

Ready to Respond

Part 1: Building a Disaster-Ready Organization

Disaster Preparedness Training Series

Practical Guidance for Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery for Georgia Domestic Violence Programs

Presented by Jennifer Thomas, LMSW and Jenny Aszman, LMSW | Hosted by Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV)

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Background

- **National Guidance** - NNEDV Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Disaster Response Collaborative
- **Georgia Adaptation** - Adapted by GCADV for Georgia's context and systems
- **Field Experience** - Informed by advocates, directors, and community partners

READY TO RESPOND

Practical Guidance for Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery for Georgia Domestic Violence Programs

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Funding Acknowledgement

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- Its contents are those of the presenters and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACF, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

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We Are Building on Existing Expertise

- Today is an opportunity to learn from the resource and from one another
- Many of you have already navigated hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, prolonged outages, pandemics, and other emergencies
- You do not need to become an emergency management expert.
- You are bringing expertise in survivors, services, your community, and your organization.

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Training Series Overview

- **Session 1:** Building a Disaster-Ready Organization
- **Session 2:** Leading During a Disaster
- **Session 3:** Recovering From a Disaster
- Regional in-person scenario trainings

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Why This Matters for DV Programs

- **Survivors' needs continue**
 - Violence and instability may increase as ordinary resources become harder to reach.
- **The program is also impacted**
 - Facilities, transportation, staffing, utilities and communication may all be disrupted
- **Staff are affected personally, too**
 - They may be supporting survivors while navigating their own emergencies and family needs.

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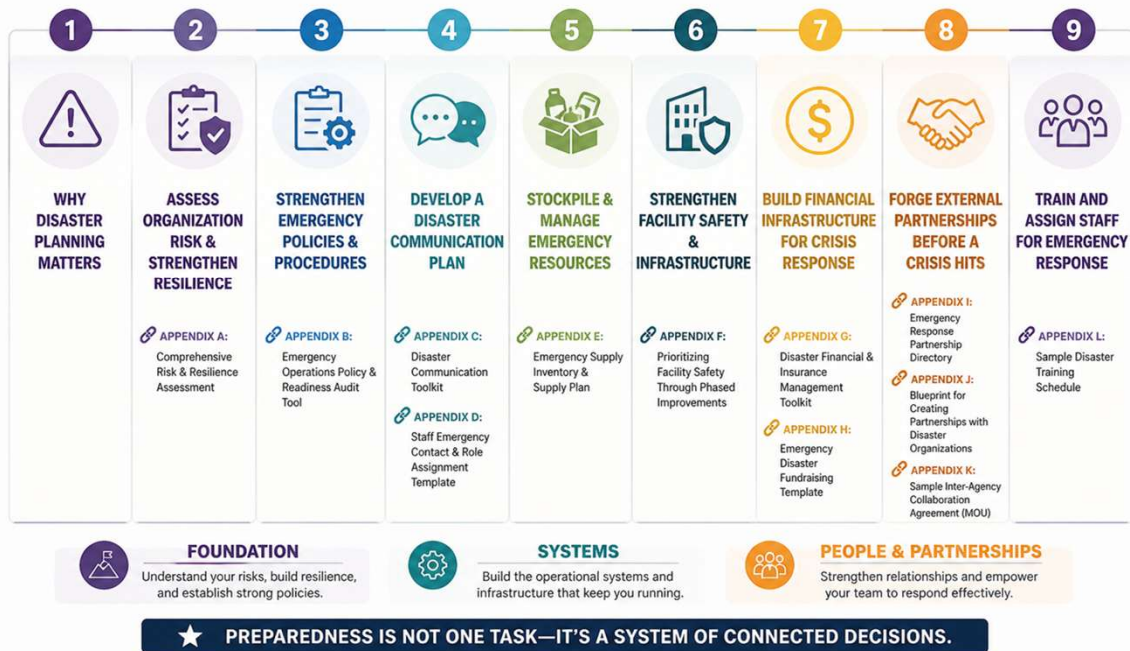
Guiding Principles for DV Programs

- Survivor self-determination
- Confidentiality
- Trauma-informed practice
- Equity and accessibility
- Staff well-being
- Collaboration

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PART 1: BUILDING A DISASTER-READY ORGANIZATION

Nine Essential Steps to Strengthen Your Organization Before Disaster Strikes



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Starting Reflection

Where is your organization starting?

- Plan – Do you have one?
- Update – When was it last revised?
- Practice – Have staff seen or tested it?
- Readiness – What feels strongest or least tested?

