

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Position Task Books (PTBs) and the FEMA Qualification System (FQS)

Question: *Why do we need the new Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) Position Task Books (PTBs)?*

Answer:

On April 8, 2013, FEMA leadership transferred the Community Relations (CR) program from the Office of External Affairs to the Recovery Directorate. To reflect a renewed commitment to disaster survivors and the expanded role of the cadre, FEMA changed the name from CR to Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA).

In June, a group of selected DSA Reservists, the DSA Certifying Official, and the DSA Reservist Program Manager held a working session to revise the existing External Affairs/Community Relations PTBs. The revised DSA PTBs align with the expanded mission of DSA, focusing on addressing survivor needs.

Because the goal is to have DSA members function in a 100% mobile environment to provide services directly to survivors on-site and in-person, additional technical competencies are required. For example, DSA members will need to use a web-based GIS application to collect information that is replicated in real-time and available to view by response officials.

Question: *How do I become “qualified” for the new DSA program?*

All of the General Competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills, abilities, and on-the-job behaviors or other characteristics that can be applied across different jobs and organizations, sometimes called “Common Tasks”) remain essentially unchanged. General Competencies are tasks that are similar among all FEMA Qualifications System (FQS) positions.

Technical Competencies are tasks that are specific to functioning as a DSA member in the field.

The following process will apply for demonstrating successful performance in the required competencies found in the new Disaster Survivor Assistance PTBs:

- For DSA Specialist-Trainees who have submitted a completed CR PTB to FEMA-IWMO-ReservistEvaluations-Program@fema.dhs.gov *or* have competencies evaluated/signed-off in a CR PTB:
 - The FQS Call Center should have emailed you a DSA Specialist PTB and Qualifications Sheet the week of December 16, 2013. If you did not receive these documents, please email FEMA-DSA-RSV@fema.dhs.gov and your point of contact will assist you.
 - The DSA Specialist General Competencies that transfer from the CR PTB are listed on the DSA Webpage.
 - For those competencies that do not transfer or are new, you will be required to perform those competencies with a FQS Coach Evaluator for credit.
 - If at any time in this process you have questions about your individual case, please email FEMA-DSA-RSV@fema.dhs.gov and your point of contact will assist you.

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For DSA Specialist Trainees who have not started a CR PTB:

- The FQS Call Center should have emailed you a DSA Specialist PTB and Qualifications Sheet the week of December 16, 2013. If you did not receive these documents, please email FEMA-DSA-RSV@fema.dhs.gov and your point of contact will assist you.
- For DSA Reservists currently certified as “qualified” in any CR job title:
 - You will retain your status as “qualified,” however, you will not be considered “DSA qualified” until you complete a DSA-specific addendum.
 - You should have received an email the week of November 18, 2013 (to your personal email account) with a DSA-specific addendum to your PTB outlining DSA Technical Competencies and training that you will be required to complete in order to be certified as DSA qualified.
 - If you did not receive this document, please email FEMA-DSA-RSV@fema.dhs.gov and your point of contact will assist you.

We know this process requires additional training and demonstrated performance to complete your FQS requirements. With the expanded mission of DSA, it is essential that we determine the qualifications and readiness of our cadre through the fairest and most objective means possible.

Question: *I had my CR Position Task Book signed off during Sandy, and I deployed under DSA, am I qualified?*

Answer: Currently, no one is qualified in any of the DSA FQS positions. If the General Competencies you completed prior to the transfer were “signed off” by a qualified CR evaluator, you will receive credit for completing those General Competencies. However, all members of the DSA cadre will need to complete additional DSA-specific Technical Competencies in order to be certified as “DSA qualified.” Once these additional competencies have been “signed off” by a qualified evaluator, you will receive acknowledgement from the FQS Call Center that your certification package is being forwarded to your Reservist Program Manager (RPM). Once the certification package is signed by your Certifying Officer and Certifying Authority, you will receive a letter certifying that you are DSA-FQS qualified.

Question: *What is the DSA Addendum?*

Answer: The Addendum is a list of DSA Technical Competencies (position-specific), survivor-centric tasks that must be completed by those DSA members who were ***already certified as qualified*** under Community Relations to be certified as DSA-FQS qualified. The DSA Addendum looks at the behaviors and skills required to address the needs of individual survivors and describes seven - twelve specific technical competencies, that, when performed successfully, demonstrate an individual’s qualifications to hold a Disaster Survivor Assistance position title. The DSA Addendum also includes the DSA training requirement(s) specific to each position.

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***Question:** How long do I have to complete my PTB to be considered DSA-FQS qualified?*

Answer: If you are issued a new PTB, you have four years (from the date it was issued) to complete it. If you are already qualified under a CR title and are issued the DSA Addendum, you will have two years to complete the DSA Addendum.

