

Reunification Standards and Procedures

Disaster Cycle Services Standards & Procedures

DCS SP RESPOND



January 2017

Change Log

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Introduction

Reunification services are designed to meet the short-term reunification needs of those directly impacted by disaster. Services include providing human and technological resources to reconnect individuals by facilitating communication from inside the disaster-affected area to outside the affected area. Additional assistance is provided for individuals with an urgent need.

Reunification services are delivered to individuals, families and communities with no discrimination as to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship or veteran status. The American Red Cross shall ensure inclusion of all diverse communities in Reunification services.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the process, functions, standards, responsibilities, authorities and control mechanisms for the reunification program. Workers can use this to provide standardized service to clients, measure program effectiveness, and inform continuous improvement. The tactical “how-to” work instructions are found in the job tools.

Relation to Other Documents

This document provides standards and procedures for the disaster workforce to provide Reunification services during response, recovery, and preparedness. This document is part of the Disaster Cycle Services Respond Process, supported by the following Disaster Cycle Services doctrine and training products:

- Concept Of Operations
- Respond Program Framework
- Respond Program Essentials

At the end of this document is a comprehensive list of additional documents related to Reunification.

Audience

This document provides standards and procedures for the disaster workforce responsible for providing Reunification services to clients throughout the disaster cycle as well as all workers who interact with an issue of reunification during a disaster.

Scope

This standards and procedures document covers Reunification services provided in all phases of the disaster cycle.

Out of Scope

Mass casualty incidents are covered in the Mass Casualty Incident Response Guide.

Overview

When a disaster occurs with large numbers of fatalities or injuries, individuals who are unaccounted for, damage to communication infrastructure and evacuations etc., a local jurisdiction can quickly become overwhelmed with requests from concerned loved ones. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Reunification services was primarily a reactive activity, responding to high volumes of inquiries that often overwhelmed Red Cross phone lines and emergency services, spreading efforts thin. Since Katrina, the [Safe and Well website](#) has helped alleviate this burden by allowing reunification workers to concentrate resources on those who are most vulnerable during a disaster.

As a co-lead with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the Mass Care component of the Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF6) in the National Response Framework, Red Cross has a commitment to provide Reunification services. Additionally, the Red Cross Reunification services are incorporated into a variety of state and county emergency response plans, continuity of operations plans, and family communications plans that serve to ease the burden on emergency services during a disaster.

Reunification Program Principles

The Reunification Program principles are to improve the quality of service provided to clients who want to notify others that they are safe, seek others who are unaccounted for, reestablish contact when separated from family and deliver reunification services consistently across the country.

The following principles define the Reunification Program:

- Emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests receive highest priority;
- Follow-up always occurs with the emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests;
- Unaccompanied Minors and Separated Children are kept safe and provided with swift transfer or reunification through working with relevant partners;
- Client information is protected;
- Accurate information is provided;
- Services are provided fairly and consistently across the organization.

Definitions

Client

Clients are individuals receiving or requesting Red Cross services. Clients are adults and children of every age, race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, citizenship and veteran status including individuals with access and functional needs including those with disabilities.

Continuity of Operations Plan

Continuity of operations plans are plans developed within individual departments, agencies and businesses to ensure that primary mission essential functions continue to be performed during an emergency.

Core Materials

Core materials include the [Safe and Well Registration Form](#), [Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Form](#), [Unaccompanied Minor and Separated Child Report Form](#), and [Safe and Well Brochure](#) and [Helper Tool](#).

Emancipated Minor

An emancipated minor is a minor who is legally entitled to be treated as an adult through a court order, marriage, military service, or being a parent (Note: Laws vary by state on this definition).

Emergency Welfare Inquiry

An emergency welfare inquiry is a service provided for an individual that has a medical, mental health, functional or access need or disability that could impact an individual's ability to be safe during a disaster. An emergency welfare inquiry results in a comprehensive search for that individual and follow-up with the seeker.

Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log (in development)

The Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log is an online SharePoint site used by the Red Cross field and call center workers to record and track emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests. This system replaces the current 3CS. This site is not accessible to the public.

Family Reunification Request

A family reunification request is a case where a member of an immediate family or household has become separated within the disaster-affected area. These requests follow the same process as emergency welfare inquiries.

G/A/P

G/A/P is the group, activity, and position assigned to an individual in Volunteer Connection. For example, MC/SWL/MN is the G/A/P for an individual with the rank of Mass Care, Safe and Well Linking, Manager. Refer to the Roles, Responsibilities, and Authorities section below for a table of which G/A/Ps can fill each Reunification role.

General Welfare Inquiry

A general welfare inquiry is a service provided to someone who is concerned about the welfare of a loved one. The [Safe and Well website](#) is always used in these cases in addition to providing recommendations.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.

Individual with Access and Functional Needs

An individual with access and functional needs is one who requires assistance, accommodation or modification for mobility, communication, transportation, safety and health maintenance due to any situation (temporary or permanent).

Individual with a Disability

An individual with a disability is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

International Committee of the Red Cross Restoring Family Links Online Tracing

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Restoring Family Links Online Tracing is available to help people separated by conflict or disaster to get back in contact. The online tracing is only available outside of the United States and only in certain situations and contexts.

Legal Guardian

A legal guardian is an adult with a legal right to physical custody of a minor or adult with diminished capacities bestowed by court order or state law.

Mass Care

The term mass care refers to a wide range of humanitarian activities that provide life-sustaining support to individuals and families who are temporarily displaced or otherwise impacted by a disaster or emergency that disrupts their ability to provide for their basic needs. Mass care services begin as soon as a disaster is imminent or occurs and continues through the recovery phase. In general, mass care services include sheltering, feeding, distribution of emergency supplies, reunification, disaster health and mental health services, and disaster spiritual care.

Mass Casualty Incident

A mass casualty incident is any incident in which emergency medical resources, such as personnel and equipment, are overwhelmed by the number and severity of casualties.

Missing Child

A missing child is one who has become separated from their family and cannot be located. (Note: State law varies on the timeline for when a child may be officially reported missing.)

National Emergency Child Locator Center

The National Emergency Child Locator Center (NECLC) is operated by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and may be activated through a request to FEMA from a state, tribe, or territory during presidentially-declared disasters. Its primary mission is to assist with the reunification of children who have become separated from their parents or legal guardians during a disaster. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Memorandum of Understanding located in the [Community Partnerships MOU Index](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides more information on this topic.

National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System

The National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System (NEFRLS) activates following a presidentially-declared disaster to reunite *families* that have become separated as a result of the disaster. [The Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency Memorandum of Agreement](#) located in the [Government MOU Index](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides more information on this topic.

Parent

A parent refers to an individual who has legal guardianship/custody of a child.

Patient Connection

Patient Connection is a Red Cross program operating in Illinois, Northwest Indiana and the Greater Massachusetts area that reunites hospitalized disaster victims with family and friends during emergencies, offering one central hotline where families can obtain information.

Relevant Government Jurisdictions

Relevant government jurisdictions vary depending on the size, scope, and scale of an operation. Jurisdictions may include FEMA regions, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments.

Reunification

The Reunification function provides human and technological resources to reconnect individuals as quickly as possible following a disaster or incident. Mechanisms include facilitating communication through the [Safe and Well website](#), acting upon urgent requests including unaccompanied minors and separated children, reestablishing contact with family members who have been separated within the disaster area and working with partners to resolve reunification-related inquiries.

Reunification Strategy

The reunification strategy is determined by the Reunification lead and the External Relations assistant director in consultation with the Mass Care chief. The strategy includes determining which system should be used to capture information related to those who are safe and those who are unaccounted for, a plan for sharing of information between the Red Cross and relevant government jurisdictions, and providing public messaging for those impacted by the disaster and for those seeking individuals impacted by the disaster.

Safe and Well

The [Safe and Well website](#) is a free public reunification tool that allows individuals and organizations to register and post messages to indicate that they are safe, or to search for loved ones. The site is always available and open to the public and available in Spanish.

