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Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans**

Testimony Before the

Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery

On

An Examination of Claims Administration and Social Services

January 27, 2010

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Landrieu, Ranking Member Graham, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the Social Services and Claims Administration in the Aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. My name is Tom Costanza, Executive Director of the Office Justice and Peace of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Today, I appear on behalf of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans. In addition to the insight that I bring from Catholic Charities Archdiocese New Orleans, my testimony also includes information from other Catholic Charities agencies along the Gulf Coast that provide help and create hope for families in crisis due to the oil spill. I also offer recommendations based on our collaborative work with the fishing industry associations and other non-profit organizations that have been assisting families to recover since the oil spill began.

I would like to begin by remembering the families that lost loved ones and for the families that continue to struggle to recovery from this disaster. I would also like to highlight the resiliency of coastal residents and their spirit to work together toward recovery once again.

I've been asked to discuss the current social services delivery system and case management as well as the current situation facing the fishing industry as the claims process moves into interim and final claims decision points. In particular, I would like for the committee to know that from our perspective the BP claims process is deficient in at least two ways: First, the process is cumbersome, takes too long, and requires excessive paperwork thus failing to fulfill its goal of getting adequate funds to people in need and to the agencies that are working directly with those adversely affected by oil spill. Secondly, the process fails to take into account the unique and special needs of the impacted people from the Gulf area and in particular, the needs of the fishing industry.

Finally, this was never declared a federal disaster; therefore, no coordinating structures are in place. Subsequently, there is no federal funding for disaster case management, disaster unemployment, disaster food stamps, disaster mental health or individual assistance. It is the responsibility of the private party to provide these basic disaster human recovery services and recommendations to change the Oil Spill Pollution Act to include human recovery are offered.

Catholic Charities Response

Since July 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil leak has been capped but the clean up and the recovery of the Gulf Coast continues. To-date, five local Catholic Charities agencies along the Gulf Coast have provided relief and recovery services to people impacted by this disaster. These agencies include: Houma-Thibodaux, New Orleans, Biloxi, Mobile and Northwest Florida. These agencies have provided the full range of social services, specifically counseling, case management, and direct assistance (utilities, food, housing, medicine, etc.).

Even with the closure of the leaking oil well, the social and economic impact continues and necessitates continued services by the Catholic Charities network. To-date, the responding

Catholic Charities agencies report a collective total of over \$2.77 million in resources delivered and leveraged for the oil leak impacted population.

Overview of Current Environment

“The anxiety level is high and getting higher as we move forward. We are dealing with a double issue of continued recovery from Hurricane Katrina and devastation to our employment opportunities. Those who were able to be employed during the oil spill recovery operations are now out of work again and added to the roles of those who were not able to get employment. We lost an entire season of fishing, savings are gone, and the cost of living is on the increase.” *Benny Puckett, Human Services Plaquemines Parish*

CCANO received an early grant of \$1,000,000 from BP, which was used almost exclusively for food and other family services. That money was quickly expended, mainly for food and other forms of family emergencies. In the meantime, a coalition of social agencies banded together to request \$12 million from BP to continue provide direct assistance and case management. This coalition chose CCANO as its representative agency and its fiscal agent. Currently, CCANO is providing assistance from its own reserves and has launched a broad appeal for funds from individuals, and from philanthropic and commercial sources. Recently CCANO re-structured and re-submitted the VOAD Family Stabilization request to BP for \$18,000,000.

New Orleans

The Archdiocese of New Orleans continues to respond to the needs of the fishing families and communities affected by the oil spill through the direct services of Catholic Charities and its affiliated ministry, Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana. Together, Catholic Charities and Second Harvest have partnered with Church parishes, local governments, state agencies (DSS and DHH), United Way of Greater New Orleans, other area non-profits and the New Orleans Saints. CCANO continues to operate five “Oil Spill Relief Centers,” where families can receive direct assistance, case management services, crisis counseling and emergency help.