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The Importance of Disaster Planning

- Natural disasters and severe weather events have become more frequent, intense, and unpredictable
- Georgia experienced 134 billion-dollar disasters between 1980-2024
- Survivor needs continue even when services are disrupted
- Operational challenges become safety issues

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Creating a Disaster-Ready Organization

- Understand risks
- Maintain clear, accessible policies
- Ensure role clarity
- Build redundancy
- Be flexible
- Cultivate strong community partnerships

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Your Unique Reality

- Planning must reflect real conditions, including the most likely disaster in your region
- Past experiences inform planning
 - What went well?
 - What felt hardest or unclear?

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What Would Disrupt Your Organization First?

- What is your most likely primary risk?
- What secondary disruption would create the biggest challenge?
- Power?
- Water?
- Roads?
- Staffing?
- Communication?
- Supplies?
- Technology?

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Key Takeaway

- Planning must match real risk
 - Generic plans often fail in practice
 - Preparation should reflect likely scenarios
- Preparedness is not about predicting every scenario. It is about building the capacity to respond with clarity, care, and confidence when the unexpected occurs.***

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Assessing Risk Through Two Lenses

Organizational Risk

- Primary hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and wildfires
- Secondary disruptions, Power, water, technology, and communication failures
- Facility and utility vulnerabilities
- Communication and service continuity
- Financial and organizational resilience

Survivor Access and Staff Capacity

- Transportation and fuel access
- Safe, accessible, and affirming placements
- Medication, refrigeration, and health needs
- Language, disability, and pet access
- Staff availability and backup coverage

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Appendix A

Appendix A: Comprehensive Risk & Resilience Assessment

- Identify likely hazards and disruptions
- Assess existing protections and gaps
- Prioritize the most significant risks
- Choose three next steps

Appendix A: Comprehensive Risk & Resilience Assessment Form

This form helps domestic violence agencies evaluate vulnerabilities, strengthen disaster resilience, and implement proactive measures to protect survivors, staff, and facilities. It should be completed annually—and updated after any major disaster or service disruption. Use this tool to guide agency-wide planning and ensure continuity of trauma-informed, survivor-centered care across all stages of emergency response.

1. Identifying Disaster Risks

Primary Risks – What hazards are likely in your region?

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Hurricanes
- ☐ Floods
- ☐ Tornadoes
- ☐ Wildfires
- ☐ Earthquakes
- ☐ Severe winter storms
- ☐ Extreme heat/cold
- ☐ Public health crises (e.g., pandemics, outbreaks)
- ☐ Hazardous material spills (chemical/gas)
- ☐ Civil unrest or community violence
- ☐ Terrorism or mass violence
- ☐ Public infrastructure failure (power grid, water, cell service)
- ☐ Long-duration displacement (>30 days)
- ☐ Other: _____

Secondary Risks – What disruptions could follow?