Safe and Well Linking

Safe and Well Linking is the former name for the current Reunification program. The Safe and Well Linking name is still reflected in Volunteer Connection and the applicable G/A/P.

Separated Child

A separated child is a child who is separated from both parents, legal guardian or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from adult family members.

Unaccompanied Minor

An unaccompanied minor is an unemancipated child younger than 18, who has been separated from parents, legal guardians, other relatives, schools or child care providers, and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Unaccompanied Minors Registry

The Unaccompanied Minor's Registry (UMR) is a data collection tool administered by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that allows the public to report information related to children who have been separated from their parents or legal guardians as a result of a disaster. [The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Memorandum of Understanding](#) located in the [Community Partnerships MOU Index](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides more information on this topic.

Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities

This section outlines the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of workers throughout the reunification cycle. Operation headquarters and districts are scaled to meet the support requirements of the operation, and staffing is limited to only the staff necessary to support service delivery in the field. The [Concept of Operations: Disaster Cycle Services Program Essentials](#) located in the [DCS Management: Disaster Cycle Services Operations topic hub](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides diagrams of the operation structure for direct services and the district structure.

Steady State

The following roles have responsibilities and authorities related to reunification during steady state, non-disaster times:

Division Disaster Director

During the preparedness phase of Disaster Cycle Services, division disaster directors are responsible for ensuring that regions develop plans and relationships to meet the reunification needs identified in their regional plans.

Regional Disaster Officer

During the preparedness phase of Disaster Cycle Services, regional disaster officers are responsible for assessing the risks and needs of the community, building the region's reunification capability, and ensuring that reunification plans are included in their regional plans. They can delegate these tasks to others in their region as agreed upon with their regional executive. During the response phase of Disaster Cycle Services, regional disaster officers may assume any of the operational roles listed below.

Regional Mass Care Lead

The regional Mass Care lead is responsible for ensuring that volunteers are recruited and trained in reunification and that partnerships are developed and maintained with external partners.

Regional Reunification Lead (Optional)

The regional Reunification lead is responsible for ensuring that reunification guidance is observed, developing reunification plans with internal and external partners and building capacity and capability within the regional workforce.

National Headquarters Reunification Liaison

The national headquarters Reunification liaison is responsible for providing programmatic and operational guidance that support affected divisions, regions and chapters. In addition, they provide direct support for large scale operations that may require national coordination.

National Headquarters Reunification Volunteer Partner

The national headquarters Reunification volunteer partner is responsible for providing subject matter expertise and guidance to program development staff responsible for the Reunification program. The volunteer partner is appointed by and reports to the national headquarters Reunification liaison.

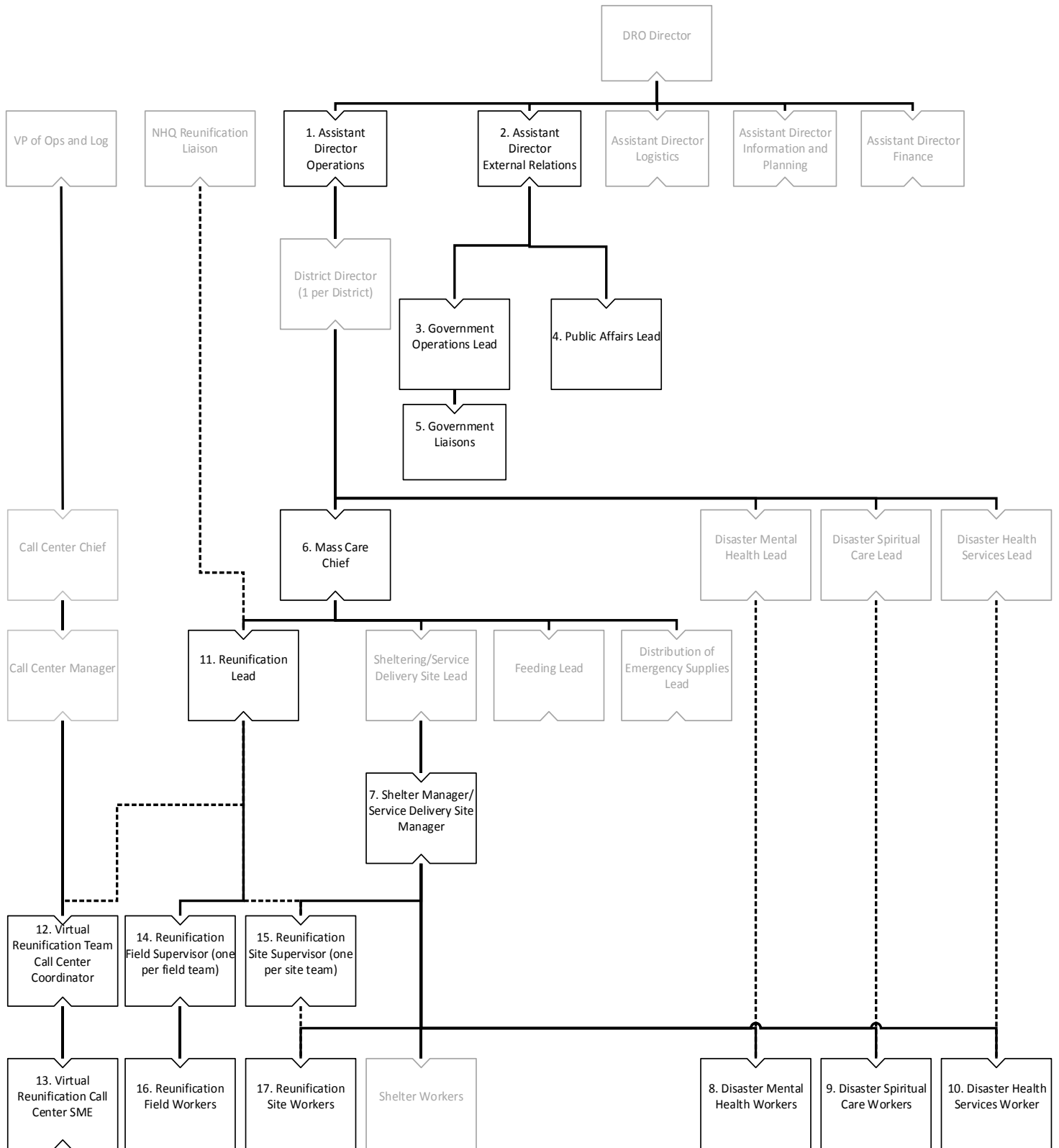
Operation Structure for Reunification

Diagram Legend

The following [diagram](#) provides a visual picture of the structure and relationships between the operational roles described below. Black boxes with numbered positions have an operational role in reunification. Their responsibilities and authorities are described below. Grey boxes are not included in the responsibilities and authorities of this document.

Solid lines indicate administrative reporting lines. Dotted lines represent technical reporting lines and are equally as important to service delivery as the administrative reporting lines.

Operational Structure for Reunification Diagram



Operational Roles Working with Reunification

The following non-reunification roles, included in the Operation Structure for Reunification above, have responsibilities and authorities related to reunification during operations. The [Concept of Operations: Disaster Cycle Services Program Essentials](#) located in the [DCS Management: Disaster Cycle Services Operations topic hub](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides information on the overall responsibilities of these roles.

1. Assistant Director of Operations

Related to Reunification, the assistant director of operations is responsible for approving the Reunification strategy, ensuring that the Reunification lead and External Relations assistant director have the authority and resources to execute the strategy.

2. External Relations Assistant Director

Related to Reunification, the External Relations assistant director (or designee) is responsible for ensuring that all partners (non-governmental organizations and relevant government jurisdictions) are accurately informed of our organizational intent regarding Reunification services. The External Relations assistant director is also responsible for working with the Reunification lead to develop the reunification strategy.

3. Government Operations Lead

Related to Reunification, the Government Operations lead is responsible for having overall awareness of the reunification needs and requests to the government liaisons.