New Orleans Service Information

Type of Service	# of <u>People/Families</u> Served	Value of Services Provided (\$)	Description
Crisis Counseling	12,976		
Case Management	9,902		
Emergency Assistance	38,569/15,243		

Food Vouchers		\$852,500	Vouchers to community grocery stores
Meal Distribution	610,785 (meals)	\$1,368,158	
Direct Assistance		\$344,059	Rent, utilities, mortgage, medication
Baby supplies		\$31,267	Diapers and formula

In addition, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans was awarded a grant from BP for behavioral health, but this grant did not include resources for wraparound services, such as direct assistance or case management. This resource gap challenges the holistic delivery of services to meet people’s needs related to the oil leak that extend beyond behavioral health needs.

Houma-Thibodaux

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux continues in its work to assist oil leak victims. On October 31 CC Houma-Thibodaux ended its provision of casework services as casework services began through another agency. This case management agency continues to refer client families to CC Houma-Thibodaux for rent/mortgage payments, utilities and medicine assistance. CC Houma-Thibodaux has received no additional BP assistance since the first and only payments in April. Continued funding for the work of CC Houma-Thibodaux has been provided through private donations and the Greater New Orleans Foundation. From the beginning of services in April after the spill through December, Catholic Charities Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux has provided services according to the following:

Houma-Thibodaux Service Information			
Type of Service	# of Families Served	Value of Services Provided (\$)	Description
Case Management	364		
Information and Referral	668		
Food	404	\$63,100	Includes grocery store certificates

Electric	160	\$38,505	
Water	97	\$ 6,339	
Gas	14	\$ 600	
Rent/Mortgage Payment	54	\$19,950	
Medical/Prescriptions	5	\$ 1,389	
School Uniforms	200	\$ 6,650	

Biloxi, MI: *Information as of November 2010*

Catholic Charities-Diocese of Biloxi continues to provide case management, financial assistance, food, baby items, and community referrals to all those that walk through our doors, including those directly and indirectly affected by the Gulf Oil Crisis. As the crisis has continued, CC Biloxi has seen increased anger from those affected and people who were working for BP but have now been laid off. Claims are not being approved in a timely manner and many of their clients cannot provide sufficient documentation to receive a claim.

The amount of assistance that the agency provides depends on the funding available and the availability of case managers to provide the assistance. Currently, their offices are overwhelmed with people requesting services. In order to serve more people, the agency's priority need is funding to hire more case managers. Three additional case managers would allow us to expand the number of people served in our coastal offices. The cost for three full-time case managers for one year is approximately \$119,223.00. This amount includes salary and benefits.

“CC Biloxi is blessed to have received the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing grant for two years (2010 and 2011). This grant has allowed us to prevent the homelessness of renters in our service area, as well as, house persons who were already homeless. These funds have allowed us to help many people affected by the Gulf Oil Spill by preventing eviction. We have also been blessed to receive Mississippi Power grants totaling \$48,930 and a Wachovia grant of \$12,500.00 for those in the affected area. We received those funds via the local United Ways based on our proven case management process. While these grants have been a blessing and have allowed us to serve people in need, we could serve so many more people if we were able to provide more staff to each office.”

Mobile, AL:

Catholic Social Services of Mobile response to the oil leak is ongoing and expanding. CSS Mobile has provided ongoing emergency financial assistance to those individuals and families who have suffered a loss of income as a result of the oil spill. CSS Mobile continues to provide services and direct aid, and has so far provided \$39,000 in direct assistance for those client households struggling economically due to business collapse, job loss and financial hardship. In addition, CSS Mobile has started a disaster case management program modeled on the program

developed by CCUSA to begin the process of recovery from the oil spill. The CSS Mobile Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) expects to be able to successfully case manage 50-60 client households in South Mobile County.

