

Recommended Disaster Core Competencies for Community Based Organizations



1. Essential functions and services are identified and incorporated in agency emergency plan

Identify which agency functions are essential, identify mandatory staffing, and have greater success in handling the disruptions.

2. Develop Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

COOPs enable agencies to continue their essential functions in a broad spectrum of emergencies. Ensure plans are reviewed and updated annually. Consider Business Continuity Insurance.

3. Develop Emergency Response Plan

Emergency response plans enable agencies to successfully respond to a broad range of emergencies, identifying roles and responsibilities of staff members. Ensure plans are reviewed and updated annually. This includes hazard identification and low/high risk potentials of those hazards.

4. Staff is personally prepared

Provide personal preparedness training and yearly evaluation. Encourage staff and volunteers to make a go-kit at home and work.

5. Staff have been trained and exercised on agency's emergency plan

Incorporate training about your agency's emergency plan in new staff orientations. Regularly (e.g. annually) familiarize key staff who are likely to play a role in an emergency. Plans should be reviewed and updated after they are exercised. Connect agency exercises with larger exercises, such as the annual statewide hurricane exercise, or a nuclear power plant drill.

6. Vital information is backed-up and accessible

Create back-ups of information and processes. Create work 'go-kits' that have everything necessary for staff to pick up and restart services in an alternate location. If the facility were destroyed, what would be needed to continue essential functions elsewhere? It is recommended to identify a business continuity/continuity of operations coordinator to coordinate the relocation if necessary.

7. Physical safety of facility is addressed (hazard reduction)

Bring attention to potential safety hazards during a disaster. Prepare pre-disaster using structural mitigation. Consider non-structural retrofitting and structural mitigation. Identify potential safety hazards in the area of the facility (i.e. is the facility in a flood zone, etc.?). Include your risk/safety representative in these tasks.

8. Partner organizations are identified to share resources

Identify community assets that can assist you in your efforts to serve your clients during times of disruption. Build community relationships. Create memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with partnering organizations for mutual aid during disasters. Revisit these regularly.

9. Facility and staff are prepared for an evacuation

Identify roles, practice evacuation plans and ensure staff understanding of processes. Establish policies and procedures. Identify evacuation routes. Identify alternate location and sign MOU for potential use. What happens if staff cannot get back into the building? Does everyone go home?

10. Multiple communication tools are identified

Identify multiple redundant communication tools for communicating internally (staff), externally (clients and other agencies), and the public. Consider procuring WPS and GETS cards for phones, a satellite phone, FRS radios (walkie-talkies), and/or partnering with HAM radio operator(s) for alternate communication methods.

11. Staff is prepared to be self-sufficient in workplace for at least three days

Prepare staff in the workplace, with a plan, having supplies and being ready. This may include allowing family members to come to agency.

12. Emergency payment procedures are established

Procedures are in place to track disaster/emergency expenditures. Create backups of your fiscal information. Discuss what would be necessary to continue and sustain payroll, bills, etc. Tracking of expenditures, staff and volunteer time during disasters can help with reimbursement should the disaster receive a federal disaster declaration. Always have cash on hand.

13. Staff is trained on Incident Command System (ICS)

ICS was developed by FEMA, and this training will prepare staff for what their roles are during an incident. To find offered classes online, go to www.fema.gov.

14. Local emergency service providers familiar with agency and staff

Communicate information about the services your agency provides to local emergency service providers. Identify key agency staff. Invite local emergency service providers (fire and law) to tour your facility. Get them familiar with your agency and what services you provide.