4. Public Affairs Lead

Related to Reunification, the Public Affairs lead is responsible for promoting Reunification services to facilitate increased Safe and Well registration, publicizing stories of successful reunifications to the public and, in larger scale disasters, coordinating media messaging with FEMA and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for individuals seeking people impacted by the disaster.

5. Government Liaison

Related to Reunification, the Government Liaison is responsible for ensuring that the Reunification strategy is communicated to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and notifying the Reunification lead and External Relations assistant director of any confusion or questions. They are also responsible for facilitating communication with law enforcement, emergency management, emergency services, hospitals and coroners and ensuring non-duplicative work during the reunification operation.

6. Mass Care Chief

Related to Reunification, the Mass Care chief is responsible for ensuring the Reunification function is integrated into the operation and well-coordinated with other functions.

7. Shelter Manager / Service Delivery Site Manager

Related to Reunification, the shelter manager or service delivery site manager is responsible for working with the Reunification site supervisor assigned to that site to assist with allocating a designated area for Reunification site workers to provide services and relaying information regarding client reunification needs to the Reunification lead.

8. Disaster Mental Health Worker

Related to Reunification, the Disaster Mental Health worker works closely with the Disaster Health Services worker and is responsible for ensuring reunification clients have access to Disaster Mental Health services. The

Disaster Mental Health function provides individual triage, crisis intervention, information about typical stress reactions, enhanced psychological first aid, advocacy and casualty support to individual clients and workers, as well as community-level resilience-building programs. Disaster Mental Health workers may assist with an emergency welfare inquiry, family reunification request, unaccompanied minor, separated child or a human trafficking concern.

9. Disaster Spiritual Care Worker

Related to reunification, the Disaster Spiritual Care worker is responsible for supporting the reunification process by providing emotional and spiritual support to clients, families and other workers.

10. Disaster Health Services Worker

Related to reunification, the Disaster Health Services worker is responsible for assessing clients to determine appropriate care needs, providing care and support to clients who have disaster-related or disaster-aggravated unmet health needs, and assisting clients with finding resources to meet disaster-related unmet health needs. Disaster Health Services workers may assist with an emergency welfare inquiry, family reunification request, unaccompanied minor, separated child or a human trafficking concern.

Operational Roles within Reunification

Reunification roles, included in the Operation Structure for Reunification above, have the following responsibilities and authorities during operations:

11. Reunification Lead

The Reunification lead is assigned to either a district or operation headquarters, reporting to the Mass Care chief. When assigned to a district headquarters, the position is generally referred to as the district Reunification lead. When assigned to an operations headquarters, the position is generally referred to as the headquarters Reunification lead. The Reunification lead is responsible for leading the Reunification operation; developing a Reunification strategy with the External Relations assistant director; overseeing all Reunification casework; facilitating requests and information between all of the Reunification teams and all of the other functions; problem solving; and reporting Reunification-related data. The [Job Tool: Reunification Lead](#) provides more information on the specific tasks the Reunification lead completes.

12. Virtual Reunification Call Center Coordinator

The Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator is responsible for reviewing all reunification call logs and either assigning them to the field for resolution or managing them remotely. A Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator reports to the Call Center manager and receives technical guidance from the Reunification lead.

13. Virtual Reunification Call Center Subject Matter Expert (SME)

The Virtual Reunification Call Center Subject Matter Expert is responsible for calling back all Reunification calls for resolution or assigning to the field. The Virtual Reunification Call Center Subject Matter Expert reports to the Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator.

14. Reunification Field Supervisor

The Reunification field supervisor is responsible for providing supervision and administrative support to a team of Reunification field workers, maintaining a span of control appropriate for the location and tasks. A Reunification field supervisor reports to the Reunification lead. Other primary responsibilities of a Reunification field supervisor include reporting information to the Reunification lead and ensuring that workers maintain

accurate records of all cases. For more information on the specific tasks the Reunification field supervisor completes, see the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#).

15. Reunification Site Supervisor

The Reunification site supervisor is responsible for providing supervision and administrative support to a team of Reunification site workers, maintaining a span of control appropriate for the location and tasks. A Reunification supervisor reports to the shelter/service delivery site manager and has a dotted line to the Reunification lead. A Reunification site supervisor represents the Reunification function at that particular service delivery site. Other primary responsibilities of a Reunification site supervisor include reporting information to the Reunification lead and ensuring that workers maintain accurate records of all cases. For more information on the specific tasks the Reunification site supervisor completes, see the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#).

16. Reunification Field Worker

The Reunification field worker is responsible for promoting the program within the community, assisting clients with registration and searches on Safe and Well, logging and executing casework for emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests and supporting the process for reunifying unaccompanied minors and separated children. When applicable, the Reunification field worker may work closely with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children representatives on the ground. The Reunification field worker reports to a Reunification field supervisor. For more information on the specific tasks the Reunification field worker completes, see the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#).

17. Reunification Site Worker

The Reunification site worker is responsible for promoting the program at service delivery sites, assisting clients with registration and searches on Safe and Well, logging and executing casework for emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests and supporting the process for reunifying unaccompanied minors and separated children. When applicable, the Reunification field worker may work closely with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children representatives on the ground. The Reunification site worker reports to the Reunification site supervisor. For more information about the specific tasks the Reunification site worker completes, see the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#).

Additional Roles Coordinating with Reunification

Additional roles have the following responsibilities and authorities.

International Services Restoring Family Links Worker

The Restoring Family Links worker coordinates with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent network to provide assistance when families are separated internationally by war, disaster, migration and other humanitarian emergencies, by helping to locate unaccounted for family members, restoring family communication and providing war-time documentation of internment and/or documentation on the fate of unaccounted for family members.

Service to Armed Forces Worker

The Service to Armed Forces worker reports on emergency situations to members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families. These reports enable service members and their commanders to make appropriate responses regarding the need for leaves.

Disaster Operations Coordination Center Dispatch or Disaster-Specific Call Center

The Disaster Operations Coordination Center or the disaster-specific call center is responsible for intaking

reunification calls, assisting with [Safe and Well website](#) registration and searches, providing appropriate recommendations if not successful and capturing information regarding an emergency welfare inquiry or family reunification request and providing guidance on situations involving unaccompanied minors, separated children and missing children.

External

For additional external organizations that play a role in reunification, the [Multi-Agency Reunification Services Plan Template](#) provides more information.

Amateur Radio Operators

Amateur radio operators are responsible for providing radio communication between the Red Cross service delivery sites and personnel to facilitate Safe and Well registration or supporting the resolution of emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests. For more information, see [ARRL, the national association for Amateur Radio Memorandum of Understanding](#) located in the [Community Partnerships MOU Index](#) on [The Exchange](#).

Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign

The Blue Campaign is the unified voice for the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to combat human trafficking. Working in collaboration with law enforcement, government, non-governmental and private organizations, the Blue Campaign strives to protect the basic right of freedom and to bring those who exploit human lives to justice.

Department of State Office of Overseas Services

The Department of State Office of Overseas Services is responsible for managing reunification cases involving U.S. Citizens who are unaccounted for abroad.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Under the National Response Framework, FEMA is a co-lead for Reunification.

Local Child Welfare Agencies

The local child welfare agency (Department of Social Services, Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Public Health) might be included in assisting with a transfer plan of an unaccompanied minor or separated child.

Local Coroner or Medical Examiner

The local coroner or medical examiner is responsible for fatality notifications and providing information about the procedures needed to obtain a list of fatalities.

Local Law Enforcement Agency

The local law enforcement agency is responsible for providing the Red Cross with any local procedures regarding unaccompanied minors and separated children and for working with the Red Cross to determine and approve a transfer or reunification plan.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (a Red Cross partner) is the national organization responsible for working with the reunification function and law enforcement to help find missing children, reunite unaccompanied minors and separated children, reduce child sexual exploitation and prevent child

victimization. [The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Memorandum of Understanding](#) located in the [Community Partnerships MOU Index](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides more information on this topic.

