

Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

Standard Operating Procedure

Unmet Needs

Purpose:

The function of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to establish Unmet Needs Committee (UNC) procedures for managing unmet needs cases.

General Information:

Declared and undeclared disasters continually create a need for human services beyond the ability of affected individuals. Unmet needs cases arise and are presented to WAVOAD in many different ways. It is the responsibility of the Unmet Needs Committee to examine and act upon each case as expeditiously as possible.

All unmet needs will be given serious consideration and every effort will be made to help people resolve unmet needs that affect their safety, security, or sanitary needs. Unmet needs outside one of these three categories will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Communications are an important function of the Unmet Needs Committee. Persons in need must be treated with respect and part of that respect begins with timely communication as well as action.

The Chair of the Unmet Needs Committee, or in his/her absence a designee, is responsible for compliance with this Standard Operating Procedure.

Procedures:

1. Initial Notification

Upon notification of an unmet need, the chair of the Unmet Needs Committee will ensure that pertinent information surrounding the case is entered into the worksheet as found at tab A.

Within 48 hours of notification of the unmet need, the Chair of the Committee will assign a committee member (case manager) the responsibility of contacting the affected party to gather any additional information that may be required and to establish a case management file. This contact will be initiated no later than 72 hours after WAVOAD is notified of the need.

During the initial contact, the case manager will ensure that a "release of confidentiality" is signed by the applicant, if applicable, so that information on the case may be shared with agencies that may be able to provide assistance.

The case manager will complete a case management worksheet (tab B) and update any new data in the intake worksheet immediately (same day) following the contact. A case file will be created for the applicant.

NOTE: If a large caseload necessitates a delay in case management within the periods set forth in this Standard Operating Procedure, the UNC Chair will immediately send the applicant a letter stating the reason for the delay and providing them with a date in the future that they can expect work to begin on their case. No delay shall be more than 15 business days from the date notified of the need as recorded in the database.

2. Case Disposition

Within five (5) working days following contact with the affected party, the unmet needs committee will discuss (by phone or e-mail) the case and decide upon a course of action. Some examples of possible courses of action follow.

- a. Deny the case because it is not disaster related.
- b. Accept the case and initiate a course of action to provide relief.
- c. Decline the case because it is beyond the capability of WAVOAD member organizations to address.
- d. Refer the case to another agency that may be able to provide assistance
- e. Provide counseling to the individual so that they can better manage their own assets in achieving a solution.
- f. Request additional support from one or more of the VOAD member organizations.
- g. Organize a local unmet needs committee to resource a relief effort.

Closure: The case will be considered closed when the committee determines that all appropriate actions have been completed.

3. Coordination / Communication

Regardless of the decision, the Chair of the Unmet Needs Committee will contact the affected party and explain what will or will not be done to assist them. The Chair will follow up with a letter within 72 hours. A copy of this letter will be sent to the WAVOAD President. A copy will also be sent to the person or agency that referred the case provided it does not violate the applicant's confidentiality.

4. Follow Up

The UNC Chair or a designated representative will review all open cases weekly to ensure that appropriate actions are underway. Any cases that are not progressing will be investigated and actions will be taken to get them moving again.

If a case is referred to another organization, the UNC Chair or a designated representative will follow up on that referral weekly until the case is closed. All follow-up actions will be documented in the applicant's case file. If the referral agency does not follow through with the

case, the Chair or a designated representative will attempt to get that referral agency to act. If that fails, the Unmet Needs Committee will reopen the case and decide upon a new course of action.

Throughout the follow up process, as long as the case is open, there should be continuous communication with the applicant until the case is closed. At a minimum, the case manager should contact the applicant at least once a week while the case is in work. All contacts and actions will be recorded in the case file.

5. Quality Review

When the case is closed, a quality evaluation form (tab C) will be sent to the applicant to get their comments on how the case was handled.

The WAVOAD Leadership Team will review all completed cases every two months in the months of February, April, June, August, October, and December. This review will focus on the timeliness and appropriateness of the disposition decision, and the quality of the communication between the applicant and the Committee.

Any discrepancies in procedures and/or case management will be addressed immediately.

6. SOP Revisions

This SOP will be updated when needed to improve the quality of the Unmet Needs management.

Tabs

- A. Intake Database
- B. Case Management Worksheet
- C. Quality Review Questionnaire
- D. Unmet Needs Committee Contact Information
- E. Release of Confidentiality Form

Effective: February 2007

Signed:

Susan Pelaez, President

Jay DeBoer, Unmet Needs Committee Chair