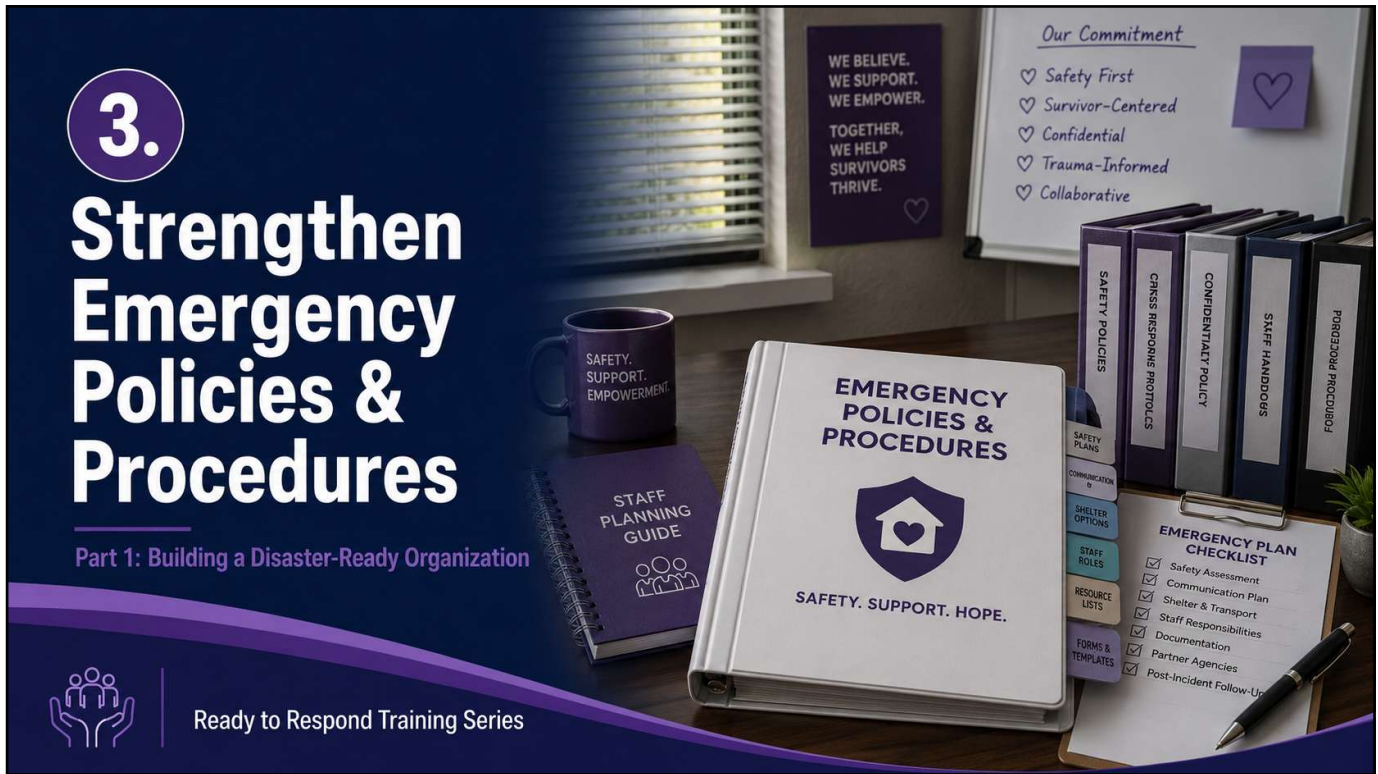
- ☐ Power outages
- ☐ Water contamination or shortage
- ☐ Road closures (impacting access)
- ☐ Food or medication supply shortages
- ☐ Technology failures (internet, phone, database)
- ☐ Survivor isolation from services
- ☐ Delayed grant reimbursements or funding loss
- ☐ Increased service demand beyond capacity
- ☐ Public transit shutdown
- ☐ Other: _____

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Remember

- You cannot prepare for every potential scenario
- Resilience is built through systems you create
- Planning requires redundancy and depends on coordination
 - Build support around staff: backup roles, alternative communication, supplies, spending authority, safe locations, and external relationship

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Policies & Procedures

- Plans must be usable in real time and adaptable to different disasters
- Simplicity and flexibility
- Trauma-informed
- Support staff wellness

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Policy Areas to Prioritize

- Personnel support and staffing expectations
- Survivor confidentiality and data protection
- Facility operations contingency planning
- Internal and external communication policies
- Legal and regulatory compliance

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What Makes a Plan Work

- Clear activation triggers
- Defined decision authority and communication plan
- Simple structure and outline of procedures
- Staff clarity and training

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Pressure-Test Your Plan

If the Executive Director were unreachable...

- Who could activate your disaster plan?
- Would staff know where to find it without internet access?
- What decisions could supervisors make independently?
- Where is the biggest policy gap today?

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Appendix B

Appendix B: Emergency Operations Policy & Readiness Audit Tool

Supports review of existing emergency policies and plans to identify gaps in activation, staffing, communication, survivor safety, continuity, and recovery procedures.

Appendix B: Emergency Operations Policy & Readiness Audit Tool

This policy and audit tool helps domestic violence programs evaluate whether key disaster-related policies are up to date, trauma-informed, and compliant with federal, state, and funder expectations. Use this tool annually, during policy development, and after any disaster response.

How to Use This Tool

- Use this tool when developing or updating your Emergency Operations Policy
- Review each section with leadership and relevant staff across departments
- Use the audit table to assess which policy and procedure areas are complete, in progress, or need to be initiated
- Document accountability and timelines for each item
- Align your policies with the appendices included throughout this guide

Sections to Include in Your Emergency Operations Policy

Each section below outlines the critical content your agency should consider including in its formal emergency operations policy. Tailor these elements to your program's size, structure, and capacity.

1. Policy Activation and Decision Making

- List of positions authorized to activate the disaster plan
- Conditions that trigger activation (e.g., severe weather alerts, facility damage)
- Benchmarks for decision-making at 48, 24, and 12 hours pre-disaster
- Chain of command and authority delegation protocols

[Appendix: Emergency Decision-Making Matrix](#)

[Appendix: Disaster Response Log](#)

2. Emergency Communication Protocols

- Internal staff communication procedures during disaster activation
- Trauma-informed communication with survivors, including preferences
- Public/media messaging protocols and designated spokesperson(s)
- Use of communication tools (phone trees, Signal, satellite phones, etc.)