Reunification Task Force

A Reunification Task Force is a group of Emergency Support Function representatives that convene to problem solve and share information about reunification on an operation. A Red Cross representative is typically a part of this group, when activated.

Reunification Strike Team

A Reunification Strike Team is a set number or resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel. A Reunification Strike Team is comprised of representatives from FEMA, Health and Human Services, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Red Cross. This team of individuals completes Reunification field work relevant to an operation. This team could become a component of a state-level operation that may expand into a federal operation that could include Department of Education, Health and Human Services, etc.

Competencies and Training

Any Red Cross worker who has an approved background check is authorized to complete the activities of a Reunification worker. Further details about the Reunification competencies can be found in the [Reunification Toolkit](#) on [The Exchange](#).

Operational Reunification Role	Minimum G/A/P	Reports To
Reunification Lead	MC/SWL/MN	Mass Care Chief
Virtual Reunification Call Center Coordinator	MC/SWL/MN	Call Center Manager
Virtual Reunification Subject Matter Expert	MC/SWL/SV	Virtual Reunification Call Center Coordinator
Reunification Field Supervisor	MC/SWL/SV	Reunification Lead
Reunification Site Supervisor	MC/SWL/SV	Reunification Lead
Reunification Field Worker	MC/SWL/SA	Reunification Field Supervisor
Reunification Site Worker	MC/SWL/SA	Reunification Site Supervisor

Standards and Procedures

1. Planning and Readiness

Standard

Regions pre-identify resources and partnerships to facilitate reunification needs in their disaster regional plans to:

- Ensure there are enough Reunification workers to address the potential needs of the region;
- Promote Reunification services to the public, private sector and partners;
- Establish partnerships/MOUs with local organizations to address service delivery gaps.

During planning and readiness, regional disaster officers or their designees assess the risks and needs of the community, build the region's Reunification capability, and ensure that Reunification plans are included in their disaster regional plans. The anticipation and cooperation of Reunification services with the Red Cross workforce and partners creates a streamlined and efficient operational process that best serves our clients.

1.1 Considering Community Reunification Needs

Regions should be aware of potential needs in their own community, which helps inform reunification planning. Established risk assessment tools, such as the [Guidebook on Creating Resilience Networks](#) located in the [Disaster Cycle Services Capabilities: Community Preparedness and Resilience topic hub](#) on [The Exchange](#) are used during regional planning. Key considerations related to reunification are:

Key Considerations	Description
Community Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with access and functional needs including those with disabilities, including the percentage of the population with service animals; • Children; • Languages spoken; • Individuals living in areas with known human trafficking; • Undocumented populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This population could be unwilling to approach the Red Cross with a reunification need and could be more susceptible to human trafficking. <p>Note: Community demographic information can be found on the following websites: Census.gov and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p>
Pertinent facility locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational facilities • Child care facilities • Hospitals • Assisted living facilities

Key Considerations	Description
Staff capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many trained workers are needed and available to run an efficient reunification operation

1.2 Building Reunification Capacity

Each region is responsible for ensuring that it has the capability to respond to a reunification need. Each region must build reunification leadership and a workforce of volunteers who are trained in reunification. As any Red Cross disaster worker may interact with a Reunification issue, it is important that all Red Cross workers are familiar with this document. The use of social media and digital communications to inform the public is critical. For example, an unaccompanied minor could be found at a distribution site, feeding site, local response, including home fires, etc. All workers may end up in the role of Reunification worker during a response.

1.2.1 Recruiting Volunteers

Each region recruits, selects and trains Reunification workers. Competencies for a Reunification worker can be found on the [Reunification Toolkit](#) on [The Exchange](#). Shelter workers and disaster action team members are encouraged to work towards a secondary or tertiary G/A/P in Reunification (currently in Volunteer Connection as Safe and Well Linking). Regions are encouraged to work with International Services and Service to the Armed Forces volunteers since those services incorporate reunification elements.

1.3 Engaging Partners

Red Cross Reunification services are at their best when working in close collaboration with community partners and relevant government jurisdictions. Developing strong comprehensive plans and partnerships helps ensure that reunification operations are using all available resources to achieve the most efficient and effective response.

1.3.1 Promoting the Development of a Comprehensive Reunification Plan

Many emergency management agencies look to the Red Cross to provide reunification services. However, various agencies, businesses and non-profit institutions play a role in reunification operations and some are statutory in nature (for example: cases involving children). The strongest reunification plan takes a holistic approach, including government, private and community stakeholders. Using the guidance provided in the [Multi-Agency Reunification Services Plan Template](#), regions work with local jurisdictions to convene comprehensive discussions around developing a reunification plan. The [Multi-Agency Reunification Services Plan Template](#) provides suggested guidance and procedures for a jurisdiction to consider in the development of a reunification plan that focuses on the role of managing and/or supporting reunification activities. A plan can help mitigate the burden of responding to high volume of requests to locate individuals.

A comprehensive plan incorporates all of the roles and responsibilities of organizations and agencies with reunification responsibilities. The table below outlines the major groupings and their role.

Group	Description of Role
Law enforcement	Law enforcement plays a critical role in the process for managing unaccompanied minors, separated children and missing children, death notifications and managing missing person's lists.
Child welfare agencies	Child welfare agencies play an important role in a transfer/reunification plan for an unaccompanied minor or separated child.
Emergency management	Emergency management may have the responsibility for supporting reunification. This differs per jurisdiction.
Private sector	Local businesses often develop continuity of operations plans or emergency plans. The Safe and Well website may be incorporated into these plans.

Group	Description of Role
Educational facilities	The reunification of missing children and unaccompanied minors during a disaster often causes high levels of confusion and anxiety among the public. The Safe and Well website should be promoted by educational facilities and incorporated into their reunification planning.
Access and functional needs, including those with disabilities entities	Facilities such as elder care, independent living and organizations that work with those with limited English proficiency (refugee organizations, etc.) serve vulnerable individuals who could benefit from Red Cross's reunification services as well as those offered by community partners.
Health care facilities	Health care facilities interact with the public during pre-disaster times and could be provided Safe and Well website promotional materials. Hospitals often manage reunification of patients, including patients who were in the hospital at the time of the disaster or who may have been evacuated from the hospital, and those who go to the hospital as a result of the disaster.
Coroners and medical examiners	Coroners and medical examiners assist in providing information on the deceased and are responsible for providing death notifications.

1.3.2 Building Partnerships

It is important to work with partners, such as those that could fill staffing needs. Important partnerships to focus on are animal reunification and workforce partners.

Animal reunification partners

Animal reunification issues occur anytime a disaster affects a community. While the Red Cross does *not* have the expertise to execute animal reunification, the Red Cross must be prepared to provide a referral to assist a client with such a request, especially for those requests in relation to a missing service animal. Establishing partnerships with appropriate animal reunification partners in the region creates a more effective and efficient human reunification operation.

The following risks occur when animal reunification partnerships do not exist:

- A pet owner may find a missing pet to be a traumatic experience and they could put themselves in harm's way searching for a missing pet;
- Owners worried about their pets may have a longer recovery process;
- A missing service animal puts an individual with a functional and access need or disability at risk.

Regions should pre-identify community partners that could provide support for animal reunification. This could be done through reaching out to the ESF-6 Coordinator who will typically know the lead agency for local animal reunification efforts. Some partners to consider include local animal control, animal rescue teams, animal shelters and local emergency management offices. The reunification of owners with their service animals is considered a priority.

Workforce partners

Any individual may work with the Red Cross to provide Reunification services after passing an approved background check. Regions should consider reaching out to voluntary organizations such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), government agencies or private sector businesses that could help fill a workforce gap during a disaster. The Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) State lead would also be a great resource for information on applicable organizations and businesses. Developing memorandums of understanding with such partners provides ease of execution when resourcing an operation.

