

Written Statement of
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FEMA

**“Disaster Case Management: Developing a
Comprehensive National Program Focused on
Outcomes”**

Before the

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Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Landrieu, Ranking Member Graham, and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Elizabeth Zimmerman, and I am the Assistant Administrator for FEMA's Disaster Assistance Directorate. It is a privilege to appear before you today on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). As always, we appreciate your interest in and continued support of emergency management, specifically FEMA's efforts in implementing disaster case management authorities.

When an individual's home is damaged or destroyed by a disaster, the impact may be felt for weeks, months or even years, as we saw in particular during the 2005 hurricane season. For some, dealing with repairing the damage is just the beginning. In disasters where hundreds or thousands of lives have been disrupted, entire communities destroyed, and essential community services, schools and utilities rendered inoperable for days or weeks, the impact can be considerably larger.

FEMA's goal has always been to work with communities and assist them with their unmet disaster-related needs so that they can move forward on the road to recovery as quickly as possible. One of the ways of achieving that goal, particularly in a catastrophic disaster event, is to help survivors understand the wide array of services and programs that may be available to help them return to self-sufficiency and sustainability. As the coordinator of federal disaster assistance, FEMA is charged with securing delivery of case management services.

The Encyclopedia of social work defines case management as "a method whereby a professional social worker assesses the needs of a client and the client's family, when appropriate, and arranges, coordinates, monitors, evaluates and advocates for a package of multiple services to meet the specific client's complex needs." Successful case management for disaster survivors requires in-depth knowledge of how to work with individuals and families, an awareness of the public and private resources available to assist them, and knowledge of the service delivery system and how to navigate it.

The delivery of timely, appropriate disaster case management services cannot be managed at the federal level alone. In fact, this coordination is most effective when it is on the ground, local, and close to the people affected. Many communities have such systems for coordination already in place, with established collaborative relationships among federal, state and local agencies. Our goal is to build on those relationships, recognizing that effective case management requires teamwork with our federal state and local partners, voluntary and faith-based organizations, the private sector, and most importantly, the disaster survivors themselves.

An effective Disaster Case Management services program connects survivors with local providers that can target recovery services to assist them in developing and achieving short and long-term recovery goals. FEMA and our partners seek to offer disaster survivors a roadmap for navigating and maximizing the use of available federal, state,

local, non-governmental and volunteer organization disaster recovery programs. Our goal is to build on the foundation and the network of services that exists to ensure that survivors have a holistic approach to rebuilding their lives in the wake of a disaster event. Ultimately, we want to provide the needed support to disaster survivors in the swiftest and most effective way.

Historical Efforts for Case Management

FEMA has been delivering disaster case management services on a limited basis since the beginning of its Individual Assistance recovery programs in 1988. Historically, these services have been limited to providing referrals to other federal, state and local assistance programs, and connecting survivors to volunteer organizations through Long-Term Recovery Committees.

However, the widespread devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita created new challenges for the delivery and coordination of disaster recovery assistance at all levels of government. The extent of the damage was so great that full recovery for individual disaster survivors and communities will take years. In recognition of these challenges and the desire to expedite comprehensive disaster recovery, Congress provided FEMA with the legal authority to implement a disaster case management services program under the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006. This legislation includes financial assistance to government agencies or qualified nonprofits to provide such service to “identify and address unmet needs.” This provision provided a significant new program of assistance to ensure disaster assistance is more responsive to applicant’s individual needs. The goal is to connect disaster victims to a full array of disaster and other support services, including human, social, employment, legal, mental health, and medical services. Since that time, FEMA has worked closely with federal, state, and local partners to pilot the delivery of several disaster case management models.

A Disaster Case Management Program is a partnership between the case manager and the client in the development of a Disaster Recovery Plan. The Disaster Recovery Plan outlines any unmet needs based on verified, disaster-related causes; developing and develops a goal-oriented plan that outlines the steps necessary to assist with the unmet needs in order to achieve recovery; organizing and coordinating. To assist with any disaster-related unmet needs, case managers organize and coordinate information on available resources that match the disaster-caused needs; monitor the disaster survivors’ progress towards reaching their stated goals. When necessary, providing case managers also provide advocacy for the client to help ensure success.

