

## US DISASTER PROGRAM

# Module 1: The Mission and Vision of the Diocesan Team



## Building the Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to the many diocesan disaster coordinators and team members who have attended Episcopal Relief & Development's diocesan disaster coordinator trainings over the years. Your questions and comments, and your requests for resources to use at home, have shaped these exercises.

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## INTRODUCTION

Churches can be great in a crisis. By their very nature they have the capacity to gather people to common cause, to pray and facilitate hopeful and healing ritual and to offer hospitality and community outreach. Their coffee makers are large. They usually have a good supply of tables and chairs. And among their people are the kind of folks who roll up their sleeves and get things done.

*Most importantly, churches are animated by the Gospel and its central call to seek and serve Christ in society's most vulnerable members. When people are in danger of falling through the cracks, churches offer important safety nets, including a human one that embraces, supports, heals and loves.*

When a disaster hits a community, churches have a unique role to play and a particular set of gifts to employ. But mobilizing all these gifts on a congregational level during an unexpected crisis is no easy task. It works better with some preparation, with a vision of what effective response looks like and a sense of how to use the tools and gifts at hand as needs change on a community's road to recovery. Here the diocese has its own role to play, as a source of leadership and support and a clearinghouse for information and resources.

The mission of a Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team is to help the diocese and its congregations activate a congregation's gifts of ministry when a disaster impacts vulnerable people around them. And that requires some strategy, especially in places where churches are spread out, where communication is something of a challenge and where budgets are rather tight.

Building the Diocesan Preparedness and Response Team is designed to help diocesan teams develop the systems required to engage congregations in the ministry of disaster preparedness and response. It can be used in the initial development of a team as well as in the orientation of new team members.

The exercises were adapted from Episcopal Relief & Development's Level I Diocesan Disaster Coordinator Training.

The resource is divided into three modules:

- **Module 1: Vision and Mission of the Diocesan Team.** Through exercises that explore how the diocesan committee might support congregations in responding to a disaster, participants will determine the committee's vision and mission.
- **Module 2: Where Are We Now? And Where Do We Go From Here?** By evaluating where the diocese is on a continuum of preparedness, participants will begin to develop a strategy on how to move the diocese forward.
- **Module 3: Parish-Level Disaster Response Stories.** By listening to first-hand accounts of how local parishes have responded to disaster and crisis, participants will get a deeper understanding of skills and best practices already present in the diocese.

Depending on the time available, portions of these modules can be inserted into regular planning meetings or can be grouped into a series of 60 to 90-minute training sessions.

An outside facilitator or a team member can lead the exercises. Suggested language is provided for introducing the activities.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE SESSIONS?

The Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team may grow over time, but it's important to start with a core of diocesan and congregational leaders who are committed to fostering local disaster preparedness and response efforts. You might begin with four to six members who have experience with long-term disaster response, who are well connected with local congregations and who have relationships with vulnerable groups in the community and the network of organizations that serve them.

**It's also important to have the buy-in of diocesan leadership.** If a disaster hits a diocese, the bishop, the canon to the ordinary and the communications director will likely be heavily involved in initial diocesan-level response efforts. While it's not essential that these diocesan leaders sit on the team, it is important that they attend the first part of Module 1. Their input on the team's role and their thoughts on who can help shape the initial committee would be very helpful.

## FOLLOWING THROUGH ON DECISIONS

Some of the activities in these modules require the group to make decisions about issues such as its role and its membership. While formal minutes don't have to be taken, it's important that these decisions are captured, noted and shared with the members. Either the facilitator or a designated note taker should compile these and note if the group indicated any follow-up steps and who might accomplish them by what deadline.

Also make sure to save flip charts for reposting at future meetings, especially if the team will continue its work on an activity.

