

TITLE: Overview of American Red Cross Current Disaster Relief Activities

AUDIENCE: Disaster Relief Operations, Chapters, Service Areas

PURPOSE: To provide a complete picture of the current service delivery methods and options provided by the American Red Cross to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Included are:

- *Emergency Lodging*
- *Individual Assistance*
- *Family Links Registry*
- *Hiring Additional Staff*

While supporting the Hurricane Katrina survivors' needs for essential shelter, food, safe drinking water and family reunification, the American Red Cross is moving simultaneously into the next phase of response with a variety of efforts to address emergency lodging and interim financial aid. Red Cross volunteers are doing all they can to provide assistance to upwards of three quarters of a million Katrina victims who are dispersed across the nation. They are working without rest to provide disaster relief on a previously unimaginable scale. Three separate assistance programs are currently in place to provide for needed services. Services may be provided by any unit.

EMERGENCY LODGING

As described in prior guidance addressing transient accommodations, the Red Cross, through Corporate Lodging Consultants, will arrange to cover the cost of lodging for evacuees in hotels. Lodging will be covered for two-week periods at a time. The Red Cross is working through a hotel management firm which has relationships with more than 90% of hotels nationwide. Red Cross chapters and operations may extend these stays in 14-day increments until further notice.

- **WHO:** Evacuees from ZIP codes that were heavily impacted by Hurricane Katrina who have found hotel accommodations but are exhausting their personal resources for lodging and for those in areas where hotels are available. The program is also available to move evacuees out of small shelters into available hotel space.
- **HOW:** Red Cross staff can make reservations for evacuees anywhere in the country. In TX, LA, MS, and AL, residents who can demonstrate they lived in the affected zip codes can go directly to the hotels. Corporate Lodging Consultants, at the request of national headquarters has used an email and blast fax to contact area hotels to alert them. If a blast fax to hotels is needed in your area, contact TA@usa.redcross.org. Red Cross national headquarters will be billed directly for these hotel costs. People staying in hotels who are in need of assistance should alert the front desk to their status as evacuees.
- **WHERE:** Nationwide, where hotel rooms are available. The program is most useful outside the hardest-hit storm-ravaged areas where hotel rooms are available. Chapters and operations can use this program anywhere in the country.
- **WHY:** To enable evacuees to maintain their hotel rooms once they have run out of personal resources and to avoid moving additional survivors into already strained shelter situations.

- Lodging will be covered for two-week periods at a time. **Currently, it has been extended for another 14-day period and this was communicated by blast fax to hotels.**

INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE

Provides Financial assistance for essential emergency-related needs, such as food, clothing and other necessities.

Verification of Need

Updated guidance is sent out to chapters, service areas and operations with lists of affected zip codes. Due to the enormity of the damage, all clients with pre disaster addresses within the damaged zip codes are eligible for assistance. As stated in prior guidance – we have established a flat rate of assistance based on number of family members, with a cap of 5 to streamline the casework process. A one page intake form was developed to be utilized as an alternative to the Disaster Case Record (Form 901) to further streamline the process and expedite assistance.

This includes providing financial assistance in shelters, from chapter locations and via an 800 #. Relief Operations should be transitioning from pure mass care to the provision of individual assistance. Financial mechanisms include Client Assistance Cards (CACs), Disbursing Orders, and checks. Other forms of assistance may soon be available. In combination with the 800 #, Red Cross has arranged for Western Union which has offices in 48,000 locations across the United States to act as the disbursing point for Red Cross Assistance for cases initiated through the 800# Chapters and Operations should not send people directly to Western Union.

While this may act as an additional conduit for relief, it will not substantially reduce the demand on chapters and relief operations in the short run. It is expected that wait times will be substantial and we will ramp up slowly to avoid overwhelming western union sites and as we see how the program works. Chapters and Operations should actively refer clients to FEMA registration as well.

