



Individual Client Services

In addition to mass feeding and sheltering, the American Red Cross offers services focused on individuals and families affected by a disaster. The Red Cross provides disaster health services including emergency first aid, assessments of health needs and appropriate referrals, health education, disaster mental health and crisis counseling. The Red Cross also assists with emergency assistance, family reunification and planning for recovery as people begin to rebuild their lives and communities.

In keeping with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, including neutrality and impartiality, the American Red Cross offers humanitarian assistance without regard to nationality, race, religious beliefs, economic status, or immigration status.

Disaster Health Services

The mission of Disaster Health Services is to provide health related services and secure resources to meet the health needs of disaster victims. Volunteers in Disaster Health Services evaluate the health status and health care needs of shelter residents, service center clients and members of the community. They also perform emergency first aid, health education and assist with replacement of emergency medications or securing the needed health supplies and equipment. This group also refers families to health care resources and services.

The Disaster Health Services team also cooperates with local medical and nursing communities as well as with public health authorities regarding care of people with special needs, environmental concerns and contagious disease control and reporting. This includes providing surveillance data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and coordinating with the Department of Health and Human Services on referrals to medical facilities when people require advanced medical care or accommodations beyond those found on emergency shelters.



Red Cross volunteer Patricia M. places a bandage on a girl's injured elbow at the Service Center.
Bound Brook, New Jersey Floods, April 25, 2007.
Talia Frenkel / American Red Cross

Disaster Mental Health

Disaster Mental Health responds to the emotional needs of the disaster victims as well as workers serving during a disaster. Our volunteers are licensed mental health professionals--including counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and registered nurses with documented psychiatric training and experience--as well as social workers. In addition, graduate students studying psychology or a related field may serve on relief operations if they are accompanied by their faculty supervisor.

Disaster Mental Health personnel provide the following services:

- psychological triage, crisis intervention, psychological support
- instrumental support (taking action in support of an individual)
- advocacy (taking action on behalf of an individual)
- referrals
- supervision and support to Red Cross workers providing Psychological First Aid
- monitoring and alleviating organizational stress
- casualty support

Disaster Mental Health personnel also provide exit interviews to departing disaster relief workers.

Client Casework

Client Casework provides direct assistance to individuals and families affected by man-made or natural disasters, ranging from single-family home incidents to larger events such as tornadoes, floods and hurricanes and catastrophic incidents. The Client Casework team offers assistance such as listening, providing information, advocacy, counseling and referrals. During an intake interview, the Client Casework team identifies any special needs to ensure that an individual may safely be accommodated in a shelter or referred to an appropriate facility. A Red Cross case worker can also provide emergency assistance in the form of a fixed amount debit card to allow clients to purchase what they need most: groceries, new clothes, rent, emergency home repairs, transportation, household items, medicines and occupational tools. Prior to this type of emergency assistance, the caseworker validates that the person or family lives in the disaster affected area, confirms damage information, and cross-references information with other organizations distributing financial assistance. The Red Cross may, if the client chooses, enter information about the person or family into a database of emergency aid organizations, called the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN), in order to access other community resources.



Welfare Information and Family Reunification

During times of disaster, the American public turns to the Red Cross as a trusted source of information. The Red Cross facilitates communication from people from inside the disaster-affected area to their loved ones outside the affected area. Through the Red Cross, family members may request welfare information regarding their loved ones. The Red Cross also continues to work with both government and community-based agencies who offer a range of welfare information and family reunification service solutions and technical tools. The Red Cross Safe and Well Website enables people within a disaster area to let their families and friends outside of the affected region know that they are “safe and well.” The Red Cross also provides a call center with disaster information at 1-866-GET-INFO.

Safe and Well Website –is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week via <https://disastersafe.redcross.org>. People within a disaster area can register as “safe and well” by selecting and posting standard messages for friends and family. Concerned family members who know the sought person’s phone number (home, cell or work) or a complete home address can search for the messages posted by those who register.

Recovery, Planning and Assistance

When the effects of a disaster are longer lasting, Client Services seeks to address issues that span beyond the immediate emergency needs such as housing, building and repairs, replacement of household furnishings and mental health needs. Working in partnership with national and local community organizations, the Red Cross assesses the long-term needs of the community, identifies organizations and resources to address the needs, and jointly implements special programs to assist the disaster-affected communities achieve their own recovery.