Mobile Service Information

Type of Service	# of <u>People/Families Served</u>	Value of Services Provided (\$)	Description
Direct Assistance	454/150	\$ 39,000	Rent, utilities, mortgage, medication

Our agency recently submitted a grant proposal to the Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives that requested \$59,407.00 in operating costs, and \$10,000 for direct aid to clients, for our disaster case management program. Because clients are not receiving compensation in a timely manner, many still struggle with day to day financial obligations, as well as the emotional impact of the oil spill.

Northwest Florida: Information updated as of November 2010

Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida continues to provide direct assistance and related services to people impacted by the oil leak. The agency has reported increased requests for assistance and provides approximately \$10,000 per week in emergency assistance (rent, utilities, food, etc.). The agency is participating in coordination with other agencies provided social services and support to response efforts in order to leverage resources and share information. The local coalition is working to assess the long term economic impact of the oil leak so that they may plan for and provide an effective response for the long haul.

Catholic Charities New Orleans and Mobile report the following regarding the continuing need of the impacted population and the status of the BP claims process.

New Orleans:

- Port Sulphur, LA: *Clients are experiencing hours reduced or they have been laid off. Client that are self employed have indicated that businesses are slow. They are not having as many contracts as they had before the oil spill. Clients are losing homes, vehicles and are having difficulty finding other employment opportunities.*
- St. Anthony: *Clients are feeling under paid. There are some cases were the deckhand received more than the captain. <The issues clients face include :> Financial problems,*

emotional issues, substances abuse, depressions, anger, mood swings, unemployment, lack of other job opportunities.

- St. Thomas: <Clients are reporting the following issues :> ***Depression, anxiety, anger, insomnia; uncertainty about financial situation present day as well as future; lack of job opportunities; unable to meet basic household needs (i.e. utility payments, food, clothing); many of the fisherman do not see the claims process as user friendly; lack of trust in the claims process.***
- St. Bernard: <Clients are reporting the following issues:>***Nobody is buying the seafood that clients catch; they can't sell to the factories because they are currently closed; hours are cut in half at some businesses in the lower part of St. Bernard....uncertainty about financial situation present day as well as future; unable to meet basic household needs (i.e. utility payments, food, clothing).***

Mobile:

“Those families and individuals we’ve served, who have been impacted by the oil spill, report lost income, utility cutoffs, food insecurity and in some cases homelessness. Many of the businesses that thrived prior to the oil spill remain closed or on reduced production. As our clients continue to languish in unemployment and lost wages, their bills and expenses continue to mourn.”

Family Stabilization Grant Timeline and Re-Structured Proposal and Human Recovery System:

In July 2010, upon the request of BP, an intermediary grant was requested of the VOAD by BP for six months. This grant for \$24,000,000 was submitted shortly thereafter and the response was to re-submit for three months. The request for \$12,000,000 for three months was resubmitted in July. We have not had a formal response to this application as of yet. The informal verbal response was that the BP claims process had taken care of this. We were told at that point that we would receive a formal response, which we have not yet received. Also, on August 16, 2010 at a Press Conference in Grande Isle we were told that we would have a response within a week from Mr. Dudley of BP.

Later in the month, Witt and Associates interviewed us as part of their information gathering requested by BP in order to structure their Gulf Coast Restoration Organization. This was a very detailed review with recommendations from various NGO’s in the community.

The State of Louisiana then asked us to re-structure the grant based on lessons learned from working in the field and dealing with this particular disaster. A re-structured VOAD grant was submitted with a well designed level system of care that would identify vulnerable families and provide the necessary direct assistance and case management support until the claims process improved. This was submitted to Mr. Dudley of BP in November 2010, with no response as of yet.

The re-structured VOAD application is necessary to incorporate all the lessons learned from the past eight months and to have a model that is more responsive to the “stabilization” phase of recovery over the next six months. This stabilization phase will last from the Spring of 2011 until the Fall of 2011. At that point, we may have more information on the status of the fisheries and when the Feinberg process yields better results in terms of just payments. A long term recovery application will then be needed to cover years two through five of the human recovery process.

We have learned over the last six months the necessary components of a comprehensive human recovery model following an oil spill disaster. The following includes a brief overview of the process, structure and outcomes necessary to stabilize families during this transition phase to move us effectively to the long-term human recovery phase.

