



Standard Practice for Responder Family Support Service¹

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INTRODUCTION

The delivery of critical emergency response services in time of disaster is largely dependent upon designated individuals (responders) who possess the necessary skill and training to provide relief to those affected. Such designated individuals may come from a variety of public, private, or government sponsored entities depending on the nature and extent of the emergency situation. While their contributions to the relief effort may be diverse, they all share a common concern that has the potential to distract from their focus on emergency response, which is the concern for the safety and security of their families and loved ones.

These responders need to be able to concentrate fully on their response duties, especially in times of a widespread emergency. However, it is recognized that these responders may face the difficult challenge of deciding between professional duty, the welfare of their local community, and the safety and welfare of their families and loved ones. Thus, this practice was developed to provide a framework for the responsible entities to help their response personnel plan for and manage the safety of their families during extended periods of emergency assignment. To avoid unnecessary burden on or reduction in the number of an entity's emergency responders, other available community human resources should be considered to help with this task of ensuring that responder's families are supported. Preferably, such additional human resources would have access, either personally or through their organization, to local resources that might be needed to provide the necessary responder family support.

These additional resources can often be found in local recreational, cultural, and educational programs and organization located within the community. In some communities these programs and organizations may have paid staff, and in other communities such staff may be volunteers or a combination of paid and volunteer staff. Additionally, these resources are likely to be available for such service, because in times of emergency usually recreational and educational programs are curtailed. Also, these programs and organizations often have access to and control of core physical assets (buildings, vehicles, emergency equipment, etc.) that may be valuable for both community and responder family support. They can also be equipped with additional resources as required (food, water, blankets, etc.). Such programs and organizations often have full, part-time or volunteer staff, or both, that can be trained and made available to provide the necessary family assistance support. These programs and organizations often have a command and communications structure that can be expanded to help support such an assistance program. Simply stated, staff in these programs and organizations would be trained and prepared to include assigned members of a responder's family in with the care and support of their own families during the stated emergency or extended responder assignment. This practice outlines a process for responders to identify family members to be included in the program, on strictly a volunteer basis. It is important to note that responder family members included in the program would not be given preferential treatment, but would have someone assigned to look out for them (in the responder's absence) to ensure that they get equal treatment (that is, the same care as everyone else in the community, who have their head of household looking out for them).