



**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM**

**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
STANDARD OF CARE
FOR DISASTER SPIRITUAL CARE MINISTRIES**

Natural and human caused disasters can potentially harm the spiritual lives of direct and indirect survivors -- those who have suffered loss through death or injury and/or lost property; witnessed a traumatic event, or assisted people. As members of Church World Service, we work together to collectively address the spiritual distress of all who are affected by disasters. We will strive to effectively partner with the local community to deliver appropriate spiritual care services to people in need. Our efforts will be inclusive and welcoming of all who are suffering. We will establish, promote, and uphold standards for a continuum of spiritual care throughout disaster recovery and insure that affected persons receive appropriate and respectful spiritual care services.

This document details a standard of care that disaster survivors can expect. It includes:

- 1) points of agreement among Church World Service Emergency Response Program member denominations/communions
- 2) a code of conduct for our related disaster spiritual care providers
- 3) an agreed-upon care approach

Points of Agreement

Participants in development of this document have agreed to uphold the following in a consistent and transparent manner:

- We are called to this ministry by our common commitment to Christ and our desire to be faithful to scripture in showing mercy, doing justice, and walking humbly with our Lord. While we will refrain from using disaster as an opportunity for evangelization and proselytizing, we are nonetheless compelled to do this work out of our love for God, one another, and those we serve.
- We celebrate the diversity of faith traditions and their varying expressions, while also recognizing the diversity of those who subscribe to no faith tradition. Our service delivery will, in coordination with others, reflect and respect this diversity
- The training and credentialing/validation process administered either collaboratively or as individual denominations, will reflect an inclusive perspective for the provision of spiritual care. Training/education and experiential requirements help insure adherence to this Code of Conduct and enable the provision of appropriate spiritual care.

- The credibility of our efforts, collectively and individually, is dependent upon our adherence to the Standard of Care to which we have agreed. This document affirms our commitment that individuals and organizations will not benefit from the vulnerability and suffering of persons affected by disasters. All members are responsible for enforcing these standards in their organizations.
- Our arena of response for spiritual care will engage disaster mitigation, preparedness, rescue, relief and long term recovery while acknowledging that some organizations may be more active in certain areas of disaster ministry. In addressing all of these areas, we acknowledge the importance of a holistic, broad-based approach to spiritual care.
- We commit to maintaining open communication in working together to build a cross-organizational standard of care. We will consistently communicate to our respective internal and external stakeholders how disaster-affected persons can access suitable spiritual care with ease and comfort in any stage of disaster response.

Code of Conduct for our Spiritual Care Providers

To uphold and advance the honor, dignity, and effectiveness of disaster spiritual care and in keeping with high standards of competence and ethical conduct, we will adhere to, and are committed to the following in our disaster spiritual care programs:

Professionalism

- Providing appropriate care in line with our capabilities
- Providing correct information to those who seek our care
- Making only promises we can fulfill

An affirmative and respectful interfaith response

- Refraining from the distribution of unsolicited religious literature
- Refraining from all forms of proselytizing and sermonizing

Honest, fair, direct, and impartial behavior

- Offering spiritual care to all, regardless of gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation, religious tradition, or political belief
- Preserving the integrity and confidentiality of the information of and about others

Loyal and respectful service to a community impacted by disaster

- Respecting the various theologies, traditions, and values of each individual and faith group
- Valuing and respecting the variety of disciplines and capabilities present in the community
- Facilitating diverse participation in planning community services.

Working within a coordinated response

- Respecting the variety of disciplines engaged in a holistic broad based approach to spiritual care (physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual, and relational)
- Referring survivors to other services when it is beneficial, appropriate, and accepted
- Carrying current credentials or validation from a sponsoring body

Standard of Care Disaster Survivors Can Expect

When disaster survivors encounter a spiritual caregiver under our guidance, they may expect:

- Spiritual care from someone within their faith tradition when possible
- Personal and professional integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and diligence from caregivers
- Objective, appropriate holistic counsel and a comforting presence
- Protection from current and continued harm
- Support through advocacy for spiritual and emotional health, including resources to strengthen their lives, when requested
- Consistent spiritual care appropriate and sensitive to their faith beliefs and traditions
- Freedom from unwanted gifts of religious literature or symbols; evangelistic and sermonizing speech; and forced acceptance of specific moral values and traditions.
- Respect for confidentiality
- Bona-fide and reputable referrals to professional services with appropriate expertise and skill

Signatory denominations which covenant to uphold these standards and code of conduct:

Direct Human Services, National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA.

Church of the Brethren

International Orthodox Christian Charities

Lutheran Disaster Response

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

Reformed Church World Service

UCC National Disaster Ministries

United Methodist Committee on Relief

Week of Compassion -- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)