Case Management Process

The following is a brief review of the process elements that are needed during the stabilization phase. All these elements need to be coordinated by a case manager that will add value by providing a human contact point and a personal relationship in a very complex and culturally confusing system, defining the unmet disaster-related needs, identifying the most vulnerable and most impacted, and leveraging resources to maximize the recovery dollars granted to those adversely affected.

Intake and Screen:

- Intake will be accomplished through the Client Track System which has an Intake Form and is able to be modified to include fields for long term case management. This will include a brief Mental Health screen called a PQH2.

Assessment

- This process includes developing a comprehensive assessment including health exposure assessments that are relevant to the oil spill. This model follows the FEMA Sequence of Delivery Approach.

Disaster Recovery Plans (See Attachment)

- The disaster recovery has core elements that need coordination and capacity building to respond to this stabilization phase.

Interventions:

- The interventions below outline the comprehensive model that is required to support stabilization of families.

Frustrations with BP Claims process:

CCANO counselors in the Oil Spill related Parishes working for the past nine months report those affected are experiencing increased feelings of stress and hopelessness. Frustrations with the claims process as well as reduced funds available to assist them with basic needs are the main precipitators. Many do not have funds even for gas to go to the community sites to seek what assistance is available. Families are being

adversely affected in all aspects of their ability to function as a unit.” *Marilyn Shraberg, LCSW, Catholic Charities*

The following agencies in New Orleans, LA and Mobile, AL report the following regarding the status of the BP Claims Process

New Orleans

- *Port Sulphur, LA: Many clients have not received any assistance at this point (emergency payment, interim payment or final payment). Their <Gulf Coast Claim Facility (GCCF)> claim is currently pending or they are requiring additional documentation that they are having difficulty obtaining. Another portion of clients that I have seen have received denial letters for Emergency Payment assistance reason indicating that clients have not proven a loss of income. On the other hand, **about 30% of my case load has received assistance from GCCF....** The majority of my clients are waiting on their claim to be processed. **GCCF is asking for additional information to process the claim and the client cannot provide this information** (For example w-2 forms). Some of my clients received cash for work and cannot provide these documents. This is causing the claim process to move slower.*
- St. Anthony: Reports that 82% of client claims have been paid (59 of 73 claims).
- St. Thomas: Reports that 31% of client claims have been paid (23 paid, 12 denied, 39 waiting on outcome).
- St. Bernard: Reports that 46% of client claims have been paid (12 received six-month payment and awaiting further compensation; 10 awaiting payment and 6 denied).

Mobile

- *Anecdotally the clients we have been serving are reporting that they received compensation from BP, and then applied for continued assistance through the Gulf Coast Claims Facility (GCCF) program. **Many clients are just now beginning to report that their original claims have been denied, after waiting nearly six months for a determination.** Our clients who have received GCCF compensation have been in the minority, and have received one (1) check last quarter (Oct-Dec) and expect one this quarter (Jan-Mar). By and large our clients were depending upon some compensation, and as a result have chronic financial needs as a result. **The lack of employment coupled with the client expectation that they would receive something from the fund, has left many clients in limbo.** They can't find a job to support their families, and they're not receiving compensation to pay their existing bills and obligations.*

NGO's Providing Claims Assistance

By June 2010 the State of Louisiana committed to developing a network of community-based organizations trained to provide claims-related technical assistance to individuals, businesses, and non-profits, which were to be funded with some of the initial BP grant funds awarded to the

state. By August 2010, twelve organizations were identified along with a literacy organization to provide translation and conversion services. This network of claims' technical assistance providers were quickly trained and provided tools for assembling comprehensively documented claims packets.

From August 2010 through January 15, 2011, this claims' TA network has served an estimated 3,037 clients across 22 parishes, two-thirds of which are individuals and one-third businesses. Over 3,900 direct encounters have been provided to people largely working in fishing or shrimping (901 encounters), restaurants/food services (377), processors (184), retailers/wholesalers (240) and other types of service jobs (215). These TA providers also conduct outreach and education events – 483 to date – and have connected with over 19,000 people affected by the oil spill event.