<i>If you are:</i>	<i>Time to Complete:</i>
<i>CR Qualified</i>	<i>Two Years to Complete DSA Addendum from Date Issued</i>
<i>CR Trainee</i>	<i>Four Years to Complete DSA PTB from Date Issued.</i>

***Question:** I completed one or two day DSA training at FEMA HQ prior to deploying to Oklahoma. Do I still have to take the DSA Specialist training to be qualified?*

Answer: Yes. All DSA cadre members must complete the five-day Disaster Survivor Assistance Specialist training (E/L 0880) in order to be certified as DSA-FQS qualified. For management positions (Crew Lead, Taskforce Leader, Group Supervisor and Branch Director) additional management training courses will be required. The DSA Branch Director and DSA Management courses are under development with expected deliveries to begin in the spring of 2014.

***Question:** Once I have completed my DSA PTB or DSA Addendum and have completed all required DSA Training, who will qualify me in my position?*

Answer: **Those who complete a PTB** will receive acknowledgement from the FQS Call Center that their certification package is being forwarded to their Reservist Program Manager (RPM). Once the certification package is signed by the Certifying Officer and Certifying Authority, individuals will receive a letter certifying that they are DSA-FQS qualified.

Those who complete an Addendum will be provided with an email from their RPM that they are DSA qualified.

***Question:** When I am deployed, how do I find the qualified DSA Coach/Evaluators?*

Answer: Currently, the DSA Certifying Authority (CA), DSA Certifying Official (CO), and DSA Reservist Program Manager are responsible for qualifying members of the DSA cadre. The CA, CO and RPM will deploy to the field/training/exercises to assist in qualifying DSA members. Once DSA Coach/Evaluators have been identified, employees should contact their immediate Supervisor (while deployed), who will work with the Disaster Field Training Operation (DFTO) to assign an appropriate DSA Coach/Evaluator for your position. We are committed to quickly qualifying as many DSA members as we can in 2014.

Employees who have been certified as FQS Coach/Evaluators will keep their certification but must become DSA qualified in order to sign off on DSA PTBs and Addendums. As DSA Coach Evaluators becomes DSA qualified, we will make their names known to DSA cadre members using the DSA website and other means, and will regularly update the Coach/Evaluator list.

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Question: *How do I become a DSA Coach/Evaluator?*

Answer: To become a Coach/Evaluator you must complete the required FQS Coach/Evaluator training (E/L/B 823) and must be certified as “Qualified” in the DSA FQS position being evaluated. The evaluation process provides trainees/candidates the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of specific qualifications through coaching and assessing their performance against a standard. Effective evaluation is important to the success of the trainee/candidate; therefore, the evaluator must assess a trainee/candidate’s performance thoughtfully, accurately, and honestly. See the [FEMA FQS Guide](#) for additional information.

Question: *What are the DSA FQS Titles? Why did they change?*

Answer: At the time of the transfer of the cadre from External Affairs to Recovery (April 8, 2013) we retained the FQS titles and simply substituted “Disaster Survivor Assistance” for “Community Relations” in the Specialist, Manager, and Assistant Manager titles. The Assistant External Affairs Officer for CR became a DSA Branch Director.

However, because DSA reports to the Operations Section, we changed the titles to align with the Incident Command System titles. Once you have completed your assigned Addendum, ADD will reflect your new title, showing that you are DSA qualified. The new titles, which took effect November 15, 2013, are shown below:

Old CR Position Title	Old DSA Position Title	New DSA Position Title
(none)	(none)	Disaster Survivor Assistance Branch Director Type 1
Assistant External Affairs Officer (CR)	DSA Branch Director	Disaster Survivor Assistance Branch Director Type 2
(none)	(none)	Disaster Survivor Assistance Group Supervisor
CR Manager	DSA Manager	Disaster Survivor Assistance Taskforce Leader
CR Assistant Manager	DSA Assistant Manager	Disaster Survivor Assistance Crew Leader
CR Specialist	DSA Specialist	Disaster Survivor Assistance Specialist

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***Question:** What is up with DSA deployments? It seems that people are getting deployed without reference to the rotational order that is supposed to determine deployment?*

Answer: Given the expanded functions of DSA, it is crucial that anyone performing the DSA mission receive DSA training prior to deployment. While there may be times when DSA personnel will be deployed to disasters without prior DSA training (e.g., if specific language skills are requested to meet survivor needs), these cases will be rare.

Currently only the five-day E/L/ 880 DSA Specialist course has been approved by EMI. We have worked to secure funding and locations for this training in order to train as many Reservists as quickly as possible. Our goal is that 80 percent of DSA Reservists will complete DSA Specialist training by the end of fiscal year 2014. We are planning additional deliveries of the course this year and are developing two management course projected to be ready for delivery in the spring of 2014.