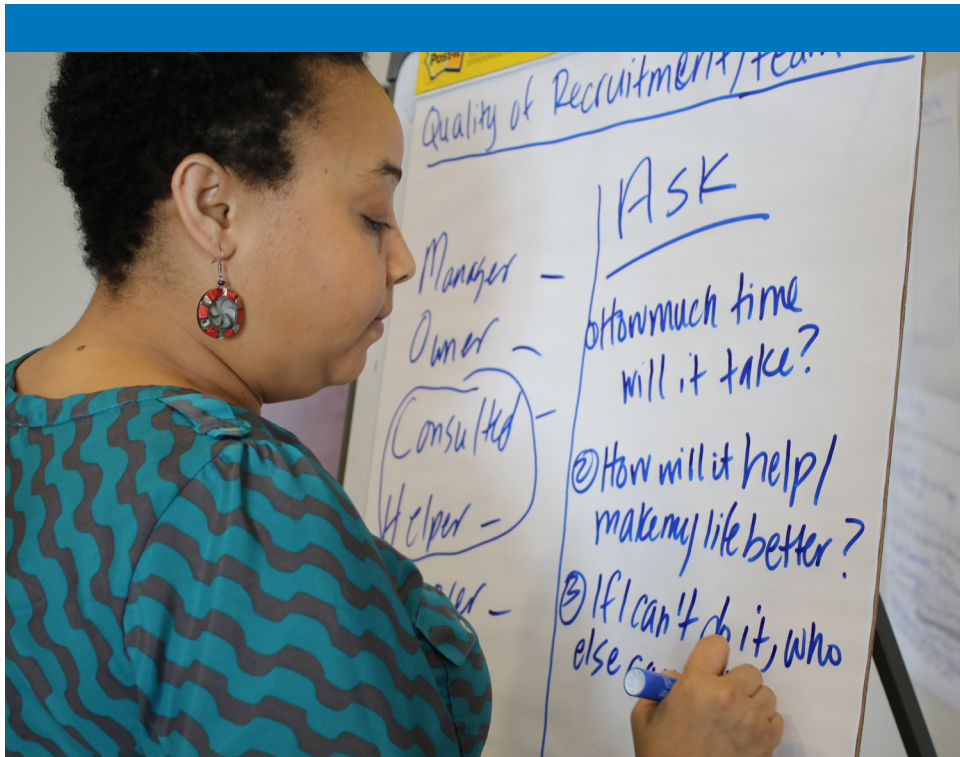
## HOW CAN EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT HELP?

The role of Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program is to inspire, connect and equip leaders of the US Episcopal Church to prepare for hazards that might affect their communities, as well as mitigate the impact of those disasters and help vulnerable people make a full and sustained recovery. Dioceses that sign on to our Disaster Preparedness Initiative can receive ongoing annual regional training for diocesan coordinators and team members (up to two people a year) and can also receive small grants and technical support for offering diocesan-level trainings. The Resource Library on Episcopal Relief & Development's website, [www.episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary](http://www.episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary), contains free, downloadable disaster training curricula as well as case studies of parish and diocesan best practices in disaster preparedness and response.

For more information on this or other resources please contact Lura Steele at [lstele@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:lstele@episcopalrelief.org). We welcome your questions as well as your suggestions for resources that will support your work in disaster preparedness and response.



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## FACILITATOR NOTES

The exercises in this module will help team members and diocesan leadership understand the role of the Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team and its expectations of members.

The discussions provide the raw material for developing a vision of the role of the diocesan team, a job description for team members and a strategy for recruiting new members.

It can be held in a two-hour morning or afternoon training session. And it can be grouped with Module 2 in a four-hour, half-day training.

## MODULE 1: THE ROLE OF THE DIOCESAN TEAM

TIME: 2 HOURS

### OBJECTIVES

- Develop a vision of effective disaster preparedness and response.
- Evaluate the strengths of the current team; develop a job description for team members, and strategize ways to make the team even stronger.

### I. WHAT DOES DIOCESAN-LEVEL RESPONSE LOOK LIKE?

This visualization exercise of the ideal church response to a disaster helps team members imagine their role in response. Read the visualization slowly and give enough time for imagining and writing.