[Appendix: Disaster Communication Toolkit](#)

3. Staff Roles & Operational Responsibilities

- Disaster role assignments and backups across departments
- Expectations for leadership, logistics, finance, survivor services, communications, and wellness support
- Template for assigning and documenting roles
- How often will roles and responsibilities be reviewed and updated?

[Appendix: Staff Emergency Contact & Role Assignment Template](#)

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Communication Planning

- A communication plan is an operational safety tool
- The best plans are built before crisis—not during
- People can tolerate uncertainty better when they know how they will receive information and when they will hear from you again
- Breakdowns in communication increase risk

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Focus & Flow Matter

Before – Prepare messages, role clarity, and training

During – Share rapid updates, confirm services, respond to changing conditions

After – Reconnect, recovery updates, communicate needs

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Communication Plan Checklist

- **Staff and leadership:** Senders and channels
- **Survivors:** Safe, consistent information
- **Partners and public:** Authorized spokesperson
- **Crisis line:** Continuity and backup coverage
- **Redundancy:** Another path when the primary communication system fails

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Reflection: When Communication Fails

What communication method does your organization depend on most, and what is your backup if it disappears?

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From the Field

*“After Helene, the most valuable tool I invested in was analog off-grid radios. When the storm hit, every form of communication went down, and I never want to be in a position again where I couldn’t communicate with the shelter or our supervisors. We have since purchased multiple radios, one for each supervisor and one to remain at the shelter. I strongly recommend that every program, and every state partner, invest in at least one.” — **Betty Dell Williams, The Refuge***

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Appendices C & D

Appendix C: Disaster Communication Toolkit

Appendix D: Staff Emergency Contact & Role Assignment Template

Appendix C: Disaster Communication Toolkit

Effective disaster communication must be survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and flexible enough to respond to rapidly changing conditions. This toolkit is organized around the three phases of a disaster (before, during, and after) with guidance and templates for communicating with staff, survivors, and external stakeholders throughout.

Pre-Disaster Communication

Goals: Establish communication tools, clarify roles, and prepare key messages for rapid deployment.

Staff Communication

- Identify and train primary and backup communication leads
- Ensure all staff are trained on communication platforms (phones, encrypted apps, Zello, ~~Google~~ radios)
- Pre-draft key internal messages (activation notices, shift protocols, check-in expectations)
- Print emergency contact lists and protocols for offline access
- Provide clear, repetitive verbal and written updates

Sample Message to Staff: "Hi team, we're monitoring the storm and preparing for activation. Please check in with your status and availability. We'll meet at 3 PM for an update."

Survivor Communication

- Prepare trauma-informed message templates in multiple formats (text, flyers, apps)
- Provide information about evacuation, transportation options, and safety planning in advance
- Translate key messages into top community languages and create visual/audio versions to increase accessibility
- Include language that is welcoming and accessible to everyone and informs them of their rights to services and support
- Ask culturally specific partners to review messaging before finalizing

Sample Message to Survivors: "This may feel overwhelming, and that's okay. You have options. We'll walk through them together."

Public & Partner Messaging

- Draft press releases, donor appeals, and coalition updates in advance
- Assign a media spokesperson and provide talking points
- Coordinate with VOA and community partners for shared messaging and aligned outreach

Communication During a Disaster

Goals: Maintain safety, trust, and continuity of services through clear and frequent updates.

Staff Communication

- Maintain regular (8-12-hour) check-ins using backup tools as needed

Appendix D: Staff Emergency Contact & Role Assignment Template

This template helps domestic violence agencies maintain current emergency contact details and clearly assign disaster roles and responsibilities across the team. Keeping this document up to date ensures coordinated action, quick response, and sustained survivor support throughout all disaster phases. Store this document securely in both digital and printed formats. Review and update quarterly and incorporate into annual disaster training.

Section 1: Agency Emergency Contact Information

Staff Name	Primary Phone	Backup Phone	Email Address	Home Address	Emergency Contact	Last Date Confirmed

Section 2: Emergency Response Role Assignments

Assign primary and backup staff for each disaster response role. Review quarterly and ensure all staff are cross-trained.

