

Disaster Spiritual Care



**American
Red Cross**



American Red Cross Mission

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.



We respond to an emergency every 8 minutes

From small house fires to multi-state natural disasters, the American Red Cross goes wherever we are needed, so people can have clean water, safe shelter, hot meals, disaster mental health, disaster spiritual care, and disaster health services.



Bringing help & hope

- Nearly 64,000 disaster responses yearly
- 95% of our disaster relief workers are volunteers.
- 90% of the disasters we respond to are home fires.



Our Individual Disaster Care (IDC) volunteers in health, mental health, and disaster spiritual care provide support to individuals and families affected by disaster.



The unique role of the Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care provider is to assist people in drawing upon their own spiritual resources – values and faith – in the midst of their pain, regardless of their faith or belief tradition.



Disaster Spiritual Care Community Outreach

DSC provides faith based groups with information, support, and if necessary, coordination for community memorial services.

DSC liaisons with local faith communities to aid in recovery and resilience.



When your faith tradition coincides with that of the client's:

- Interact according to what is appropriate, considering the particular disaster situation and faith tradition.

When your faith tradition and the client's faith tradition do not align:

- Your primary role is to provide basic appropriate and respectful disaster spiritual care.



We also care for each other

- Red Cross volunteers are vulnerable to empathy fatigue and compassion fatigue.
- The cost of “caring” may be accelerated by the disaster intensity.
- Volunteers are at risk just by listening to stories.



Who can be a Disaster Spiritual Care volunteer?

- An endorsed professional chaplain
- A board-certified chaplain
- An endorsed leader of a faith community
- A spiritual care volunteer approved by a National VOAD



What do DSC responders do?

- Basic needs first (food, water, clothes, shelter)
- Listen and comfort (active listening)
- Psychological first aid
- Assess needs by asking, e.g., do you have a faith tradition that supports you during a crisis? Is there a local clergy or faith representative we can connect you with?
- Liaison with and support local faith communities, as needed
- Provide direct spiritual support
- Provide/resource religious supplies for those who request them
- Participate with Red Cross integrated care and integrated care and condolence teams

When and where do we respond?

- Home fire
- Transportation or other mass-casualty incident
- In shelters (hurricane, tornado, flood, snowstorm)
- To accompany a Red Cross volunteer on a condolence call
- Any incident to which we are asked by Red Cross to respond



Training requirement

All Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responders must complete:

- Disaster Cycle Services: An Overview
- Disaster Spiritual Care: An Introduction
- Disaster Spiritual Care: Fundamentals
- Psychological First-Aid



We have an agreement with national partners

Because spirituality is very personal, and because our clients are vulnerable, Red Cross (in partnership with National VOAD) volunteers must be able and willing to support someone from any or no faith without injecting their own beliefs.



This is in keeping with our Red Cross values of:

Humanity
Impartiality
Neutrality
Independence
Voluntary Service
Unity
Universality



We must be able to provide religiously-unbiased spiritual support

Red Cross requires:

- The ability to provide disaster spiritual care to individuals from a diverse range of beliefs and faith communities including but not limited to someone who is Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Wiccan, Sikh, Hindu, etc.
- The ability to provide impartial disaster spiritual care to individuals who profess no faith.
- The ability to respond to diverse multi-cultural needs – without regard to nationality, race, religious beliefs, physical/emotional disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class or political opinions.

We must also possess:

- The ability to care ethically, including respecting confidentiality and boundaries.
- The ability to assess needs and make referrals to other disaster spiritual care providers when indicated.
- The ability to assess needs and make referrals to mental health providers when indicated.



And if deployed to a disaster:

The ability to work in a chaotic and rapidly-changing environment, eat and sleep as conditions allow, respect team members who have different work habits than yours, turn in statistics in a timely manner, and be willing to share in navigating and driving tasks.



Whether helping one displaced family or thousands, providing disaster spiritual care and comfort to an ill or injured service member or veteran, it is through the efforts of ordinary people that American Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care responders can do extraordinary things.



Questions?

