

Testimony of Rev. Larry Snyder

**Before U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Government Affairs, Disaster Recovery Subcommittee**

**Hearing on Disaster Case Management Program
December 2, 2009**

Good morning, Chairwoman Landrieu and Ranking Member Graham and members of the Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery. My name is Rev. Larry Snyder and I am the President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear on behalf of Catholic Charities USA to discuss the partnership between the federal government and Catholic Charities USA to provide disaster case management.

Who We Are

Every day across this country, thousands of people in our communities come to one of the local Catholic Charities agencies to seek assistance— 171 agencies with 1,668 affiliates in all 50 states and the U.S. territories. Catholic Charities agencies have a 280 year history of serving those most in need at critical and vulnerable times. Catholic Charities agencies have provided a wide range of services to families and individuals in need, including assistance with food, housing, financial education and family counseling. The provision of these services is grounded in the fundamentals of social work practice and is provided in accordance with sound ethics and our faith tradition. Case management services are critical to the effective provisions of the services provided in local Catholic Charities agencies and are fundamental from our perspective to successful outcomes for those we serve.

During times of regional or national crisis, Catholic Charities USA has helped local agencies coordinate the dissemination of information, resources, as well as expertise from other agencies around the country. Our recent experiences with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have reinforced the fundamental mission of Catholic Charities of delivering services to the poor and marginalized in recent years. We realize that low-income communities are particularly vulnerable after a disaster occurs. Catholic Charities agencies are uniquely qualified to serve these communities because of their long history of working with individuals, families and civic leaders in those communities.

Our History with Disaster Management

For more than forty years, Catholic Charities agencies have responded to disasters in this country. In the 1980s the United States Bishops recognized the need for a more formalized structure to the American Catholic Church's response in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo and created an agreement with Catholic Charities USA to serve as the lead Catholic agency in responding to domestic disasters.

Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) has been on the cutting edge of disaster case management starting with our development of the first Disaster Response Guide for use by local Catholic Charities agencies in 1996. In addition, Catholic Charities USA as a national sponsor of the Council on Accreditation (COA), an accreditation body for human services providers, urged COA to create national Disaster Case Management standards. CCUSA assisted in the development of these standards which are being used as a benchmark against which disaster case management efforts are measured. You will find a copy of these standards as an addendum to my testimony. CCUSA launched a large scale response to the September 11th terrorist attacks when it provided disaster case management in 12 states and the District of Columbia. This experience and

leadership uniquely positioned Catholic Charities USA for its leadership role in responding to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and more recently to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Central to Catholic Charities USA's disaster response and case management services is a reliance on a "local response to local needs", working in partnership with local Catholic Charities agencies and providing resources to support them in local delivery of services. Catholic Charities USA is uniquely positioned to provide disaster services from the ground up, supporting local agencies in communities that are particularly familiar with local needs and trusted by the people they serve. Local Catholic Charities agencies are effective and reliable community collaborators and are familiar with the diversity of their communities and have the resources to reach out to and serve special populations in their communities. This approach to disaster response and disaster case management is extremely effective. CCUSA has been an effective community partner before the emergency and will remain a vital community partner long after the emergency is officially over.

Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike

CCUSA was a partner in the first national disaster case management consortium coordinated by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and known as Katrina Aid Today. CCUSA and its member agencies handled the most cases under this consortium providing services to over 17,000 households in thirteen states, organizing the efforts of over 100 paid disaster case managers and more than 90 volunteers employed by 23 local Catholic Charities agencies, including Catholic Charities of Arkansas, Diocese of Little Rock; Catholic Charities Bureau, Jacksonville Regional Office, Diocese of St. Augustine, FL; Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago; Catholic Community Services of Baton Rouge; Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux; Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Lafayette; Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Lake Charles; Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans; and Catholic Charities of St. Louis- Archdiocese of St. Louis

In 2008, CCUSA provided on-the-ground support to 16 agencies responding to local disasters and over 70 disaster response grants totaling more than \$10 million. Additionally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency provided \$9.8 million to support disaster relief programs managed by Catholic Charities agencies. According Catholic Charities USA's 2008 Annual Survey, Catholic Charities agencies provided disaster related services to 331,727 consumers.