The claims' TA network is able to help claimants better understand the GCCF documentation requirements and has encouraged additional industry-specific information be provided to assist the GCCF adjusters during their claims review. Network members regularly communicate and undergo training so that they are consistent in their messaging to clients and also maintain dialogue on successes and changes within the GCCF claims processes. Sadly, to-date, the claims' TA network has had little success with sustained, open communication with GCCF; such communication would benefit both entities by way of more effective problem solving and claims resolution.

As GCCF has shifted to the interim and final claims protocols, the ongoing need for objective assistance with the claims process is critical to our citizens. Not only is the claims submission process itself more complex and confusing than when BP handled the claims, but also the settlement options now available present our citizens affected by the oil spill with a complex and confusing decision-making process.

The claims TA network is currently funded through mid-spring 2011, with efforts underway to ensure the network can maintain its work through June 2011. It is our recommendation that this claims TA network be funded annually to coincide with the GCCF longevity.

Status of Claims in the Fishing Sector- A Process in Peril

Statewide fishing industry payments for 3,919 individuals averaged \$15,717 for their Six Months Emergency Payment. A total of 4,250 Fishing Sector Claims were denied as the Emergency Phase ended on November 23, 2010. This is coupled by the fact that no Interim or Final Claims have been paid in the new phase of payments. For the thousands of individual fishermen faced with unknowns of returning to fishing, little employment opportunities, and uncertainty of receiving an interim payment, the small emergency claim amount - if they even received it - may be their only source of income for a while.

Status of Improvement Projects for Claims Assistance and Results

Report on Pilot Project with Feinberg in Point a la Hache and with Long Law Firm (Personal story of St. Bernard Deckhand): The pilot project started in Pointe a la Hache, which is Ground Zero in many respects for this disaster. Together, with good communications with the State, we were able to identify 30 fishermen who had not received their emergency payments. We worked

together with the Feinberg team in DC and were able to determine that five fishermen had all documentation and should have been paid and another ten to twelve could have been paid with a little more assistance and documentation. We began a process of fishermen signing consent forms to give us better access to information from the Garden City and Greer evaluators. We are receiving better information from Garden City that is explaining why particular claims were denied and what is needed to file Interim Claims.

The Feinberg team also referred us to the Long Law Firm in Baton Rouge. We have had initial conversations and they will visit our sites this week and attend our Case Management Training Institute. They can take cases we identify as vulnerable and high risk and hopefully get the specific claims resolved.

Success Story with Feinberg Team-Coordination of Care:

The Mental Health Team reported to us that one fisherman and his wife were seeing our counselors. The wife broke down crying in the office because she did not understand why their claim had been denied. The day before, the Feinberg team had asked us to refer any dire cases directly to them. We did so and the team determined that the deckhand had filed a model application and the decision to decline the claim was made in error. They had rejected the claim because the application did not include a fishing license. However, since the gentleman was a deckhand, he did not need a fishing license to work. Immediately, the Feinberg team contacted the fisherman and resolved his claim request. This story illustrates the structural failure and a lack of the evaluators' understanding of the industries affected by this disaster that is causing undue stress. This anecdote also indicates the need to increase the scale and scope of these kinds of collaborations.

Non-Profits Facing Barriers to Recovery

In the aftermath of the oil spill, non-profits were integral to the immediate and subsequent relief efforts, meeting both individual and community needs, and addressing key social, economic and environmental concerns. However, nonprofits are being asked to provide more services with less than adequate funding, and this will not be sustainable over the long-term.