800# Process

Clients will be advised by media of the availability of the 800 #. When calling they will be asked to provide their pre-disaster address or telephone number. A database will serve to validate identity and residency in the affected zip codes. Clients will be entered into the Client Assistance System, which will authorize disbursement, usually of cash, to the Western Union System. Clients will be provided a PIN number and, while ID is preferred, it is not necessary to pick up their assistance. Red Cross is working to provide phones and Internet access in shelters nationwide to help residents access FEMA, Red Cross financial assistance and other services

Chapter and DRO Based Individual Assistance

- **WHO:** Residents of ZIP codes that were most heavily impacted by Hurricane Katrina, no matter where they are now. Updated guidance dated 09/10 lists the zip codes. Residency in these zip codes will constitute the basis of our assistance due to the devastation.
- **HOW:** In many ways. Debit-card style Client Assistance Cards, chapter-issued checks, vouchers and other mechanisms can be used to provide financial assistance based on family size. The form of assistance may vary from place to place, but amounts will be standard nationwide. Chapters and relief operations are encouraged to work with disaster operations and finance on mechanisms for financial assistance as CACs are in short supply for another week.

- **WHERE:** Availability will be based on local infrastructure damage and capacity. Currently, financial assistance is available at Red Cross chapters in areas not impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Distribution of Client Assistance Cards to shelter residents began Thursday at the Reliant Center Complex at the Houston Astrodome, and will extend to survivors nationwide within the next few days through a toll-free call center.
- **WHEN:** Local Red Cross chapters have been assisting survivors with financial aid for the last several days. We have put almost \$40 million in assistance in the hands of clients on CAC cards alone.
- **WHY:** To provide basic necessities with maximum flexibility for survivors until state and federal assistance is accessible.
- **Sequence of Individual Assistance** – It is recommended that relief operations in heavily impacted areas begin with large shelters and then consider moving into the community facilities such as large churches or where partner organizations may be able to provide support.
- **Consolidation of Assistance** – Ultimately, the client assistance system is the one tool available to us to consolidate all financial assistance provided and to prevent or at least minimize duplication of services. Chapters who can adopt utilization of the program are strongly encouraged to do so. Chapters unable to utilize the system should act in accordance with Disaster Operations Guidance # 2, published 9/7/05 and FED EX case information to national headquarters for data entry. All users of CAS should check for existing cases prior to rendering assistance.

FAMILY LINKS REGISTRY

Web-based registry, accessible worldwide, listing the whereabouts of more than 154,000 who want their location made available.

- **WHO:** Anyone who is seeking to reconnect with family, friends or colleagues displaced by Hurricane Katrina.
- **HOW:** Evacuees and those searching for them can go to www.redcross.org or call 1-877-LOVED-1S.
- **WHEN:** Available now.
- **WHY:** To reconnect the vital ties of family and friendship so essential to emotional wellbeing in the wake of a disaster.

HIRING ADDITIONAL STAFF

Texas operations have had significant success with temporary workers providing casework staff. Chapters and Relief Operations should note that Spherion has been authorized to work with you or your designee to hire staff living in or near staff shelters as well as for other activities you need on your relief operations that will supplement the response.

The plan is for a Spherion person to team up with a Red Cross staff member from the HR department to work on your DR to hire staff. An initial 500 staff each for Baton Rouge, Montgomery and Houston has been authorized. As the program gets underway additional resources will be authorized.

Use these hires for continuity as sheltering and feeding workers, individual assistance workers, material support staff, and support administrative positions and utilize direct hires through American Red Cross as shelter managers, transportation (people who need to drive our vehicles) and other non-traditional Spherion roles (your HR team will help sort this out with you).

Staffing on the operations can advise of current procedures and will assign people to assist in hiring. You may direct these staff to go to locations where you need to hire staff anywhere in your DR geographic area. Relief operations may choose to support Chapters as well as the operations themselves. A shelter in Mississippi, a service delivery site in Louisiana or Red Cross facilities in Texas—the flexibility of utilization is up to you.