The scale and level of need generated by Hurricane Katrina changed the relationship between Catholic Charities USA and the Federal government in the provision of case management services. Our first federally funded disaster case management partnership was Katrina Aid Today. This partnership recognized the importance of non-profits in deployment of disaster case management. It reinforced the important strategies in national or regional emergency case management response. Among them, local and national partnerships are critical; diversity of organizations and expertise is key; and sharing of resources, information and coordination of services are paramount. It also recognized that:

- Local agency presence, trust within the community, local infrastructure/capacity and knowledge are important in rapid response.

- National capacity to deploy expertise, to create partnerships, and to serve as an intermediary between government and local partners will speed delivery of service.

During hurricane season 2008, Catholic Charities USA with HHS/ACF and Abt Associates (subcontractor to ACF) participated as part of a disaster case management pilot. Initially, our work was to take place in Florida as a tabletop exercise with Catholic Charities USA pulling together key partners. When Gustav hit, implementation was moved to Louisiana and partnerships of Catholic Charities USA proved critical to the program's quick start up. Following a two week pilot by Abt and Associates, pilot continuation was transferred to Catholic Charities USA, which continued through July 2009. The multi-year indefinite duration, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract extends the pilot services to March 2010 and positions Catholic Charities USA for future case management deployments. While the approved contract included other task orders focused on preparedness and future deployments, Catholic Charities received funding only for the continuation of the Gustav/Ike work.

As of October 2009, Catholic Charities USA and its local partners have employed 14 subcontractors operating between Lake Charles to New Orleans, LAⁱ. To date, our efforts in the region have served 21,102 people and 7,526 cases:

- 33% of cases have a disability
- 22% are elderly
- 57% report an income less than \$15,000
- 76% are female headed households

The partnership has employed 145 staff who operate from 26 service delivery sites. The staff has provided case management services through more than 10,812 home visits. Through our case management partners, it has been reported that households have been connected to over \$1.7 million in services. At the national level, Catholic Charities USA has provided technical assistance, training, contract oversight, content expertise, partnership coordination and government relations.

Based on our experience, case management is a comprehensive process involving a skilled case manager working with an individual or family to identify and overcome barriers to "recovery" through the assessment and recovery planning processes. The case manager works within the context of the "big picture" and helps the client identify the action steps needed to achieve the long term case management goal(s) set forth on the recovery plan. A case manager assesses plans, advocates, links, and monitors.

The goal of disaster case management services must be to meet the needs of a large client influx in the aftermath of emergencies and major incidents. These services are inevitably provided under difficult conditions including infrastructure losses, operation disruptions, special communication needs, and record keeping and coordination challenges. Effective disaster case management requires assessing survivors' needs first. Processing applications for their identified needs in consolidated

‘one-stop centers’ minimizes efforts, avoids duplications, allows streamlined intake and case management strategies, and fosters interagency human service administration in a disaster area. CCUSA plans, secures, coordinates, monitors, and advocates for unified goals and services with organizations and personnel in partnership with individuals and families in the aftermath of a disaster.

Catholic Charities USA bases its Disaster Case Management Programⁱⁱ on the principles of self-determination, self-sufficiency, flexibility and speed, and support to states. When the societal fabric is damaged by a disaster, individuals and families need disaster case management services to effectively provide resources and support that build on their strengths and meet their recovery needs.

CCUSA gives attention to developing collegial working relationships/partnerships with Federal, state, and local stakeholders as quickly as possible. Staff is trained to coordinate their work with these partners to comply with all relevant local, state and Federal requirements; to minimize duplication of effort; and to prevent those in need from falling through the cracks. These partnerships allow CCUSA to provide local agencies with support and financial aid if available for disaster case management services consistent with the disaster case management contract.

In CCUSA disaster case management experiences, we have learned both the strengths and weaknesses in delivering services to those living on the margins before the disasters, and whose recovery will be much more complex and long term because of lack of accessible resources. CCUSA engaged the University Texas at Austin to surveyⁱⁱⁱ case managers working in the Katrina Aid Today disaster case management response. The focus of this survey was to learn the challenges and successes, the assets and weaknesses from the perspective of those who provided the service on- the- ground. Over and over, these case managers reported their frustration with the lack of available resources; access to benefits; inconsistent information from various federal departments. We also learned of the frustration that they experienced in building capacity and expertise while in the midst of a major disaster: complications of getting needed equipment, communication devices, training resources, and policies and procedures.

As you know, the need for disaster case management as a resource and tool was identified and became part of the recommendations in improvements to the Stafford Act. While making the resources available during a disaster, funding is currently only available during a declaration leading to the same challenges faced in Katrina Aid Today.