The aftermath of the oil spill was financially difficult for the non-profit sector and impacted the revenue streams of many organizations. Throughout last year, nonprofits experienced a dearth of foundation support because a "responsible party" was present to pay for damages, individual donations were stagnant or diminished due to the state of the economy, and a higher than usual number of citizens that needed services led to increased costs. Compounding these financial challenges, the GCCF claims process is designed to align only with the financial structure of small businesses and individuals and does not offer a third category for non-profits. As a result, non-profits are not recognized as a separate group which is leading to substantial barriers for the sector to receive claim awards. As of today, CCANO is not aware of one non-profit organization that has received a claim award.

Since the disaster occurred last April, social service funding from all stakeholders to support the human side of oil spill recovery has been insufficient to meet the extent of client needs. In addition to non-profits not being able to secure a GCCF claim award, other avenues of funding has simply been inadequate to reimburse the work nonprofits have done thus far. Further compounding the lack of reimbursement funding is the issue of how non-profits will be able to support their work over the long-term to deal with the steady stream of clients that are asking for case management, job placement and mental health assistance. Therefore, plans must be put into place soon for how to give the sector the means to fully implement their resources now and into the future.

While non-profits are known for being innovative, resilient and nimble when times are tough, they cannot continue to extend themselves beyond their organizational capacity. If they do, then the ability to fund staff and operations will be at risk and whole organizations could be in jeopardy. Non-profits must be able to strike a balance between maintaining their operational excellence and maximizing their service delivery. Our sector is known for finding the best ways possible to meet this challenging balance, but it cannot do so without adequate support from all stakeholders including BP, foundations, major funders, individual donors, government, the business community and policymakers.

Recommendations

In closing, while Catholic Charities and other nongovernment organizations continue to work to meet the need, more funding is needed to continue to assist families adversely impacted by the BP Oil Spill and claims process. In addition to more funding, we recommend the following:

Immediate Recommendations for Claims Assistance Improvement

- Prioritize the over 4,000 Fishing Sector claims denied in the Emergency Phase and fast track resolution of these claims.
- Create a “Fishing Industry Specific Fair and Consistent Claims Process” that will allow fishermen to present documentation according to industry standards with alternatives to the quarterly reporting system currently in place
 - Designate a group to work with LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Local Government, Fishermen Associations, Industry experts, and the local fishermen/business owners on the ground to understand their culture and way of doing business.
 - Create and design a separate protocol and list of required supporting documents that make sense for the fishing industry. Due to the nature of their business, a typical fisherman only has the following documents: Personal identification; Corporate Bylaws and Operating Agreement (if applicable); Business licenses/Boat registration; Tax Returns; Fishing Licenses; Trip Tickets; Expense Receipts. All of which should be taken into consideration to figure out a formula to be utilize across the board to pay fishermen's claims.

- Improve Access to Information: Return decision-making to local community (GCCF/Worley) and allow fishermen real time immediate access their claims information
- Fund Continuation NGO TA Network Proposal and Re-structure NGO claims process

Immediate Recommendations Concerning Family Stabilization

- Fund Short Family Stabilization Grant Funds for \$18,000,000 so that the families will remain stabilized during the transition to Interim and Final Claims
- Award Subsistence Claims and Declare Emergency Food Stamps in highly impacted communities
- Ensure diligent and consistent monitoring of the physical health of the workers especially those who directly worked in the oil spill clean up.
- Support development of a primary care network with emphasis on integrating behavioral health services in the primary care setting
- Prioritize job development and create training opportunities will help to mitigate the psychological impact of the oil spill in cooperation with the NEG funds from the Department of Labor that will keep fisherman in their communities

Longer Term Policy Framework Recommendations:

- We agree with Federal legislative recommendations that have been introduced that at least 80% of Clean Water Act penalties and fine funding be dedicated to the Gulf Coast and a Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Fund. While the conservation, protection and restoration of coastal areas and wetlands is and remains the #1 priority for the use of Clean Water Act fine funding, the Mabus Report also clearly recommended and concluded that "the nonprofit sector is an important component of the long term restoration and recovery effort on the Gulf Coast."
 - For these reasons and the continued need, we recommend that any Federal legislation or Federal agency implementation plans, regarding the use of the Clean Water Act fine funds resulting from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, include specific language that funding be specifically directed for voluntary not for profit non-governmental organizations that have already provided and will continue to provide comprehensive case management and direct assistance to individuals and families in the coastal areas impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. At least \$50 million in funding for this important assistance

should be dedicated out of a potential Clean Water Act penalty fund total that most authorities estimate will be at least \$5 billion or more.