Prior to receiving grant authority to establish a Disaster Case Management Program, FEMA made great efforts to provide similar services to Hurricane Katrina and Rita disaster survivors. In October 2005, FEMA and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) executed a grant agreement to provide long-term disaster case management to individuals and families impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The grant agreement was approved by the U.S. Department of State and FEMA and funded through foreign cash donations. UMCOR acted as the lead organization of a National Case

Management Consortium consisting of nine primary organizations to provide case management services to Hurricane Katrina affected populations, known as Katrina Aid Today (KAT). They served over 70,000 households in a 30-month period at a cost of approximately \$68 million. This represents an approximate average cost of around \$1,000 per household.

Because states, volunteer and faith-based organizations did not have the capacity or financial resources to continue providing case management services beyond KAT's end date of March 31, 2008, FEMA implemented a two-phase Disaster Case Management plan to provide continued funding in support of the delivery of case management services in Mississippi and Louisiana. In addition, the plan included the provision of additional funds to provide targeted case management services to disaster survivors residing in FEMA temporary housing units and hotels. Pursuant to this plan, in July 2008, FEMA awarded the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services (MCVS) over \$31 million to provide disaster case management services to disaster survivors, through March 2010. To date, the state has opened 3,564 case management cases, of which 2,558 (or about 71 percent) are now closed.

The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) was granted up to \$9.4 million in June 2009 to provide disaster case management services to disaster survivors through March 2010. To date, the LRA has opened 1,482 cases, 102 of which have been resolved and are now closed.

Prior to the end of the KAT program, FEMA worked with HUD to establish an interagency agreement to provide continued disaster housing assistance to Hurricane Katrina and Rita disaster survivors under the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). Under DHAP, FEMA and HUD are able to work in partnership with local volunteer organizations to deliver case management services that focused on moving disaster survivors into long-term sustainable housing. Katrina DHAP has helped more than 36,000 individuals receive housing and case management services. A similar DHAP program was also launched for the disaster survivors of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike -- more than 15,000 individuals have received housing and case management services under the program, which is set to end in March 2010.

Building on the lessons learned from KAT and the desire to move toward a standing case management services delivery program, FEMA established an interagency agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Children and Families (ACF) in 2007 to develop a Disaster Case Management Pilot Program. Under this pilot program, ACF researched and developed a new service delivery model. ACF is currently piloting this model, in partnership with Catholic Charities USA, in an effort to assist hurricanes Gustav and Ike disaster survivors in Louisiana. In support of the progress that ACF has made, FEMA extended the pilot program through March 2010, and has provided supplemental funding in excess of \$22 million. As of October 2009, a total of 7,507 case management cases have been opened with 2,061 of these cases having been closed.

In March 2009, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission was awarded up to \$65.2 million to provide disaster case management services to approximately 30,000 clients in Texas impacted by Hurricane Ike. Services began in May 2009 and will continue until March 2010. As of September 2009, the state has opened 7,235 case management cases and closed 453 cases.

More recently, in September 2009, Georgia was inundated with heavy rains and flooding. In response to this disaster, the State Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, along with FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons, worked with the local volunteer agency community to establish Long Term Recovery Committees across the state to assist disaster survivors with unmet needs. The United Methodist Committee on Relief also provided case management trainings for various volunteer agencies in the community. To date, the state has not requested federal assistance for disaster case management services. These services are being provided by the local volunteer agency community. FEMA also employs Individual Assistance staff, who have also been working closely with each applicant to answer questions and provide support with securing assistance to address long-term housing needs. Through this assistance, applicants may have identified unmet needs that cannot be assisted by FEMA and our programs. Therefore, FEMA and the state, along with our federal, local and volunteer agency partners continue to work closely with these households to ensure that they are aware and take advantage of any additional assistance available from the state and our various partners.

As FEMA and ACF continue to partner to provide disaster case management to eligible applicants, we are implementing lessons learned and are working together to develop an Interagency Agreement that will be used to improve case management for future disaster survivors.

