

Lutheran Family Services of Virginia (800-359-3834)
and the Virginia Synod ELCA
Action and Communication Plan for Disaster Response

Last revision date: September 1, 2013

Lutheran Family Services of Virginia (LFSVA) is an affiliate of Lutheran Disaster Response and serves as the designated disaster response agency for the Virginia Synod of the ELCA.

PREPARATION: the ongoing cycle

1. Communication

- The Virginia Synod ELCA Bishop or his/her designee and the LFSVA CEO or his/her designee agrees to make communication a high priority in the event of a disaster.
- LFSVA will serve as the liaison to the LDR/Chicago office.
- The Synod Conference Deans will serve as the primary communicator with the Bishop and LFSVA. Prior to the start of Hurricane Season LFSVA will seek updates for the list of Deans and the clergy roster serving congregations in the VA Synod.
- The Pastor of each congregation will serve as the Point of Contact (POC) unless a congregation member has agreed to serve in this capacity.

2. Disaster plans

The Bishop will encourage each congregation to prepare its own disaster preparedness plan. LFSVA can provide guidance, templates and serve as a resource in this process for any congregation requesting assistance.

Congregational plans should include:

- 1st Level: **CARE FOR YOUR CHURCH:** Back-up important data, photograph or video property, review insurance coverage, develops a plan for continuity of operation, including evacuation and relocation of worship and other services if necessary.
- 2nd Level: **CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE:** Determine membership needs: Provide resources for members to prepare their homes, families and selves for a disaster. Create a database of members, identifying special needs as well as skills that members can bring to bear on in case of a disaster. Create a plan for rapidly communicating accurate information (e.g., a phone tree) to members in case of a disaster.
- 3rd Level: **OFFER HELP TO YOUR COMMUNITY:** Create a record of physical assets, including facilities that the congregation can offer in response to a disaster.

The Bishop and the CEO of LFSVA will annually review this action and communication plan.

3. Utilization of congregations and members for disaster work:

If a major disaster occurs in another part of the USA, LFSVA will provide information on disaster response needs and make available handouts and training for churches that have interest in sending volunteer teams for rebuilding efforts.

When a major event (e.g., hurricane) is forecast to hit Virginia: The Bishop of the Virginia Synod ELCA or his/her designee will communicate with the LFSVA CEO or his/her designee to determine priorities for immediate response after the disaster. The Bishop will communicate with the Dean(s) of the region of the state that could be affected.

If there is little or no prior notice of a disaster (e.g., in case of a sudden or human-caused disaster), the Dean of the Conference in the affected area will serve as the first point of contact.

RESCUE PHASE - Immediately following the disaster, i.e., as soon as response can safely begin – 0-48 hours: Effective communication and collaboration are of the highest importance.

LFSVA (CEO or designated staff person)	Bishop (or designee)	Dean/Clergy in Affected AREA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Maintains contact with Bishop and arranges to visit affected areas with Bishop as soon as possible. - Obtains from Virginia VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) information on status of rescue processes. Communicate information to Bishop and Conference Dean. -With Bishop meets with pastors in affected areas. Provide immediate financial assistance if needed. -Obtains from Pastors (if possible) names of church members impacted, or if large numbers affected determine approximate numbers impacted. - Identifies immediate needs (shelter, medical aid, family reunion, etc.) - Prepares initial assessment report and send to LDR-Chicago. If needed, submits initial Disaster Grant Request to LDR/Chicago for immediate financial needs. - If opened, maintains communication with area Emergency Operations Center (EOC). -Contacts LFSVA directors/managers for program locations in impacted area to determine impact of event on LFS staff and facilities -Determines what agency resources (e.g. financial) can be utilized in the immediate response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Arranges with LFSVA CEO to visit affected areas. -Contacts pastors in affected areas to obtain additional information on impact, esp. damages to church facilities. Meets with pastors in affected areas with LFSVA CEO. -Communicates with ELCA Synod liaison and relays needs from Synod's perspective. . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tries to determine local impact of event on Lutheran churches and in area communities. -Communicate this information to LFSVA CEO and Bishop. -Arranges with LFSVA CEO and Bishop for first meeting in affected area.

