

# Reunification Support

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Natural and human-caused disasters, including catastrophic incidents, often separate individuals from their personal and community support systems as well as resources typically used in a time of crisis. FEMA coordinates with whole-community partners to increase awareness of these vulnerabilities and to access resources to support reunification efforts before, during, and after disasters.

The National Reunification Committee, collaboratively led by FEMA Mass Care and Emergency Assistance, the American Red Cross, and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), identifies reunification support for adults, children, and families with pets. FEMA coordinates deployment of national reunification resources, both human and material, to support state, tribe, and territory (STT)-led reunification efforts and field operations. There is a cost share for some resources.

## Authorities

- Sections 402, 403, and 502 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), Public Law 93-288, as codified at 42 U.S.C. §§ 5170a, 5170b, and 5192
- Sections 689b - 689c of the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, Public Law 109-295, as codified at 6 U.S.C. §§ 774 and 775

## FEMA Responsibilities

FEMA provides both pre-disaster and post-disaster reunification support, such as human and technological resources, to reconnect individuals as quickly as possible following a disaster. FEMA coordinates reunification efforts with the support of The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the American Red Cross, as well as State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments (SLTT), Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), and Other Federal Agency (OFA) partners. These efforts:



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- Promote family communications planning and preparedness;
- Facilitate notification from “inside” to “outside” disaster areas, helping displaced individuals initiate contact with loved ones to communicate they are in a safe location;
- Respond to requests by family or friends outside the disaster area who are concerned about the well-being of a loved one possibly impacted by the disaster; and
- Prioritize requests for wellness checks for displaced loved ones inside the disaster-impact area who have a physical or mental health issue or someone who may have a functional or access need.

## **Pre-Incident**

- Technical assistance:
  - Support federal and STT reunification plans, training materials, exercises, and other capacity building tools;
  - Share best practices and lessons learned; and
  - Facilitate planning efforts with other federal agencies, SLTTs, NGOs, and the private sector
- Develop agreements with partners and providers for reunification resources, programs, and support services to include communication systems to provide survivors with a wide range of communications methods in a timely manner.
- Provide subject matter expertise to internal FEMA partners, including FEMA’s Response, Recovery, Logistics Management, and National Preparedness Directorates, the Public Assistance Division, the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, the Office of External Affairs, the Office of the Senior Law Enforcement Advisor, and the National Processing Service Centers.
- Identify communication mechanisms, including but not limited to reunification systems, current and emerging social media tools, communication technologies and equipment, and private/public resources.
- Determine practical approaches to address the communication access needs of people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people without speech, people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

## **Response and Recovery**



- Upon a Presidential declaration, coordinate with other federal agencies, SLTTs, NGOs, and other partners to monitor, analyze, validate, and provide human and material resource support programs and services to support reunification efforts for displaced children and adults.
- Facilitate the reunification of displaced children with their families and the voluntary reunification of adults with their families during Presidentially declared emergencies or major disasters, as required by law.
- Provide subject matter expertise and technical assistance in the National Response Coordination Center, as well as regional and field offices.
- Provide staff and resources to support field operations. This includes focused efforts on groups such as individuals with disabilities, older adults, people with access and functional needs, youth, and children.
- Assist SLTT integrated reunification support service systems for evacuees and survivors, including individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, people without speech, or with cognitive or intellectual disabilities, and people with LEP.
- Provide resources, including equipment, material, supplies, facilities, and personnel, to support STT operations.
- Activate the NCMEC contract to stand up the National Emergency Child Locator Center (NECLC) and deploy Team Adam to assist families by providing child reunification services.

## Trigger for Implementation

- Presidential emergency or major disaster declarations under the Stafford Act

## Tools and Resources

FEMA maintains a readiness contract with NCMEC to support the activation of the National Emergency Child Locator Center (NECLC) or the deployment of Team Adam to support the reunification efforts of SLTTs.

FEMA maintains a resource and information sharing agreement with the American Red Cross, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

FEMA, along with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and American Red Cross, co-lead the National Reunification Committee which



provides a national platform for collaboration and partner and stakeholder engagement.

## National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

- [National Emergency Child Locator Center \(NECLC\)](#)
  - Call center activated by an STT request to support SLTTs, law enforcement agencies, and the general public in identifying, tracking, and locating children separated from their parents or legal guardians as a result of a Presidentially-declared disaster or emergency.
- [Team Adam](#)
  - A program that provides rapid, onsite assistance to law-enforcement agencies and families during critical cases involving missing children.
- [Unaccompanied Minors Registry](#)
  - Available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, for people to report or request information on a missing child.

## Additional National Resources

- [National Mass Care Strategy - Reunification Support](#)
- [Multi-Agency Reunification Services Plan Template](#)
- [Post-Disaster Reunification of Children: A Nationwide Approach](#)
- Red Cross Welfare Checks (Contact: 1-800-Red Cross)
  - Emergency Welfare Inquiry: An inquiry about someone within the affected area who has a serious pre-existing health or mental health condition, or a functional and access need.
  - Family Reunification Request: A request about multiple family or household members who have been separated as a result of a disaster.
  - General Welfare Inquiry: general inquiry looking for someone within the affected area.
  - Military Welfare Inquiry: A request by a member of the military-connected community (active duty, reserve, National Guard, retired, veteran or their family members) searching for the same within the affected area.
  - VIP Inquiry: A request from partner organizations, elected officials, or Red Cross leadership to locate missing persons.



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