**TITLE:** Volunteer Navigators – A “just-in-time” volunteer and leadership training



**PURPOSE:** To prepare caring volunteers and local church leadership to respond to neighbors who have experienced a disaster by providing accurate and timely information as a gesture of care and a sign of hope.

**CONCEPT:** Volunteer Navigators Outreach prepares the church to serve locally in disaster ministry by providing information and referral to survivors in the early relief phase. The key message to survivors is: “Our church cares about the individuals and families in our neighborhood.”

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** (1)Volunteers associated with or otherwise invited by the local UMC who are willing to provide short-term outreach. (2) local church leadership willing to coordinate short-term outreach volunteers; host training; facilitate debriefing; consolidate information gathered.

**A: Volunteer Outreach**

The volunteer outreach training is directed toward “just-in-time” volunteers who would be trained in the early days following a disaster as an extension of the outreach ministries of a local United Methodist Church. These volunteers would be equipped with guidance regarding (1) the sharing of accurate, timely and useful information following a disaster, and (2) the gathering of categorical information as to those persons who might need additional help.

1. Information – basic information will be shared with survivors regarding standard disaster resources, as well as a checklist for how to prepare for next steps.
2. Information gathering is extremely basic. The survivor’s address will be the only identifying information recorded. The information will be kept confidential within the local church or annual conference leadership. The information will **not** be entered into a web-based data collection system.

**B: Leadership Development**

The local church will provide the leadership and coordination at the local level, within the structure – or in cooperation with and support of - conference leadership, including the conference disaster response coordinator. Other conference personnel would be encouraged to support and/or participate (for example, the district superintendent, district disaster response coordinator, or others). UMCOR Staff/Consultants will assist conferences that have not received the “Volunteer Navigators guidelines” to coach the local leadership regarding the implementation and support prior to, during, and immediately following the outreach effort. In the event UMCOR personnel are in the conference following a disaster, they will help with providing briefings to local churches.

What do we do with what we find out from the survivors? – The information goes to conference leadership to help identify needs for the conference response. It will not be entered into a shared database. District or conference disaster response coordinators will receive and consolidate information. Volunteers will not make the decision about what happens next and where the information goes.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS: This activity should only happen when local churches and/or districts agree to organize, train, send and receive volunteers. When everything seems chaotic immediately following a disaster, the reasoned and organized approach of Volunteer Navigators will help prevent a “vacuum” that well-meaning volunteers will try to fill. The more local church leadership and local residents move through the community, the more they will be trusted. Visiting UMCOR staff and UMVIM leadership should work with the local community, but not go out as representatives of the church/community. Outsiders...even from within a conference...can serve as calming influences within the church, provide assurance not authority, to be there and offer wisdom – as reality tester and coach. The local supervisor needs to do the debriefing, and the conference or UMCOR/UMVIM guests might spend our time coaching that person in how to do debriefing.

**OBJECTIVES:**

**CURRICULUM / METHODS** (Volunteer component)

Maps, posters and wall charts will serve better than PowerPoint presentations in the early days following a disaster.

Handouts will serve as part of the volunteer “card deck.” These will include:

(1) a checklist to give to survivors; (2) a resource list to give to survivors; (3) a wallet card / guidance for the volunteers about how to deal with people in crisis (4) a minimal data collection form;

Volunteers will know how to:

1) Respond to survivors who send them to check on other neighbors.

2) Reply to survivors’ questions and concerns.

1. Give accurate information specific to the disaster, resources, registration for FEMA and why it is important, and why they should NOT throw out the SBA application
2. Summarize how FEMA Individual Assistance works.
3. Reassure survivors, in the absence of a declaration, of what the community is doing
4. Encourage survivors to save receipts, contact insurance, take photos.

**CURRICULUM / METHODS** (leadership component) This is coaching, mentoring, guiding, not training. (See implementation.)

**SCHEDULING JUST-IN-TIME TRAINING**

If there is a conference has not received the Volunteer Navigators material, UMCOR will actively follow-up to provide resources. This will be most efficiently scheduled through phone conversations between UMCOR personnel and conference personnel.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAINING AND DEPLOYMENT OF VOLUNTEER NAVIGTORS**

* Volunteers would arrive, bringing a sack lunch (or having one prepared for them by the church?) and register the morning of the training (8:00 AM?)
* Registration includes a release and identifying information
* Training would be completed in 1.5 hours.
* Volunteers then receive a temporary volunteer ID. The ID is dated for the date(s) deployed, includes logo (cross and flame), volunteer’s name, and the coordinating officer’s name and contact phone number.
* Volunteers would be paired with an outreach partner, and assigned a particular location, area or grid. Volunteers will be paired as assigned. The coordinator will attempt to pair a known person (affiliated volunteer) with someone unknown (unaffiliated volunteer).
* Volunteers are provided a checklist to offer to survivors next steps to take. They also will have a form – very simple – to document the address visited and any expressed requests for assistance from survivors.
* Volunteers will have been taught about boundaries and DOs and DON’Ts when listening to and speaking with survivors.
* Volunteers are to return to the church at a designated time.
* Volunteers would participate in debriefing at the close of day.
* If a second day is needed, they would return the following day as predetermined.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP**

UMCOR’s goal is for Volunteer Navigators Outreach to be a conference-led volunteer event, put in place as soon as emergency management allows entry into a disaster area. Conference trainers (disaster response coordinator or designee) arrive a day prior to help set up the volunteer training and to assure all is in place for the registration, training, deployment, and debriefing, as well as tracking volunteer hours, and consolidating information to move forward to conference leadership.