1.4 Promoting the Program to the Public

Promoting a family disaster communications plan is a great way to facilitate important preparedness dialogue in the community. There are several steps that a family may take to be ready for a disaster. Additionally, the Safe and Well website is only as useful as the public's knowledge of it. Promoting Safe and Well as early as possible results in more registrations and decreases the likelihood that emergency services and the local chapter are inundated with calls from worried family members. The [Brochure: Be Red Cross Ready](#) located in the [Be Red Cross Ready Toolkit](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides additional information.

1.4.1 Integrating Reunification Planning at Public Events

During Red Cross public-facing events such as fairs, parades, etc., reunification services are incorporated into the information campaign.

Applicable promotional materials include:

- Safe and Well Wallet Card;
- Safe and Well Brochure;
- Brochure: Be Red Cross Ready.

1.4.2 Integrating Safe and Well information with Red Cross Preparedness Programs

The Red Cross has strong preparedness programs established to educate the community. Consider including Safe and Well materials during The Pillowcase Project and the Home Fire Campaign outreach.

1.4.3 Promoting Materials in Public Places

Promotional materials should be distributed in a language appropriate to the locale in public areas. Local chapters coordinate with local Emergency Management to ensure promotion of information at all public activities.

Locations for promoting materials include:

- Banks
- Gas stations
- Grocery stores
- Restaurants
- Libraries
- Houses of worship
- Pharmacies
- Healthcare facilities
- Educational facilities
- Higher education institutions

1.5 Preparing Local Chapters

Each chapter must be prepared to respond to reunification calls, especially during a disaster. Basic preparation measures can be taken to ensure a smooth process, such as the following:

- Front-desk workers have taken Reunification Fundamentals (in development) training and exercises;
- Call scripts are located near the front-desk phones. The following job tools provide more information about call scripts:
 - [Job Tool: Comprehensive Reunification Call Center Script](#)
 - [Job Tool: Safe and Well User Guide](#)
 - Job Tool: Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log User Guide (in development)

- The link to the [Safe and Well website](#) is added to each chapter and region’s webpage and on social media sites;
- Emergency Response Vehicles and shelter supply kits contain reunification core materials.

2. Identifying Client Needs

Standard

Reunification need guidance (below) is used to determine when to provide reunification services.

Reunification is a function that is challenging to anticipate. To help ensure that services are provided when they might be needed, the following considerations are taken into account to help assess client needs and available Red Cross services.

2.1 Determining Reunification Need

The regional disaster officer, assistant director of operations, or their designee, in consultation with local emergency management, decides whether Reunification services are needed for a particular operation. To help ensure our services are predictable, repeatable and delivered consistently across the country refer to the below table for determining the need for Reunification. It is taken from the [Multi-Agency Reunification Services Plan Template](#):

Intensity Level	Reunification Factors
High	Government assisted, inter-state or intrastate general and/or medical evacuation planned or in progress
	Up to 70 percent of affected population with limited or no access to communications
	International & national media coverage of event
	Primary & secondary schools, colleges and universities are in session and students are projected to be physically separated from and/or out-of-communication with parents/guardians for period > 24 hours
	Shelter population > than 20 percent of affected population
	Number of fatalities and/or injuries overwhelms the resources of the jurisdiction
	International/national or multiple special events occurring
	Peak period for seasonal population
	More than 25 percent of the affected population with cultural and language differences from the rest of the community
	More than 25 percent of the affected population are disabled or elderly residents living in their homes with or without caregivers
No notice incident	
Medium	Government assisted, inter-jurisdiction general and/or medical evacuation within the state

	planned or in progress
	Up to 50 percent of affected population without access to telecommunications
	Statewide media coverage of event
	Primary & secondary schools, colleges and universities are in session and students are projected to be physically separated from and/or out-of-communication with parents/guardians for period > 8 hours
	Shelter population > than 10 percent of affected population
	Number of fatalities and/or injuries that stresses the resources of the jurisdiction
	State/regional or multiple special events occurring
	Transitional period for seasonal population
	More than 15 percent of the affected population with cultural and language differences from the rest of the community
	More than 15 percent of the affected population are disabled or elderly residents living in their homes with or without caregivers
	No notice or short notice incident
Low	No or localized general and/or medical evacuation planned or in-progress
	Up to 20 percent of affected population without access to telecommunications
	Local media coverage of event
	Primary & secondary schools, colleges and universities are in session and students are projected to be physically separated from and/or out-of-communication with parents/guardians for period < 4 hours or not in session
	Shelter population < than 5 percent of affected population
	No or limited fatalities and/or injuries
	No special events occurring
	More than 5 percent of the affected population with cultural and language differences from the rest of the community
	More than 5 percent of the affected population are disabled or elderly residents living in their homes with or without caregivers
	Incident with notice

If the event is a mass casualty incident, the Mass Casualty Incident Response Guide (in development) provides more information.

3. Developing an Operational Reunification Strategy

Standard

- A reunification strategy is developed within the first 48 hours of an operation.

Once the need for reunification services is identified, the Reunification lead collects information, determines the Reunification strategy for the operation and coordinates with applicable functions and support services.

3.1 Collecting Relevant Information

At the onset of a disaster, the Reunification lead begins obtaining information about levels of impact, disaster type, scope, scale, timing, number of people evacuated, volume of calls that first responders are receiving about individuals who are unaccounted for. These determinations allow for more accurate service delivery planning and Reunification staffing. If an evacuation is occurring, ensure that Government Operations is aware and included in strategy conversations. The relevant government jurisdiction is responsible for determining an appropriate evacuation strategy.

3.2 Determining Reunification Strategy

Time is a crucial factor in initiating effective Reunification services. A Reunification strategy can vary in size and scope and should always be scalable and flexible in nature. Using the preliminary information gleaned at the onset of a disaster, the Reunification lead works with the External Relations assistant director and the relevant government jurisdiction or partner to determine if an applicable local or state plan for reunification exists. The Reunification lead keeps the Mass Care chief informed of the strategy. If a plan exists, the Reunification lead works with the relevant government jurisdiction to facilitate its execution. If a plan does not exist, the Reunification lead works with the relevant government jurisdiction to develop a strategy that is appropriate for that disaster.

Considerations for the Reunification strategy, which should be integrated into the operational Service Delivery Plan:

- Reunification need (as determined in section 2.1);
- Prioritization of services;
- Table of organization;
- Applicable partners;
- Material needs;
- Communications plan;
 - Public;
 - Community partners;
 - Relevant government jurisdiction;
- Information and data sharing;
- Gaps in Reunification services;
- Legal authorities for reunification and agencies designated as responsible.

The Reunification Strategy Template found in the [Job Tool: Reunification Lead](#) on [The Exchange](#) can be used to help develop the reunification strategy.

4. Resourcing the Reunification Strategy

Standard

Staff is planned and requested for a minimum of three days (the next 72 hours).

Following the development of a Reunification strategy, it is important that the Reunification function be properly staffed and resourced. The Reunification lead works with relevant functions to request the appropriate types of workers to address the reunification priorities, acquire and receive all of the appropriate resources, and request an event be posted on the Safe and Well website.

4.1 Acquiring Staff

The Reunification lead requests staff, keeping in mind the specific needs of the population. Depending on size and scope of the operation, additional staff may be recruited, as needed. The Reunification lead must also be aware that he or she might need to assign an experienced Reunification worker to a state-led Reunification strike team.

The composition of staff could include the following:

- Reunification task force liaison - if activated;
- Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator (need determined by Call Center Manager);
- Virtual Reunification Call Center Subject Matter Expert (need determined by Call Center Manager);
- Reunification field supervisor and/or Reunification site supervisor;
- Reunification field worker and/or Reunification site worker:
 - Bilingual – based on population demographics;
 - Event based volunteers;
 - Community partners - local organizations like a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT);
 - National partners – National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s Team Adam, FEMA Corps, etc.

Event based volunteers and community partners may be used as Reunification workers once they have passed an approved background check.