Role	Description	Primary Staff	Backup Staff	Role Briefing Completed (Y/N)
Disaster Response Coordination	Activate emergency protocols, oversee agency-wide response, and coordinate with external partners.	Jordan R.	Maya T.	Yes
Operations & Logistics	Manage shelter operations, supply tracking, transportation, and internal systems.			
Finance & Compliance	Approve emergency spending, track expenses, and manage insurance and grants.			
Survivor Services	Ensure continuity of trauma-informed services, relocation support, and survivor advocacy.			

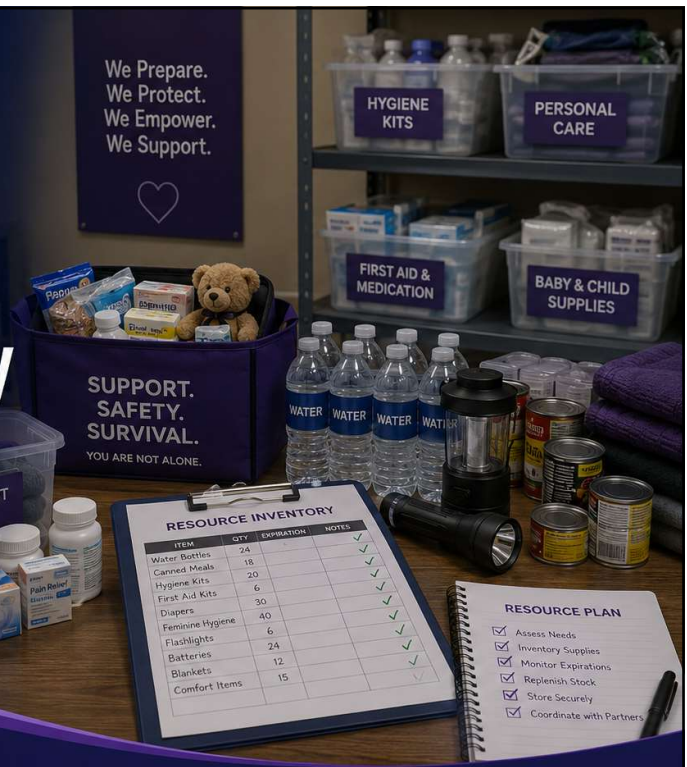
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5. Stockpile & Manage Emergency Resources

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Emergency Resources

- **Maintain a 72-hour supply of essential items for survivors and staff**
 - Water, food, medicine, hygiene supplies
 - Comfort items
 - Power and lighting
 - Communication tools
 - Maintenance tools
- **Include diverse survivor needs**
 - Dietary restrictions, refrigeration for medicine, infant and childcare supplies, accessibility and mobility-related supports

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Resource Systems

- Assign responsibility for quarterly inventory
- Rotate and replenish items before they expire
- Protect supplies from heat, cold, and moisture
- Plan how supplies will be accessed or moved
- Ensure staff know where supplies are

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Appendix E: Emergency Supplies

Appendix E: Emergency Supply Inventory & Supply Plan

Provides a structured inventory for identifying, storing, tracking, rotating, and replenishing emergency supplies, including resources for diverse survivor needs.

Appendix E: Emergency Supply Inventory & Supply Plan

This appendix provides a structured approach to maintaining, tracking, and replenishing emergency supplies to support survivor safety, staff well-being, and service continuity during disasters. It includes inventory checklists, a resupply tracking form, and maintenance protocols. Review and update this plan quarterly and incorporate it into all preparedness drills and facility walk-throughs.

Section 1: 72-Hour Emergency Supply Inventory Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure all essential supplies are stocked for at least 72 hours per person.

General Emergency Supplies

- Flashlights or lanterns (consider rechargeable options or have spare batteries)
- Small solar panels or portable power banks to charge electronics
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio for weather and emergency updates
- Basic tool kit (hammer, screwdriver, pliers, duct tape, utility knife)
- Work gloves
- Headlamps
- Multi-tool and/or Swiss Army knife
- Heavy-duty trash bags
- Lighter and/or matches
- Fire extinguisher
- Plastic bags (sandwich, gallon size)
- Cooler/Ice Chest
- Duct tape, zip ties, rope, cord
- Paper plates, cups, napkins, and plastic utensils

First Aid & Medical Supplies

- First aid kits (including bandages, antiseptics, gloves)
- Emergency medications (pain relievers, antihistamines, wound care)
- Face masks, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes
- Emergency blankets for warmth and shock prevention

Communication & Navigation

- Backup cell phone (prepaid or emergency-use only)
- Whistle (for signaling in case of emergency)
- Paper map of the area (if digital navigation fails)
- Printed and laminated emergency contact list

Shelter & Comfort

- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Emergency ponchos or rain gear
- Extra socks and thermal layers

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6. Strengthen Facility Safety & Infrastructure

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SAFE. SUPPORTED. EMPOWERED.