TIME: 60 MINUTES

#### MATERIALS

- Flip charts and markers
- Copies of Handout 1: A Vision of Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response (page 10).
- Pens

#### POST-DISASTER VISION (30 MINUTES)

*Note to Facilitator: Use these or similar words to introduce the visualization. (Feel free to adapt this visualization to hazards more common to your area.)*

Close your eyes and imagine that there has been a flood in your diocese. An unprecedented amount of rain has swollen waterways. A nearby dam has failed. The community is inundated. There is major damage to several congregations and their surrounding communities. Many people are dead or are missing. Property damage is extensive.

Throughout the diocese, the Church is responding in the wake of the disaster. It's doing what it does very well. Imagine what is happening at the diocesan level.... What are congregations doing to respond to the needs around them?

Look at the side of Handout 1 marked "A Vision of Diocesan Disaster Response." In the first column, write what the local Church is doing to respond.

Now imagine the specific work of the The Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team. You are doing an excellent job of responding in the wake of the disaster. Imagine that your team is doing exactly what needs to be done.

What are you doing to learn about and support the church's response on the diocesan and congregational level? ... Who are you working with in the diocese, in congregations and in the impacted community? ... What is your role/job? What behaviors and skills are we putting into play?

Ask the group to jot their thoughts down in the second column of the handout.

- Invite the large group to share their thoughts. Flip-chart key ideas. This is the time to tease out the specific work that the team would see itself doing in the name of the diocese.

Now try another very different type of hazard.

- Imagine there's been a forest fire. You've had warning that it was nearing your region. Again, the church is responding with all its gifts. What is it doing? Make notes in the first column.
- What is the team doing (and not doing)? Who are you serving? Does anything change from the previous scenario? Again, think and jot notes in the second column and share with the large group.

## PRE-DISASTER VISION

**(20 MINUTES)**

Use these words or similar to make the following points:

Take a moment to consider the things that would have been in place before the disaster to allow for that effective church response .... What role would our team have had in helping congregations prepare to respond to this disaster? .... What skills do we need on our team to do this job?

- Have participants write down key impressions in the columns on side two of the worksheet, A Vision of Diocesan Disaster Preparedness.
- Invite the group to share. Flip-chart key ideas.
- Post both the Post-Disaster and Pre-Disaster vision flip charts prominently.

## CONCLUDING IDEAS

**(10 MINUTES)**

Use these words or similar to make the following points:

Look at the activities listed on our Pre- and Post-Disaster vision flip charts. Based on these, what are three or four statements that capture our vision of what the Diocesan team most wants to be known for? Flip chart the ideas.

Check in with the group to ensure that they have consensus on the vision.

*Note: Make sure these sheets are transcribed into a general vision for the group.*

Make sure to post the flip charts for the Pre-Disaster Vision and Post-Disaster Vision prominently during the rest of the session.

After the session, transcribe these sheets into a general vision for the team that the group can refer to at subsequent meetings.



## FACILITATOR NOTES

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## II. WHAT SKILLS ARE REQUIRED OF A DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TEAM?

In this exercise, participants take the work they envisioned and flesh out the skills, characteristics and qualities the team needs to get the job done, creating a job description for team members.

### TIME 30 MINUTES

### MATERIALS

- Flip Chart and Markers
- Copies of Handout 2: Sample Diocesan Preparedness Committee (page 12)
- Pens

### MAKE A LIST OF TEAM ROLES AND SKILLS

Use these words or similar to make the following points:

We just imagined the perfect response and how it shapes our vision as a team. But what does it take to get the work done? Now we're going to look at the specific skills and qualities required to coordinate disaster preparedness and response on a diocesan level.

Invite the group to call out skills and qualities that diocesan team members should ideally employ in disaster preparation and in response. Flip-chart responses in columns or sheets headed **"Preparedness"** and **"Response."**

- Provide copies of Handout 2: Sample Diocesan Preparedness Committee. Ask: Is there anything on the sheet that should be added to our flip chart?
- Assign someone to transcribe these pre- and post-disaster skills and characteristics into a draft job description for future team members.



