Officially Declared Disaster Areas Q&A.)

   i. Foster Grandparents who are unable to continue to serve their previously assigned children may be assigned temporarily to other children in shelters or other settings and may serve groups of children, while seeking to provide one-on-one assistance wherever possible.
   ii. Senior Companions who are unable to continue to serve their previously assigned clients may be assigned temporarily to assist other adults with special needs. Assignment plans in such cases may be written generically in recognition of the temporary nature of the assignments.
   iii. In exceptional circumstances, where a Foster Grandparent or Senior Companion is unable to serve and has exhausted all available leave, the Corporation can authorize the payment of a temporary allowance.
      1. The temporary allowance may be funded by rebudgeting Volunteer Expense funds in the grant budget. Stipend funds may be rebudgeted for this purpose, with a corresponding temporary reduction in the grantee's VSY level. Such a reduction will not be deemed to reduce the base level of grant funding.
      2. CSO approval must be provided in writingfollowing the process outlined by Senior Corps.

3. Contact[1] your State Service Commission to ensure the following goals are met: Note: The DSU will be the primary contact with the State Service Commission in a disaster situation, however it is imperative the State Office also establishes contact with the Commission.
   a. Open a clear line of communication and direct the Commission to the Disaster Services Unit (conference calls between all three offices may be established)
   b. Ensure that your offices are not duplicating each other's services, and prioritize the successful collaboration of cross-stream resources.
   c. If the Commission is tied into the state's response plan or is coordinating with the Governor's office, ensure that your office is looped into the actions that the Commission is taking at the behest of the state's executive leadership.

[1] The DSU will also be in contact with State Service Commissions affected by disaster.

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Step 4: Stay Engaged

1. If operations continue, make sure your office is receiving, reading and responding to the Situation Reports or other briefings, as needed.
2. Plan for any needed further resources for disaster response (i.e. new VISTA projects designed around disaster response, or long-term engagement of RSVP)

DSU Contact Information:

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Please note: the DSU has a group email HOWEVER the DSU team does NOT have access to this group email after leaving the office. Please use the individual email addresses above to reach the DSU team.
DSU Group Email: DisasterServicesUnit@cns.gov