ESSENTIAL POWER

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Facility Safety

- Assess structural, utility, and grounds risks annually
- Identify safe interior shelter areas
- Prioritize vulnerabilities that could endanger people or interrupt services
- Maintain and test backup power, water, security, and IT systems
- Phase larger improvements over time
- Power, water, HVAC
- Roof, drainage, and trees
- Locks, gates, and security systems
- Generators and manual overrides

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Appendix F: Facility Safety

Appendix F: Prioritizing Facility Safety Through Phased Improvements
Helps programs assess facility vulnerabilities, prioritize improvements, and develop realistic short- and long-term strategies based on available resources.

Appendix F: Prioritizing Facility Safety Through Phased Improvements

This appendix outlines a phased approach to improving facility safety and resilience in domestic violence shelters and advocacy programs. A trauma-informed facility protects not only from physical threats, but also supports emotional safety, confidentiality, and survivor autonomy, especially during disasters. Use the [DF Comprehensive Risk & Resilience Assessment Form](#) to guide priorities. Adapt timelines based on funding, location, and facility type. Each phase builds toward long-term sustainability and service continuity.

Phased Approach to Facility Safety Improvements

Improvements should be approached in **three progressive phases**: addressing urgent safety risks, building operational resilience, and investing in long-term infrastructure.

Phase 1: Addressing Immediate Vulnerabilities (0-6 Months)

Goal: Stabilize the facility and ensure safe operations during immediate threats or outages.

- Conduct comprehensive facility risk assessment
- Repair critical structural issues (e.g., roof, flooding, insulation gaps)
- Install or test emergency lighting and backup power (for security, HVAC, refrigeration, communication)
- Confirm redundant manual locks, reinforced doors, and non-electric access control
- Stockpile 72+ hours of emergency supplies (food, water, hygiene, PPE, power banks)
- Train staff on evacuation, shelter-in-place, and manual facility systems (e.g., security, gas shutoff)
- Ensure ADA-accessible safety zones and exits are available and marked
- Remove vegetation within 50 feet of your facility to reduce wildfire damage
- Trim trees or branches that could fall during strong winds
- Clean out all gutters and ensure proper drainage around your facility

Responsible Staff: _____

Target Completion: _____

Phase 2: Strengthening Resilience (6-18 Months)

Goal: Expand capacity to operate safely during prolonged outages or high-risk events.

- Upgrade materials in high-risk zones (e.g., flood-proof drywall, storm shutters, fire-resistant insulation)
- Expand backup power (second generator, solar, battery storage)
- Install emergency water filtration or storage tanks for sanitation and drinking water
- Harden facility security (cameras with battery backup, door sensors, reinforced access points)
- Develop pet-safe spaces, sensory-friendly rooms, and gender-affirming restrooms where feasible
- Secure emergency housing MOUs (hotels, faith groups, culturally specific orgs)
- Train staff on security systems, IT/data protection, and facility-specific hazard protocols

Responsible Staff: _____

Target Completion: _____

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7.

Build Financial Infrastructure for Crisis Response

Part 1: Building a Disaster-Ready Organization

DISASTER RESPONSE BUDGET

REVENUE	BUDGET	ACTUAL
Grants	\$200,000	\$180,000
Donations	\$50,000	\$45,000
Insurance Proceeds	\$125,000	\$120,000
Other Income	\$50,000	\$48,000
TOTAL REVENUE		\$493,000

EXPENSES	BUDGET	ACTUAL
Personnel	\$110,000	\$98,500
Supplies & Equipment	\$75,000	\$62,200
Facility & Operations	\$60,000	\$54,200
Communications	\$25,000	\$21,100
Transportation	\$30,000	\$27,600
Direct Assistance	\$100,000	\$88,400
Other	\$20,000	\$14,100
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$420,000	\$377,200

EXPENSE TRACKING

DATE	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
5/1	Supplies	Water, Food	\$1,200
5/1	Supplies	Vehicle	\$320
5/2	Fuel	Radars	\$480
5/2	Communications	Cats	\$2,100
5/3	Temporary Shelter	Overtime	\$1,200
5/3	Personnel	Fuel	\$560
5/4	Transportation		
		TOTAL	\$5,960

INSURANCE SUMMARY

- ☒ Property Coverage
- ☒ Liability Coverage
- ☒ Equipment Coverage
- ☒ Business Interruption

Coverage Active

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Financial Infrastructure

- Programs with financial infrastructure during disasters can
 - respond quickly
 - document expenses accurately
 - recover financially after a crisis
- Address use of funds as well as decision-making authority, internal controls, documentation, and the ability to act without delay

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Core Components of Financial Readiness

- Emergency funds
- Pre-approved spending procedures
- Insurance coverage review
- Rapid documentation and expense tracking
- Disaster relief grant planning

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Could You Spend Quickly?