**II. RELIEF phase - 12-72 hours after disaster: Building partnerships to respond to identified needs.
(If there is a large scale disaster the following steps will be implemented)**

LFSVA (CEO or designated staff person)	Bishop or Designee	Dean/Clergy in Affected AREA
<p>- Works with local/state organizations and VA VOAD members on the response effort.</p> <p>-Attends first meeting of impacted congregation.</p> <p>At first meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -shares information about assistance provided through LDR. -provides emergency funding from LDR for urgent needs previously identified. -seeks to identify further needs. -seeks to identify facilities (e.g., Lutheran church buildings) and volunteers available for the relief effort. -arranges for follow-up meetings with pastors or congregations not represented at first meeting. -arranges if needed any follow up meetings to continue to identify needs. <p>Following this meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -prepares report to LDR Chicago that identify needs. <p>Note: LFSVA will set up a system to communicate information and identified needs, such as the LFSVA website; e-mails to congregational leaders and through LDR/Chicago’s website etc.</p> <p>-LFSVA will utilize its toll-free number as a resource for disaster assistance information.</p> <p>-LFSVA will communicate and work with Thrivent and other Lutheran service organizations to explore ways they can assist.</p>	<p>-Attends (or has a designee present at first meeting.</p> <p>-Facilitates communication of needs to congregations; encourages responses of prayer and financial donations, as well as volunteer efforts.</p> <p>- Communicates with the National ELCA church-wide staff.</p>	<p>-Secures a location for first meeting.</p> <p>-Communicates with church and community members to identify and help to prioritize needs.</p> <p>-Attends first meeting and serve as spokesperson for the congregation, if needed.</p>

Tasks at first meeting:

1. To provide arrange for assistance to individuals and families who were identified during visits immediately after the disaster.
2. To identify further needs; to share information about additional assistance available; and to discuss the need for future meetings and, if appropriate, the possible formation of a Lutheran Disaster Response Task Force comprised of local Lutheran leaders.
3. To provide information to congregations so they can consider opening their facilities to be used for disaster response purposes, and/or to recruit volunteers from congregations to assist with the recovery effort.

III. RECOVERY phase: Begins after the Relief stage; usually lasts 100 times longer than the Rescue stage.

LFSVA (CEO or designated staff person)	Bishop or designee	Dean/Clergy in Affected AREA
<p>-Works with long-term disaster response organizations (e.g., Virginia VOAD, FEMA, VDEM) to facilitate appropriate voluntary response and serves as the liaison between these organizations and the VA Synod ELCA and LDR Chicago.</p> <p>-Coordinates follow-up processes with church leaders and if organized the local disaster response task force. If needed, participates in the establishment of such efforts as an Inter-faith Coalition or an Unmet Needs Task Force.</p> <p>-Supports the Synod in their responsibilities for congregational and pastoral care.</p> <p>-As needed, sets up and/or coordinates the various parts of the Lutheran response efforts. (Such as an operations center, construction program or volunteer rebuilding program).</p> <p>-Continues to monitor needs as they are identified, and as appropriate, request additional assistance from LDR/Chicago.</p> <p>-Communicates through appropriate channels the progress of the recovery effort and emerging and unmet needs.</p> <p>-Completes all grant reporting and maintains fiscal accountability for any funds received for disaster response efforts.</p>	<p>-Continues collaboration with LFSVA, especially to identify and address long-term unmet needs in congregations and their communities.</p> <p>-Communicates with pastors to identify unmet needs and emotional/spiritual stresses, particularly among clergy and lay leaders.</p> <p>-Communicates success stories and recovery needs to church and other media outlets.</p>	<p>-Maintains ongoing contact with Bishop and LFSVA to keep them apprised of unmet needs and new developments requiring assistance.</p> <p>-Makes every effort to return to normal patterns of worship, pastoral support, and church programming</p> <p>-Is attentive to personal needs of clergy and church staff for support and time away.</p>