4.2 Acquiring Material Resources

Once the Reunification strategy is developed, the Reunification lead ensures that all Reunification supervisors and workers are adequately resourced with a laptop and a cell phone. It is recommended that all core materials are printed (except the [Helper Tool](#)) and loaded onto a flash drive for each Reunification field or site team. A [Disaster Requisition Form \(F6409\)](#), located on The Exchange, is used to request these materials. When technology materials are not available early in the response, Reunification responders will use appropriate print material.

4.3 Receiving Staff and Material Resources

Each Reunification supervisor is responsible for ensuring that all Reunification staff check in with Staffing, receive an orientation to the operation and a job induction, and understand their roles. It is important to create, share and publish the Operation and Function Table of Organization for all staff to reference. Each worker should know who their supervisor is and the escalation path for any issues they need help with. All workers

should have access to the incident action plan.

4.4 Requesting a Designated Event on Safe and Well

If Safe and Well has been selected as a Reunification website for the operation, a designated event facilitates registration for those individuals or organizations who are seeking to use the site (although any individual or entity could always register under “other” or “otro”). A designated event will also enable reporting for the event. For more detailed information, see the [Job Tool: Safe and Well Event Creation](#) and [Job Tool: Reunification Report Creation](#).

5. Promoting Reunification Services

Standard

Reunification services are promoted at all applicable sites.

Reunification systems and information are only useful if the public is aware of their existence. If included in the Reunification strategy, targeted outreach to the public, community partners and Red Cross service delivery sites help ensure that clients are informed and know how to seek Reunification services.

5.1 Promoting Reunification Services with the Public

The Reunification lead works with the Public Affairs lead to create public messaging. This messaging must be created in coordination with the relevant government jurisdiction and community partners. It is important to ensure that the public is aware of the reunification system of the operation. Creating awareness and understanding through providing specific information is critical.

Facilitating client access to communication services at a service delivery site, call center, or within the community will help expedite the reunification process. This communication must be accessible to everyone, including individuals with functional and access needs and people with disabilities.

Considerations for public messaging:

- Information about the applicable reunification systems used during the operation:
 - [Safe and Well website](#);
 - National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Unaccompanied Minor’s Registry or FEMA’s National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System;
 - [The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children Memorandum of Understanding](#) located in the [Community Partnerships MOU Index](#) and the [Federal Emergency Management Agency Memorandum of Agreement](#) located in the [Government MOU Index](#) on [The Exchange](#) provides more information and details.
- Reminder for individuals and organizations to contact their loved ones;
- Service delivery site locations;
- Reunification Call Center phone number (if applicable);
- Talking points to provide to community partners;
- Talking points to non-disaster relief operation staff – front-desk workers, call center agents, Board of Directors, non-impacted chapters, biomed, SAF, etc.

5.2 Promoting Reunification Services with the Relevant Government Jurisdiction

Working with Government Operations, the Reunification lead ensures that Reunification services are widely known and understood by government partners. The Reunification lead ensures that promotional activities

occur at all service delivery sites and that the government liaisons are well-versed in the Reunification strategy and services to communicate out at the Emergency Operations Center.

5.3 Promoting Reunification Services with Community Partners

The Reunification lead works with the Community Partnerships lead to ensure proper communication amongst community partners. Consistent and efficient communication with all community partners (non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, private sector, etc.) keeps partners informed, ensures coordination of services and avoids duplication of efforts.

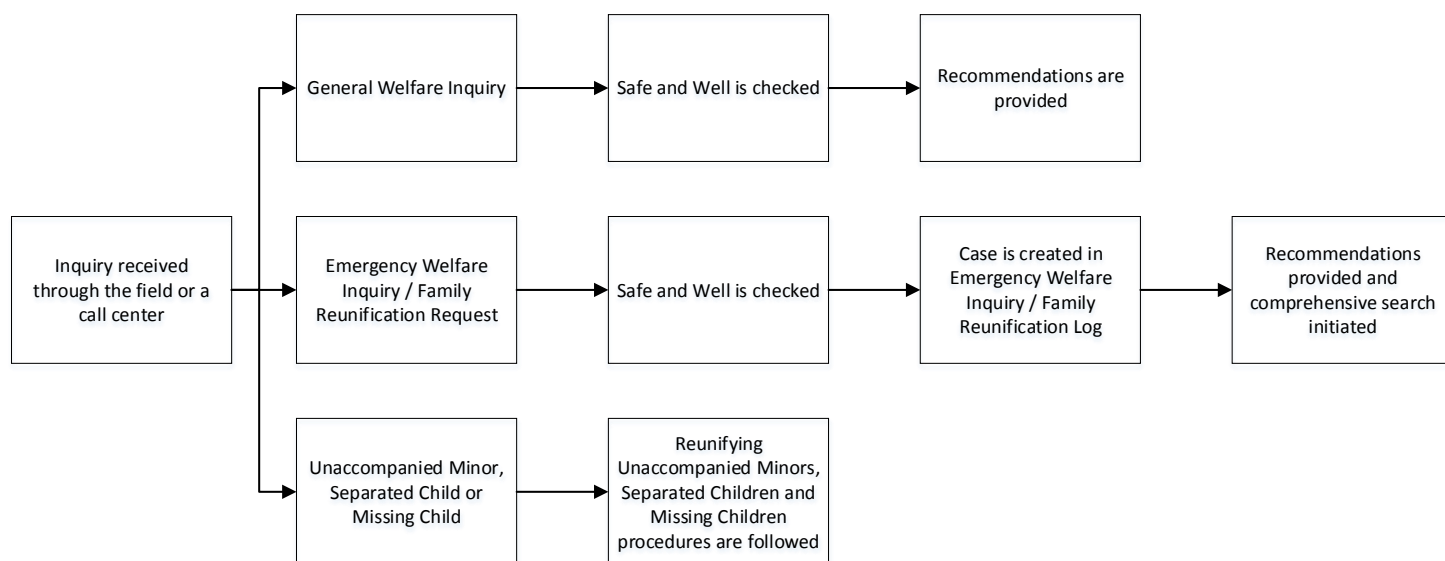
6. Providing Reunification Services

Standard

- Information on [Safe and Well Registration Forms](#) must be entered into [Safe and Well website](#) within 24 hours of form completion.
- Emergency welfare inquiries, family reunification requests and unaccompanied minors receive highest priority.
- Follow-up always occurs with emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests.
- General welfare inquiries are provided with appropriate recommendations if sought person is not found in Safe and Well.

Reunification services may be provided in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of the clients, the operation and the types of inquiries received. It is important to remember that reunification service requests could also occur during non-operational periods through a local chapter or Red Cross dispatch. The process for resolving such requests are the same.

The diagram below depicts the overall process for inquiries:



6.1 Managing General Welfare Inquiries

Reunification workers provide individuals who have a general welfare inquiry or would like to list themselves as 'Safe and Well' with a means to register and search. If connectivity exists, Reunification workers ensure that a

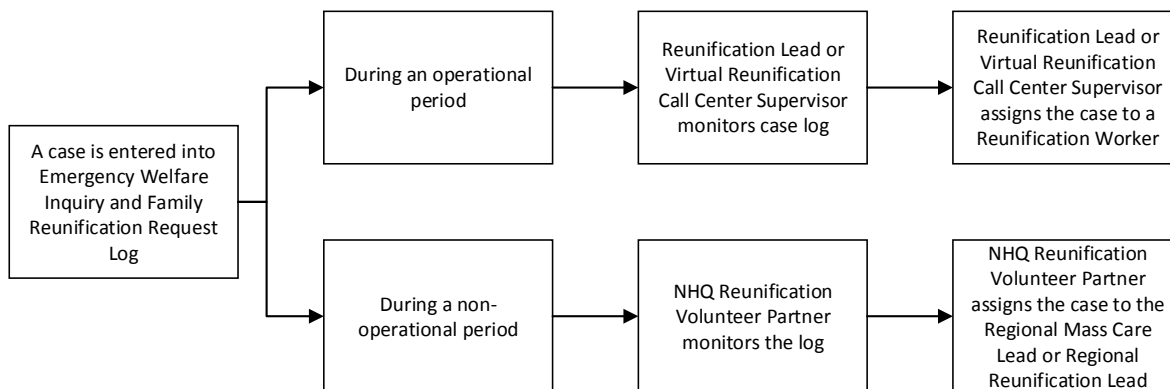
laptop or phone is available for using safe and well. In the event that there is no connectivity, a Reunification worker provides a paper registration form or a piece of paper and a pen for the individual to write down their information, then either arranges for the data to be entered into the website as soon as possible or enters registration data into the [Safe and Well Helper Tool](#) for upload into the system. Information on [Safe and Well Registration Forms](#) must be entered into [Safe and Well website](#) within 24 hours of form completion.