- Who can approve emergency spending after hours?
- Who is the backup?
- What documentation is required?
- Could the process still work without internet?
- Do you know what your insurance covers?

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From the Field

“Every few years we invite our insurance agency to walk our shelter and make recommendations. It ensures our coverage keeps pace with upgrades and risks. That preparation has saved us time, money, and stress after multiple storms.” — Diane Rogers, Liberty House of Albany

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Appendices G & H

Appendix G: Disaster Financial & Insurance Management Toolkit

Appendix H: Emergency Disaster Fundraising Template

Appendix G: Disaster Financial & Insurance Management Toolkit

This toolkit supports domestic violence agencies in preparing for and managing financial operations and insurance claims during and after a disaster. It ensures that organizations can sustain survivor services, maintain staff stability, recover costs, and remain compliant with funder and legal requirements. Disaster financial management must balance flexibility with sound accounting practices. It is a core part of trauma-informed operations and organizational resilience.

Section 1: Emergency Financial Planning Overview

This section outlines core planning practices to ensure that your organization can respond to disaster-related expenses quickly and responsibly.

Key Components:

- **Emergency Reserve Fund Policy:** Maintain flexible, unrestricted reserves for immediate needs; target at least one month of core operating expenses.
- **Pre-Approved Spending Tiers:** Establish thresholds for emergency purchases to streamline decision-making.
- **Disaster Expense Categories:** Identify eligible costs such as survivor housing, transportation, staffing, food, PPE, generator fuel, on-call therapists, emergency childcare, etc.
- **Vendor Agreements:** Establish pre-arranged agreements with hotels, ride-share services, food vendors, therapists, and contractors, etc.
- **Documentation Protocols:** Use consistent logs and receipt retention practices for funder and audit compliance.
- **Dedicated Budget Lines or Cost Codes:** Simplify funder reporting and track actual costs across multiple funding sources.

Section 2: Emergency Spending Protocols & Fund Management

This section outlines recommended practices for setting up and using an emergency fund during disasters. These strategies support clarity, rapid response, and accountability, especially for staff making time-sensitive decisions in the field.

Recommended Practices:

- **Establish a Dedicated Emergency Fund:**
 - Maintain unrestricted reserves specifically for disaster response.
 - Set a minimum target balance (e.g., \$15,000 or one month's operating expenses).
- **Set Spending Thresholds and Authority Guidelines:**
 - Pre-approve common categories of disaster spending (e.g., hotel rooms, gas cards, food) for amounts under \$5,000.
 - Require a second signature/approval for expenses above \$5,000.
 - Consider a \$15,000 threshold for board-level review depending on your organization's budget size.
 - Permit alternate approval methods (such as text, photograph, or email) when in-person signatures are not feasible due to infrastructure damage.
 - Use the Board Treasurer or Chair for second signature – not full board approval – unless the expense exceeds the approved budget or falls outside defined categories.

Appendix H: Emergency Disaster Fundraising Template

This appendix provides a customizable toolkit for launching a rapid-response fundraising campaign to secure critical resources after a disaster. It includes campaign planning prompts, message templates, and donor stewardship strategies to maintain trust and transparency while securing immediate financial support.

1. Fundraising Campaign Overview

Campaign Name	[e.g., “Rapid Response for Survivors” or “Rebuild & Reconnect: Emergency Relief for DV Survivors”]
Disaster/Event	[e.g., Shelter Flood, Wildfire Evacuation, Hurricane Ida]
Launch Date	
Fundraising Goal	
Campaign Duration	[e.g., 7 days, 2-week emergency appeal, rolling]
Primary Use of Funds	☐ Emergency relocation ☐ Hotel stays ☐ Staff relief ☐ Facility repair ☐ Generator fuel ☐ Food/medicine ☐ IT & communications continuity ☐ Other _____

Messaging Tip: Communicate how survivor needs and risks increase after disasters. Emphasize urgency, autonomy, and trauma-informed support.