- Revise Oil Spill Pollution Act to include Human Recovery
- Mandate Regional Planning for Human Recovery to create a coordinating structure to improve recovery outcomes.
- Amend Tax Policy for Final Claims that spreads taxes over a period of years

Additional Updates

The following provides an update on other Social Services and Family Stability:

Update on SNAP/Department of Children and Family Services

As of December 2010, a total of 1186 households with 2428 members in 21 parishes received \$343,076 in SNAP benefits solely because of the oil spill. However, these numbers may be underreported according to DCFS officials.

Update on Mental Health Grant Findings

The majority of clients seen by the Spirit of Hope Program report feelings of anxiety and stress due to the loss of income and the lack of compensation from the claims process. In the cases where they have received some compensation, clients are still stressed because the amount given is not comparable to the losses that they have endured as a result of the oil spill. Many of the clients enter the program reporting feelings of hopelessness, stress and anxiety.

Based on previous disaster experiences, substance abuse issues and domestic violence issues occur about 18 months after the initial disaster takes place. As a result, Spirit of Hope has placed some funding in reserve to address those needs as they arise.

Update on Physical Health (Report from La. Bucket Brigade)

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade conducted door-to-door surveys (report forthcoming) in seven coastal Louisiana communities that recorded self-reported health impacts potentially related to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Some key findings of this survey were that 46 percent of nearly 1,000 participants believed they had been exposed to crude oil or dispersants. In total, 71.5 percent of respondents who believed they had been exposed *also* reported an unusual increase in symptoms that included headaches, eye irritation, difficulty breathing and nausea. These self-reported health impacts of chemical exposure recall the plight of the 9/11 first responders who were not required to wear respirators. From the exposure they experienced, many of them developed complex illnesses that require treatments the individuals cannot afford. Our main concern, based on those voiced from the affected communities during the surveys, is that the same will potentially happen to coastal residents and first responders on the Gulf Coast. They were also not required to wear respirators and will not be provided with insurance to cover the long-term health effects that we will begin to see transpire. We are additionally concerned at the lack of health facilities in coastal communities and the number of consistently available health care professionals who are appropriately trained and qualified to diagnose or treat chemical exposure.

US Department of Labor National Emergency Grant

Millions of barrels of oil have idled commercial and sport fishing operations throughout our coastal waters. Businesses that serve the fishing industry or buy their harvests have similarly been affected. Among them are tackle shops, net makers, gas stations, restaurants, truckers, and seafood processors and distributors. Such is also the case for the travel and tourism sector. The

moratorium on deepwater oil drilling will have an even greater economic impact. Rig workers and oil service operations will see fewer and smaller paychecks and thus will inject less money into our coastal economies. It is safe to say that nearly every business in coastal southeastern Louisiana will feel some effect of the oil disaster.

The primary occupational areas from which workers have been dislocated include:

- Fisheries (oystering, shrimping, crabbing, recreational charter boats, marina operations, seafood processing and distributing, marine supply and sales, net makers)
- Related industries (transportation, restaurants, travel, tourism, retail, oilfield exploration and production, oil service operations)

The chart below indicates the population, unemployment and poverty rates of the three parishes. It also shows the number of claims paid by BP and the total amounts of those claims. Employment in the fishing industry, which is very important to the economies of Plaquemines and St. Bernard, is heavily undercounted because fishermen are typically self-employed. The unemployment rates will not include these individuals.

