

UNITED WAY DISASTER/CRISIS RESPONSE

Initial response

- In the time immediate following a disaster or crisis, the first step is providing your local 2-1-1 with appropriate information and additional staffing/resources.
- It's helpful if all organizations involved in the crisis response know to direct people to dial 2-1-1 for the most updated information and if they help disseminate that resource to the media and the public.
- One of the biggest values a United Way can provide in the immediate aftermath is deploying one or more Volunteer Reception Centers. (Webinar: <http://uww.adobeconnect.com/p86795410>)

Creating a fund

- Many United Ways choose to establish a disaster relief fund.
- A guide for doing so is available [here](#).
- Some tips if you're planning to establish a fund:
 - Coordinate with other groups in the community to make it a central fund. Splintered efforts and multiple funds only create confusion and can lessen overall impact.
 - Many communities have reacted negatively when necessary administrative/processing fees are applied to the fund. Be fully prepared to explain this aspect. Some United Ways have also found individual or corporate sponsors to underwrite the processing costs.
 - Be crystal clear about the intent of the fund. If you intend to hold some funds for long-term relief efforts (typically recommended) this needs to be clearly communicated.
 - Establish a formal distribution board comprised of a cross-section of community leaders and organizations.
- Please contact United Way Worldwide directly to be connected with United Ways that have faced both natural disasters and man-made crises.

Long-term relief

- Another value United Way brings is addressing long-term recovery efforts. Typically the post-disaster/crisis needs of a community fall squarely within education, income and/or health. Frame your efforts in this way so as not to create confusion about United Way's mission and purpose.
- Long-term relief can span everything from clean-up and recovery to long-term mental health efforts to support for first responders.
- When facing the aftermath of a crisis, United Way could offer to host community conversations on that particular issue: keeping kids safe, mental health, youth violence, etc. The conversations would be designed to allow people to weigh the complexities of the issue and would not pre-determine possible solutions. (<https://online.unitedway.org/groups/community-conversations-workbook-harwood-institute>)

To access more resources on disaster response, please visit <https://online.unitedway.org/groups/disaster-and-emergency-preparedness>.

For tips on creating a media plan, please contact Neil Parekh – neil.parekh@uww.unitedway.org