If an individual is unable to find their loved one through a Safe and Well search, the Reunification worker provides recommendations on other information sources. The [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#) provides further details on general welfare inquiry registration/search.

6.2 Managing Emergency Welfare Inquiries and Family Reunification Requests

6.2.1 Creating Case Log and Assignment

The Red Cross could receive an emergency welfare inquiry or family reunification request during operational and non-operational periods. During a non-operational period, inquiries could come in through a local chapter or call center related to an incident or event that the Red Cross is not involved in. Chapter or call center workers enter the information into the log. Refer to the [Job Tool: Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log User Guide](#) (in development). The diagram below depicts the process for case management.



On a daily basis, the national headquarters Reunification volunteer partner monitors the Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log (in development) for any new cases. During an operational period, the call center workers or Reunification workers enter the information into the Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log (in development). According to the staff to case ratio, the Reunification lead assigns one or multiple Reunification workers to each case.

6.2.2 Conducting comprehensive search in relation to Emergency Welfare Inquiries and Family Reunification Requests

Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request cases are considered the most serious inquiries and receive top priority. The Reunification worker or the call center worker has the authority to determine that classification. Considerations for an emergency welfare inquiry include the following:

- Medical need;
- Cognitive or mental health disorder;
- Functional or access need;
- Disability.

If the seeker indicates the person sought has an existing condition that may put them at risk, a case is created. If in doubt, a case should be created. Each emergency welfare inquiry case is assigned a Reunification worker. For

more detailed instruction on how to resolve a case, see the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#).

6.3 Call Center Operations

When a disaster-specific call center is activated, a team of Virtual Reunification Subject Matter Experts, led by a Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator, might be assigned to assist with managing and/or assigning emergency welfare inquiries or family reunification requests to the field. Refer to the Call Center Operations Standards and Procedures and job tools (in development) for detailed guidance on this process.

6.4 Tracking Patients

Patient Connection is a Red Cross program operating in Illinois, Northwest Indiana and the Greater Massachusetts area. Patient Connection is activated when a local incident sends 10 or more people to hospitals. A call center is activated so people may inquire about those who may have been hospitalized. Patient Connection call agents work confidentially with hospitals and the state Department of Public Health to collect and compile names and physical descriptions of patients. Through the Patient Connection database, call center agents compare this information to descriptions given by callers. If there is a match, callers are directed to the hospital where an individual matching the description they provided may be located.

Triggers for the utilization of Patient Connection:

- Transportation accidents including mass transit, aviation and traffic emergencies; the Mass Casualty Incident Response Guide (in development) provides more information;
- Building fires and collapses;
- All mass casualty incidents where ten or more people are transported to various hospitals;
- Some large community and athletic events like a marathon – in these cases it serves as precautionary measure.

For more information, contact patientconnection@redcross.org.

6.5 Completing International Requests

The [Safe and Well website](#) is always on and open to anyone with access to the site, including those who are overseas. However, there are additional services offered through the global Red Cross movement and other external organizations.

Nature of request	Appropriate referral
U.S. military stationed or deployed overseas	Service to Armed Forces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Red Cross Emergency Communications Center 1-877-272-7337
U.S. citizen abroad	Department of State Office of Overseas Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From U.S. or Canada – 1-888-407-4747 • From overseas – 1-202-501-4444
Non-U.S. citizen abroad	If the request is originated in the US: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Reconnecting Families Inquiry Form or • 844-782-9441 If the request is originated outside of the US: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICRC RFL Online Tracing; Online tracing search (only available in limited situations and

	<p>contexts) or:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the country tracing unit where the caller is located
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6.5.1 Partnering with the Mexican Red Cross

The Red Cross and the Mexican Red Cross are partners, and the [Safe and Well website](#) is the Reunification system of choice for disasters in Mexico.

6.6 Using Disaster Mental Health Resources

Reunification workers witness and interact with people under extreme stress, which can be emotionally trying for workers. The Reunification lead works closely with the Disaster Mental Health lead to ensure that reunification clients and workers have access to Disaster Mental Health services. Reunification is important because people rely on social connections with other people to feel safe and secure in the world, an important indicator for individual and community resilience. When loved ones are unexpectedly separated, they lose their sense of safety and predictability. For children, their most important relationships are with their caregivers. Additionally, Reunification workers witness and interact with people under extreme stress, which can be emotionally trying for workers. The [Disaster Mental Health Standards and Procedures](#) provides additional information.

6.7 Continuing to Establish Situational Awareness

The Reunification lead continues to engage with all functional leads and Reunification partners from other organizations and agencies to ensure that he or she is aware of the scope of the Reunification need. Additionally, the Red Cross Digital Operations Center provides assistance with trends to help anticipate public need.

7. Managing Special Situations

<p>Standard</p> <p>Unaccompanied minor, separated child and missing child procedure is adhered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Cross workers working with local authorities to address reunification requests by following the Managing Reunification Requests from Authorities Process section below.

Due to the sensitive nature of reunification, the Red Cross could receive Reunification requests from relevant government jurisdictions or community partners. Every inquiry must be managed through a consistent process across the country to protect the integrity of the program.

7.1 Working with Children

Amid the chaos of a disaster, there is an increased possibility for children to become separated from their parents or legal guardians. This separation could occur at any service delivery site or because children who are located in a child care educational, medical, juvenile justice, recreational, or other facility may be unable to reconnect with their parents or legal guardian.

7.1.2 Reunifying Unaccompanied Minors, Separated Children and Missing Children

Reunifying unaccompanied minors and separated children with their parents or legal guardians in the aftermath of a disaster is a priority. Accomplishing this goal requires the efficient, coordinated use of resources and efforts from law enforcement and community partners. Although care of unaccompanied minors and separated children is usually the responsibility of government agencies and other child welfare agencies, the high visibility of the Red Cross during times of disaster may sometimes result in these children arriving at Red Cross service delivery sites. Additionally, missing children might be reported at a Red Cross service delivery site or call center. Law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children are responsible for searching for a missing child. The Red Cross does not assist with those cases unless asked to by law enforcement. Refer to the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#) for detailed steps on how to manage such a situation.

7.2 Recognizing Human Trafficking

In the aftermath of a disaster, emotional and financial repercussions may leave individuals vulnerable to recruitment by human traffickers. Human traffickers may also take advantage of a disaster environment to engage in related criminal activities such as the sale of children for illegal adoption.

Red Cross clients may be vulnerable. Human traffickers use promises of security, housing, jobs, money, or items of monetary value to recruit victims. Children who are separated from their families are particularly vulnerable to abduction by traffickers; a client of any age, race, or gender may be a target. Refer to the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#) which includes procedures for recognizing and reporting human trafficking.

7.3 Managing Reunification Requests from Authorities

In general, personally-identifiable information about Red Cross clients is confidential and should be handled according to the Red Cross's [Protecting Personal Information Policy](#) located on [The Exchange](#). There are times, however, when sharing basic client information with local law enforcement, emergency management, or other disaster relief organizations is essential to help clients reunite with their loved ones. When individuals register on the [Safe & Well website](#), the registration introductory statement notes that their information may be disclosed to other organizations for reunification purposes. This means that if local law enforcement, emergency management, or another disaster relief organization seeks information about clients for reunification purposes, reunification workers should try to accommodate the request following the process in the [Job Tool: Reunification Services](#).