	Population	Unemployment Rate June '10	Poverty Rate 2008	# of BP Claims	Amount of BP Claims
Plaquemines	23,000	6.7%	15.1%	6,290	\$16,274,946
St. Bernard	37,000	8.0%	20.3%	3,817	\$ 7,270.811

Skills gaps in this dislocated worker population will be significant. Although these workers have been able to function effectively and operate what is in effect small family businesses, their work skills have basically been acquired from growing up in a traditional culture and could be compared to a long term OJT setting. What is known is that literacy and its subcomponents (English, math, reading, etc.) are going to surface as significant gaps regardless of what new occupations are selected. These individuals are gifted with an entrepreneurial spirit, a desire to provide for family, and what perhaps may be best described as elevated levels of mechanical aptitude and construction type skills.

While literacy levels will be low for many of these individuals, they also possess many skills that could easily be transferable to other occupations, which will need to be taken into consideration when matching them to alternative potential employment opportunities.

Fishing Licensure Numbers

For

Tri-parish Area

Parish	Resident Commercial Fisherman	Resident Oyster Harvester	Resident Shrimp Gear	Resident Crab Trap	Total Fisherman
Plaquemines	771	512	140	26	1,449
St. Bernard	501	169	294	279	1,243
St. Tammany	385	24	249	204	862
Total	2,970	776	1,671	927	6,344

Case Managers Report Unemployment Skyrocketing Affecting Family Stability:

St. Patrick's

“Fishermen are experiencing reduced hours or they have been laid off. Clients that are self employed have indicated their businesses are slow. Clients are losing homes, vehicles and are having difficulty finding other employment opportunities. Most of the clients mortgages or rent are months behind. Some clients are facing foreclosure. Many say they cannot pay bills and their bills are delinquent due to the oil spill. No jobs no money. Employment is real bad and most clients do not hold high school diplomas or other job skills since fishing has been their only way of life in this parish. “

St. Bernard

“The overall impact is that even though some of the fishermen are able to go out it cost them more to go out than they will catch and be able to sell. Clients are complaining that they are unable to work in the industry because it is just not productive as it used to be, less hours in restaurants and seafood houses, and less pay for what they are able to catch.”

St. Thomas

“There is depression, anxiety, anger and insomnia being exhibited in this community. There is uncertainty about their financial situation today as well as into the future. There is a tremendous lack of job opportunities. They are unable to meet their basic household needs (utility payment, food and clothing. Many fishermen do not see the claims process as user friendly and lack basic trust in the process.”

Mary Queen of Vietnam Testimony

“As I was a Customer Support Rep for SBA, I was providing assistance to the fishermen or businesses relating to fishing industry to apply for Disaster Assistance Loans. During those months, I came across a large number of people, especially Vietnamese, who were directly or indirectly impacted by the oil spill. For some reason, their claims got denied. These are the people who have fallen through the cracks who did not get any compensation by Gulf Coast Claim Facilities. Because of that, these people have encountered hardships in taking care of their families. I know a lot of them have to borrow money from their family members and friends to survive.

Many of them cannot find jobs because they live too far from the major cities where they can get training to allow them to change careers; furthermore, their age, language barrier are factors contributing to the difficulties of their job search. Not only has the fishing industry suffered, I have seen lots of businesses closed their doors because of losing customers. Along with that, the Moratorium has caused some difficulties to the Off Shore drilling businesses before the Moratorium got lifted.”

Update on case manager successes stories (personal stories)

Case managers are providing the key link to recovery for the fishing community. They provide compassion and knowledge of a very complex and confusing system. Fishermen are developing their recovery plans and the case managers are connecting them with employment, food, rent and utility assistance – all of which are scarce. However, there are success stories.

A client came in seeking assistance with food. She is a single mother of two residing in Buras, LA. She was employed as a cook for BP but was laid off. Since she does not speak English well, it has been difficult for her to apply for government assistance alone. With the assistance of a case manager and a translator, the client was able to apply for food stamps and register with the food bank. She is scheduled to come back with her job history so that the case manager and the translator can assist her in writing a resume to enhance her job search experience. The case manager will continue to identify resources that will accommodate the client’s needs of food and employment.