Bridging the Gap and Resolving Challenges –Building a Successful Case Management Program

Currently, FEMA is implementing an interim two-phase disaster case management model. Phase I consists of the activation and deployment of ACF to initiate the implementation and delivery of disaster case management services to disaster survivors. If a state requests and is approved for Disaster Case Management, FEMA will notify ACF to implement the Disaster Case Management Program in the affected disaster area. Then, ACF will:

- Deploy the ACF National Team to initiate Disaster Case Management services to clients in the impacted area within 72 hours of notification by FEMA;
- Provide disaster case management services to individuals and households to assess unmet disaster-related needs including healthcare, mental health and human services needs that may adversely impact an individual's recovery if not addressed until the transition to the Phase II program; and
- Ensure that case managers facilitate the delivery of appropriate resources and services, work with the client to implement a recovery plan and advocate for the

client's needs to assist him/her in returning to their pre-disaster status while respecting human dignity.

Phase I may last up to 180 days depending on the state's capacity to administer the program and whether there is a continuing need for additional case management to meet disaster-related needs. ACF may continue services until such time as the state is able to assume disaster case management.

Phase II consists of a transition to a state-managed disaster case management program funded through a direct grant from FEMA to the state. This will ensure that the state is an essential partner in the development, implementation, and delivery of ongoing case management services and that the use of local service providers in the recovery for disaster survivors and their surrounding communities will be maximized.

FEMA and ACF have entered into a pre-scripted Mission Assignment for the initial implementation of disaster case management services to ensure that FEMA has the immediate ability to provide such services for a large or catastrophic event. In such instances, FEMA will fund ACF for the rapid deployment of their National Disaster Case Management Response Team (National Team) to a disaster-impacted area. This national team will coordinate disaster case management services within 72 hours of deployment.

Meanwhile, FEMA and ACF are developing a new interagency agreement for ACF to implement and administer the Disaster Case Management Program described on a temporary basis as final program guidelines and regulations are developed. This agreement will allow ACF to initiate the rapid deployment of disaster case management assistance to individuals and families impacted by a presidentially declared disaster for Individual Assistance. FEMA and ACF are working together to ensure that the agreement will incorporate lessons learned and best practices from previous disaster case management delivery models and will offer comprehensive services for disaster survivors, and a flexible model that can easily be adapted by state, local, non-governmental and volunteer organization service providers.

In a July 2009 report entitled "*Disaster Assistance: Greater Coordination and an Evaluation of Program Outcomes Could Improve Disaster Case Management*", the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued the following recommendations for the implementation and evaluation of disaster case management services:

- Create a timeline for the establishment of the Disaster Case Management Program;
- Ensure enhanced and sustained coordination among federal and nonfederal stakeholders;
- Conduct an outcome evaluation to determine the results of previous case management efforts; and
- Facilitate information sharing with state and local providers.

FEMA will be incorporating the successes and challenges of the various disaster case management service delivery models used to date, as well as the recommendations from the July 2009 GAO report, into program guidance and regulations for a future, permanent case management program.

As we move forward with program development, we will continue to partner with federal, state, local, and volunteer agency case management service providers to establish and ensure ongoing information sharing of service delivery mechanisms. As part of this effort, FEMA has developed a streamlined process for giving volunteer organizations access to crucial information on disaster survivors. This process balances the needs of disaster survivors with the protections of the Privacy Act. FEMA has also developed guidelines and templates to ease the Privacy Act burden on organizations that need information on disaster survivors. As a result of these efforts, case management service providers are able to receive information on disaster survivors more quickly and can begin to develop targeted, comprehensive long-term individual recovery plans sooner.

Conclusion

FEMA is committed to ensuring that disaster survivors have access to the resources and services they need to help them rebuild and recover following a disaster – but we cannot do it alone. To be effective, our case management efforts have to be coordinated with experts at the local, state and federal levels of government and with volunteer and non-profit organizations. By working together, we will be able to provide a successful program that focuses on helping families and communities recover from disasters.

FEMA will continue to fortify existing disaster case management partnerships and encourage new collaboration to ensure the implementation of a successful case management program. I look forward to responding to any questions you may have at this time.