7.4 Responding to a Subpoena

If a subpoena or court order is provided for non-public facing information about a Safe and Well registrant that is not of a reunification nature, the following procedures should be followed:

- a) Subpoena is accepted;
- b) The appropriate Red Cross officials are notified and respond in a timely manner. (Be sure to check the subpoena's time requirement.);
- c) Reunification lead is notified;
- d) Operations assistant director and national headquarters Reunification liaison are notified.

7.5 Understanding the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

Red Cross workers follow the Red Cross [Protecting Personal Information Policy](#). However, a Red Cross worker is able to obtain private information since the Red Cross is exempt from the provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in the conduct of disaster relief operations.

As stated in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the following [HIPAA regulations](#) applies to HIPAA covered entities:

Use and disclosures for disaster relief purposes.

A covered entity may use or disclose protected health information to a public or private entity authorized by law or by its charter to assist in disaster relief efforts, for the purpose of coordinating with such entities the uses or disclosures permitted by paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section. (HIPAA 45 C.F.R. § 164.510(b (4))”

However, just because a Reunification worker presents a HIPAA letter does not guarantee cooperation from a medical entity. Requests for information from HIPAA covered entities might best be made through Disaster Health Services, which has the professional standing and knowledge to best handle these requests. An explanation for HIPAA covered entities and their ability to disclose information to the Red Cross is explained in the [HIPAA Explanation Letter](#) found in the [Disaster Health Services Toolkit](#) on [The Exchange](#). Additional information can be found on the [HIPAA website](#).

7.6 Responding to National Transportation Safety Board Events

The Family Assistance Act notes that when a legislated National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) event occurs, the Red Cross is legally obligated to refrain from duplicating efforts of a reunification nature. Public Affairs must ensure that they push out the reunification system or method designated by the carrier involved in the incident. The Mass Casualty Incident Response Guide (in development) provides more information.

7.7 Reporting Fatalities and Injuries

The Red Cross does not make notifications or confirmations of injuries or fatalities. When a person being sought has been injured or is listed as deceased, the Reunification worker notifies the Reunification lead who then contacts the authorities at the coroner or medical examiner’s office to seek guidance on the appropriate course of action.

8. Scale-down

Standard

- Proper communication of a Reunification scale-down must occur across all functions.
- Paper [Safe and Well Registration Forms](#) and [Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Forms](#) must be disposed of to protect private client information.
- All [Unaccompanied Minor and Separated Child Report Forms](#) must be sent to the applicable regional office and to the national headquarters Reunification liaison and kept on file for five years.

To ensure a smooth scale-down process for reunification services, ensure that relevant functions are informed, staff and materials are managed appropriately, and information is provided in the after action/post event review.

8.1 Determining if Reunification Services are Still Required

The decision to scale down Reunification services is a decision that occurs at operations headquarters with input from the Reunification lead, Mass Care chief, regional leadership, Government Operations and the relevant government jurisdictions. The Reunification lead should be well-versed on the status of all cases through their established communication plan with the Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator and Reunification supervisors. The [Job Tool: Reunification Lead](#) provides more information on how to scale-down Reunification services.

Considerations for scaling down could include the following:

- Registrations/searches on Safe and Well have decreased;
- Emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests have been resolved;
- Unaccompanied minors/separated children have been reunited or transferred to the appropriate authorities;
- The relevant government jurisdiction has agreed to take over responsibility for the reunification strategy (not including Safe and Well).

8.2 Coordinating with Relevant Functions

Once a decision has been made to scale down Reunification services, the Reunification lead is responsible for communicating the plan to pertinent groups, including Staffing and External Relations, the Mass Care chief and all leads working in the Operations section. The [Job Tool: Reunification Lead](#) provides more information on how to coordinate with other functions.

8.3 Scaling Down Services

The Reunification lead works with the Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator and Reunification supervisors to ensure that all emergency welfare inquiries and family reunification requests are closed in the Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log and that the paperwork for unaccompanied minors and separated children is up to date. The Reunification lead works with the region or relevant government jurisdiction to develop plans to transition Reunification services, if necessary.

8.4 Collecting Material Resources

All unused brochures and banners must be returned to the Reunification lead or the appropriate regional office for proper disposition. [Safe and Well Registration Forms](#) and [Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Forms](#) must be disposed of to protect private client information. All technology equipment including laptops and cell phones must be returned to operations headquarters. All [Unaccompanied Minor and Separated Child Report Forms](#), are sent to the applicable regional office and to the national headquarters Reunification liaison and kept on file for five years.

8.5 Transferring or Out-Process Staff

The Reunification lead is responsible for collaborating with other functions at operations headquarters to determine when to transfer or out-process staff. The [Job Tool: Reunification Lead](#) provides detailed instructions on transferring or out-processing staff whether it is done when services are being scaled down or as part of staff rotations. The Reunification lead is also responsible for completing performance evaluations for all Reunification supervisors (except the Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator who will be evaluated by the Call Center Manager), and signing off on all Reunification workers. The Reunification supervisor is responsible for ensuring performance evaluations are completed for all workers.

8.6 Completing After-Action Reviews

The Reunification lead should discuss the operation with the Virtual Reunification Call Center coordinator and each Reunification supervisor, and include successes and concerns in the Red Cross operational after action report in addition to any relevant after action reports with the jurisdiction. This information is used to improve the Reunification program through lessons learned.

References

Applicable MOUs/Letters

[National Center for Missing and Exploited Children MOU](#)

[FEMA MOU](#)

Red Cross Mexico MOU

Amateur Radio Operators MOU

[HIPPA Letter](#)

Standards and Procedures

[CAS 2.0 Standards and Procedures](#)

[Sheltering Program Standards and Procedures](#)

[Disaster Spiritual Care Standards and Procedures](#)

[Disaster Mental Health Services Standards and Procedures](#)

[Disaster Workforce Management Handbook](#)

[Disaster Health Services Standards and Procedures](#)

[Mission Card Standards and Procedures](#)

[Operations Planning Standards and Procedures](#)

[Event Based Volunteer Engagement Toolkit](#)

[Virtual Assignments Standards and Procedures](#)

Job Tools

[Job Tool: Reunification Lead](#)

[Job Tool: Reunification Services](#)

[Job Tool: Safe and Well Event Creation](#)

[Job Tool: Reunification in Isolated Situations](#)

[Job Tool: Comprehensive Reunification Call Center Script](#)

[Job Tool: Safe and Well User Guide](#)

[Job Tool: Reunification Leave-behind Note Template](#)

Job Tool: Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Log User Guide (in development)

Job Tool: Virtual Reunification Call Center Support (in development)

Forms

[Helper Tool](#)

[Safe and Well Registration Form](#)

[Emergency Welfare Inquiry and Family Reunification Request Form](#)
[Unaccompanied Minor and Separated Child Report Form](#)

Promotional Materials

[Safe and Well Wallet Cards](#)
[Safe and Well Brochure](#)
[Be Red Cross Ready Handout](#)

Other

[Disaster Cycle Services Principles](#)
[DCS Job Tools and Forms Index](#)

External

[National Mass Evacuation Tracking System](#)
[Multi-Agency Reunification Services Plan Template](#)
[National Mass Care Strategy \(Reunification\)](#)
[National Response Framework](#)
[ESF #6 Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Temporary Housing and Human Services Annex](#)
[Privacy and Missing Persons after Natural Disasters](#)
[Post-Disaster Reunification of Children: A Nationwide Approach](#)
[HHS ASPR Technical Resources, Assistance Center and Information Exchange \(TRACIE\) Reunification Topic](#)
[Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign](#)
[National Center for Missing and Exploited Children –Disaster Response](#)

External Trainings

DHS Blue Campaign online training