

Statement of Understanding

Between

The American National

Red Cross and

The National Mental

Health Association



**American
Red Cross**

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I. Purpose

The purpose of this Statement of Understanding (SOU) is to create a working relationship between The American National Red Cross (hereinafter referred to as the American Red Cross or the Red Cross) and the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) in preparing for and responding to disaster relief situations at all levels. This agreement provides the broad framework for cooperation between the two organizations in rendering assistance and service to victims of disaster, as well as other services for which cooperation may be mutually beneficial.

II. Concept of Operations

Each party to this SOU is a separate and independent organization. As such, each organization retains its own identity in providing service, and each organization is responsible for establishing its own policies and financing its own activities.

III. Definition of Disaster

A disaster is an occurrence such as a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, earthquake, volcanic eruption, drought, blizzard, pestilence, famine, fire, explosion, building collapse, transportation accident, or other situation that causes human suffering or creates human needs that the victims cannot alleviate without assistance.

IV. Authority of the American Red Cross

In providing disaster relief, the American Red Cross has both a legal and a moral mandate that it has neither the authority nor the right to surrender. The American Red Cross has both the power and the duty to act in disaster, and our prompt action is clearly expected and supported by the public.

The American Red Cross authority to perform disaster services was formalized when the organization was chartered by the Congress of the United States in 1905. Among other provisions, this charter charged the Red Cross—

to continue and carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply the same in mitigating the sufferings caused by

pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same.

-U.S. Congress, act of January 5, 1905, as amended, 36 U.S.C.

The authority of the American Red Cross to provide disaster services was reaffirmed by federal law in the 1974 Disaster Relief Act (Public Law 93-288) and in the 1988 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

V. Organization of the American Red Cross

The national headquarters of the American Red Cross is located in Washington, D.C. National headquarters is responsible for implementing policies and regulations that govern American Red Cross activities, and for giving administrative and technical supervision and guidance to the chartered units. Chartered units include chapters and Blood Services regions. The Board of Governors has delegated to the duly-constituted volunteer governing board of each chartered unit the authority and responsibility for: (a) governance of the chartered unit, (b) delivery of authorized services in the territorial jurisdiction of the chartered unit, and (c) meeting corporate obligations, in conformance with and subject to the limitations stated in corporate regulations.

The American Red Cross provides the following five (5) services: Armed Forces Emergency Services, Biomedical Services, Disaster Services, Health and Safety Services, and International Services.

Each chartered unit has the authority and responsibility for carrying out the purposes of the American Red Cross, for delivering local American Red Cross services, and for meeting corporate obligations within the territorial jurisdiction assigned in conformity with corporate regulations. The chartered units (“chapters”) coordinate their work through voluntary state councils. There are more than 1300 chapters across the United States.

Each chapter is responsible for providing disaster planning, preparedness, education, and response. Each chapter has a disaster leadership team or committee.