## FACILITATOR NOTES

Make sure to post the flip charts for the Pre-Disaster Vision and Post-Disaster Vision prominently during the rest of the session.

After the session, transcribe these sheets into a general vision for the team that the group can refer to at subsequent meetings.

### III. WHAT'S THE CAPACITY OF OUR CURRENT COMMITTEE?

This exercise helps a committee look at the strengths of its members and determine if additional skill sets are needed in the group. If diocesan leaders, such as the bishop or canon to the ordinary, are only staying for part of the meeting, they could be excused at this point.

#### TIME 30 MINUTES

#### MATERIALS

- Copies of Handout 3: Strengths and Stretches (page 11).
- "Preparedness and Response Skills" flip-chart page from previous exercise.
- Pens
- Sticky notes
- Flip chart and markers

#### INTRODUCE ACTIVITY (15-20 MINUTES)

Use these words or similar to make the following points:

**All of us have strengths that will help us be excellent at this job and all of us have areas that will be a stretch for us. Individually, we can't be good at everything. But as a team, we can be good at many things. It's important to know our strengths and stretches both as individuals and as a team.**

- Distribute the Strengths and Stretches Handout, and invite team members to fill out their own self-assessment. Then have them write their various strengths and stretches individually on sticky notes. Do not put names on these. (10 minutes)
- Make two columns on a flip chart, labeled strengths on one side and stretches on the other. Invite team members to post their strengths and stretches sticky notes in the appropriate column.
- Have the group take a 5-minute break. During this time, the facilitator can review the strengths and stretches sticky notes in the following way:

\* Put like ones together.

\* Group them so strengths and corresponding stretches, if any, are across from one another.

\* Note if there is an overabundance of some strengths, or if there are some stretches that remain for the group.

## LARGE-GROUP DISCUSSION

### (15 MINUTES)

Point out your observations to the team, and ask if they would make any adjustments. Point out where the group's collective gifts address the collective stretches. Ask the group:

- What do you think about the balance of skills on the current team?
- Where are the holes in our team?
- Where are there issues to acknowledge?
- Who might be able to fill the gaps in our strengths? Or, how can we find people with the skills we need? Who will contact them and invite them to our next meeting?

## IV. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

### (5 MINUTES)

Take a moment to summarize the conclusions that the group reached about its vision of the work and the skills required to do it. Ask for any final questions or comments.

Thank the group for its hard work. Point out that it is all right if anyone feels that the team or the work is not a good fit for them at this point. Ask them to let the team leaders know, and assure them that their input and honesty has been appreciated.

- Set dates for the next meeting.
- Review any next steps or activities that must happen before then and who will do them.
- Make sure that someone is designated to document decisions on roles, job descriptions and strengths and gaps. Save flip charts for future use.





What is the diocesan team doing to respond to the disaster?

How did the church prepare for the response? What had to be in place for success?

**These are some of the various tasks and responsibilities for your committee members to divide up.**

**Duties and responsibilities include:**

- Communications within the diocese pre-disaster (re: trainings, preparedness, etc.)
- Build relationships with / liaise with other ecumenical, non-profit and governmental agencies
- Organize preparedness trainings
- Preparedness planning – creating plans and mapping assets for parishes and for the diocese
- Manage communications systems throughout the diocese during disasters

**Also think about the type of people you want to work with.**

**Characteristics may include:**

- Enough time to work on this ministry, especially during a disaster (not all members can be emergency response professionals!)
- Positive energy and the ability to work collaboratively
- A self-motivated “details” person with strong organizational skills
- People that represent all geographic regions of your diocese
- Both clergy and lay people
- People with diverse backgrounds – personally, professionally and in ministry experience
- Relationships with key ministries to vulnerable people in your diocese

1. What are your strengths – the qualities and skills that make you good at helping to coordinate your diocese's preparedness and response work? Consider the list of preparedness and response skills that the group listed.

2. What are your "stretch areas", skills or qualities that you would like to work on?

3. Who would be good to invite to join your disaster preparedness committee? What kind of people would be a good complement to your current team members?