CCUSA responded to a request for solicitation to continue the remainder of the Gustav pilot and to implement a national disaster case management team which would provide the necessary infrastructure for future deployments of disaster case management. Since this contract is what is known as an IDIQ— indefinite duration, indefinite quantity—the awards are made by task order. The current contract requires services to end on March 31, 2010. No funding to support the

national team has been made available and currently the government has modified its task order indicating that CCUSA is not expected to meet the deployment requirements of 72 hours since the necessary resources to provide the infrastructure for the national team are not funded. While CCUSA has entered into a five year contract with the government to provide the establishment of a national disaster case management program, there will be no further services provided unless the government identifies resources and makes them available via a new task order to CCUSA.

Policy Recommendations

Both the GAO report, *Disaster Assistance: Greater Coordination and an Evaluation of Programs' Outcomes Could Improve Disaster Case Management* (GAO-09-561)^{iv}, July, 2009, and the National Commission on Children and Disaster Interim Report of October 14, 2010^v (pertinent parts attached as addendum C) recommend that there must be disaster preparedness funding provided for both infrastructure and capacity building to support the disaster case management program in advance and to ensure rapid deployment of trained disaster case managers to disaster areas along with the necessary equipment that is prepositioned. The government has recognized the need to build such capacity and infrastructure with its solicitation for bids for these services. However, no funding to perform this work has been made available.

CCUSA stands ready to implement the work it has agreed to perform and that was supported by a partnership with United Way of America's 211 system and support of its national disaster response partners including National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD) Lutheran Disaster Service, and Volunteers of America.

In all other aspects of disaster response, the need to be prepared is recognized and funded. Disaster Case management as an effective and identified tool now made available under the Stafford Act should receive the support and funding necessary to fully prepare a national structure for deployment and rapid response. It is important to note that disaster case management is absolutely essential to ensuring that unlike those who were left behind in the wake of Katrina, no one will be left behind again. A well funded and fully prepared national disaster case management program addresses this by recognizing that individuals need the services of a disaster case manager as quickly as possible after a disaster occurs to stabilize them quickly and work towards their recovery. This model is a recognized model within human services and in particular within HHS/ACF, where for decades case management services have been recognized as essential in ensuring that families who experience crisis receive the services of a trained case manager who is familiar with resources and who can work with the family to devise a plan that meets each family's unique needs. So too is this model effective in quickly intervening and supporting individuals and families in developing plans, identifying resources, and supporting individuals in their recovery after the disaster is over.

Recommendations to Improve Disaster Case Management

1. Fund a single national disaster case management program including infrastructure and readiness for rapid response.
2. Establish a lead federal agency that will have oversight and accountability for ensuring that agreed upon outcomes are established and met.
3. Establish a consistent definition of disaster case management and policies and procedures to be adopted by both federal and non-federal organizations.
4. Identify and implement one database for the collection of information that meets the needs of both federal and non-federal partners with consistency in meeting privacy requirements.
5. Involve key stakeholders in all aspects of the national disaster case management program.

ⁱ Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in partnership with the following agencies continue to provide to provide disaster case management services for victims of Gulf Coast hurricanes: Advocacy Center, Catholic Charities Baton Rouge (CCBR), Catholic Charities Lake Charles (CCLC), Catholic Charities New Orleans (CCANO), Family and Youth Counseling Agency, ICNA Relief (ICNA), New Beginning Community Outreach (New Beginning), Operation Hope, Society Saint Vincent De Paul Baton Rouge (SVDPBR), Terrebonne Readiness and Assistance Coalition (TRAC), Volunteers of America Greater New Orleans (VOAGNO), Bayou Teche Community Health Network (ByNet), Louisiana Methodist Disaster Recovery Ministry (LDRM), and Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge (VOAGBR).

ⁱⁱ Catholic Charities USA. *Proposal for Disaster Case Management*. Submitted in response to HHSP2332009RFP0006 to US Department of Health and Human Services. 24 March 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Laura Lein, Holly Bell, Julie Beausoleil, Jennifer Karas Montez, and Elisa Vinson Borah. MID-TERM EVALUATION: KATRINA AID TODAY CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, Final Report. Center for Social Work Research, The University of Texas at Austin. July 2007.

^{iv} United States Government and Accountability Office. *Disaster Assistance: Greater Coordination and an Evaluation of Programs' Outcomes Could Improve Disaster Case Management* (GAO-09-561). July 2009.

^v National Commission on Children in Disasters. *Interim Report*. 14 Oct. 2009. Page 31-32.