



# **Catholic Charities of Arkansas Diocese of Little Rock Disaster Response**



*“Catholic defines who we are, not who we serve.”*

Dear Father,

Many of you already know me but I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and explain the role of Catholic Charities in this series of disasters. The goal of our Disaster Response efforts is to support you and your community as we recover; we do this by providing funds, technical assistance and linkage into resources.

I have put together a brief list of important phone numbers and a list of insights that can help in your community. As our recovery progresses I will send you occasional updates as well as passing along any information that might help. Jamie Deere, Brigid Ryan and I are also available to help

Blessings,  
Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC

## **Contact Information**

### **Diocese of Little Rock:**

- Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, director of Catholic Charities (501) 664-0340, ext. 352 or by cell at (501) 392-4079
- Jamie Deere, director of Parish Social Ministries (501) 664-0340, ext. 419 or by cell (501) 412-0693

**FEMA:** Call (800) 621-FEMA

**National Suicide Hotline:** (800) 784-2433

**Arkansas Information and Resources:** 211 or (866) 489-6983

## **Parish Resources**

Parishes affected by tornado or flood disasters can receive up to \$10,000 disaster assistance grant from Catholic Charities. This grant is to help residents in your area. In order to get this grant, parishes must establish an outreach/response team that will receive a short training in disaster case management. Clients are asked to prove a pre-disaster address and verify their damage. Assistance is not limited to those who lost their homes, many simply missed work or lost power and don't have the assets to recover without help.

## **Steps for Disaster Response**

- Contact Catholic Charities for disaster grant funds and case management training. Catholic Charities will provide case management training to a core group of volunteers within your parish who will lead the response effort in your community. It is our belief that local people should direct the response and will know best what a community needs. Our role is to provide the funds and the technical expertise.
- Identify your parish team coordinator. Do you have a volunteer who can contribute time on a regular basis? This person should be able to work well with other agencies and be fiscally responsible.
- Join the local Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC). FEMA will be working with communities to help bring together local leaders and resources to steer the overall recovery effort. In many cases, the ministerial alliance will play a pivotal role in this.

*“What does a LTRC do?”*

Different organizations will have different resources and different needs. For example, the Catholic Church has a client who needs help rebuilding his flood damaged home. They also need food and basic

supplies while recovering. Using Catholic Charities Disaster Grant funding they are able to provide grocery store vouchers to replace spoiled food and a Wal-Mart card for bedding. The Arkansas Rice Bowl can supplement with more groceries. The United Methodists may have building supplies and the local Baptist church may be able to provide volunteers. By working together we are able to help a situation that might overwhelm a single agency.

An LTRC can also help find additional resources, if your community is seeing a need, rather than have each group individually contact potential donors, LTRC can reach out to large donors or funders for assistance. (Incidentally donors much prefer this approach.)

### **Things to Do**

- Reach out to other ministries in your community.
- Keep in contact with Catholic Charities.
- Identify the vulnerable populations in your community. (the elderly, the undocumented, the poor)
- Identify volunteers. Look for leaders, case managers, drivers, delivery persons, those with construction experience, cooks and bakers, etc.
- Understand the process. Parishioners dealing with FEMA may be extremely frustrated because the process is complex, being able to listen and explain, or bring in someone who can advocate will provide great help.
- Be aware of mental health issues. Immediately after a disaster families and communities come together to respond. However as the danger passes and the daily inconveniences of shared space, lost items, and endless mess persists tempers will grow short. People will grow depressed. Those already suffering mental illness may have problems with the change of setting or availability of their medications. Studies in New Orleans found that the number of cases of depression tripled in their community after the hurricane. This is a normal part of the recovery and clients who may be adverse to see a counselor may need one now.
- Take care of yourself. In many areas the priests have been affected by the disaster along with their community yet they are still very much needed as the caregivers. Please take time to ensure your own mental and spiritual well being. Your parish needs you.