2. Pre-Drafted Messaging Templates

Email Appeal

Subject Line Examples:

- “We Need You – Help Us Rebuild Safety After the Storm”
- “Disaster Hit – Survivors Still Need Shelter Tonight”

Body:

Dear [Supporter Name],
Our shelter was impacted by [Disaster] and the survivors we serve are facing renewed danger and uncertainty. Right now, we're responding with hotel placements, trauma-informed care, and emergency support—but we urgently need your help.

Your donation today will help us:

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8.

Forge External Partnerships Before a Crisis Hits

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Four Types of Essential Partnerships

- Emergency Management Partners
- Peer Domestic Violence Programs
- Community and Private Sector
- Broader Disaster Preparedness Networks

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Partnership Readiness

- Build direct relationships before a disaster
 - Maintain more than one contact at each organization
- Ensure domestic violence programs are included in community emergency planning
 - Confirm partners understand confidentiality, accessibility, and survivor choice
- Document responsibilities when partners provide shelter, transportation, crisis line coverage, or shared resources

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Activity: Map Your Network

Imagine a significant disaster happened tomorrow...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you name the person you would call? • Do you have their direct number? • Would they know who you are? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One emergency management partner • One peer DV program • One community/private-sector partner • One local disaster preparedness network |
|---|--|

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From the Field

"Having updated cell phone numbers for nearby domestic violence programs, especially executive directors, managers, and key staff within a two- to three-hour radius, is critical. In an emergency, those direct connections make it possible to find answers and support quickly. "

— Karen Yawn, The Haven

"Being part of our local Community Organization Active in Disaster (COAD) was a huge asset after the hurricane. It helped us understand where resources were coming into the community and allowed us to coordinate effectively. Through that partnership, we were able to support 24/7 hotline referrals for the broader community using our shelter crisis line." — Karen Yawn, The Haven

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Engagement Ideas

- **Connect:** Find your local VOAD or COAD
- **Invite/Join:** Bring emergency management into a planning conversation or join meetings they already have
- **Practice:** Run a tabletop exercise with a peer program

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Appendices I, J, K

Appendix I: Emergency Response Partnership Directory

Appendix J: Blueprint for Creating Partnerships with Disaster Organizations

Appendix K: Sample Inter-Agency Collaboration Agreement (MOU)

Appendix I: Emergency Response Partnership Directory				
This directory helps domestic violence organizations identify and build relationships with the key players in disaster response and recovery. These agencies can provide critical support, including emergency shelter, transportation, supplies, coordination, funding, and survivor referrals. Use this guide to: - Map your community's disaster response network - Identify local and regional partners - Clarify how each agency can support survivors - Build memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or informal coordination plans before a crisis				
Agency / Group	Role in Disaster Response	What They Can Offer DV Programs	How to Engage	Key Contact Info
Local Emergency Management Office	Coordinate local disaster alerts, sheltering, and logistics	Emergency alerts, shelter coordination, inclusion in local disaster planning	Attend planning meetings; invite them to your next disaster drill	County/city emergency coordinator
State Emergency Management (GEMA)	Coordinate state-level response; connect to federal support	Disaster response plans, funding pathways, state VOAD access	Meet with your GEMA Regional Field Coordinator	www.gempa.gov/focusareas
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	National leadership and funding for disaster response	FEMA Public Assistance, grants, Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs)	Register your agency; connect with Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs)	www.fema.gov/focusareas/prepare , www.fema.gov/voluntary-agency-liaisons
VOADs (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)	Coordinate nonprofit, faith-based, and volunteer response	Emergency supplies, referrals, collaborative response	Join your local VOAD; draft mutual support MOUs	govad@redcross.org / www.govad.org/
Community Emergency Response (CERT) Teams	Train volunteers in community-level disaster response	Volunteers for logistics, safety, basic support during a disaster	Offer to host or attend a CERT training	www.fema.gov/cert , www.redcross.org/disaster-preparedness/prepare-to-act

Appendix J: Blueprint for Creating Partnerships with Disaster Organizations

This blueprint provides a step-by-step guide to help domestic violence (DV) agencies build proactive, sustainable partnerships with disaster response organizations. These relationships are essential to ensuring coordinated, survivor-centered disaster preparedness and response.

Why It Matters:

- Disasters can disrupt services, isolate survivors, and strain resources. Strong partnerships help:
- Expand access to safe, trauma-informed shelter
- Secure emergency transportation, supplies, and staff relief
- Strengthen coordination across response systems
- Ensure DV survivor needs are included in disaster policy

1. Understand the Role of Disaster Partnerships

Key Benefits for DV Programs:

- Faster access to supplies, volunteers, and alternative housing
- Priority access to public resources and alerts
- Greater integration into local emergency planning
- Stronger advocacy for marginalized survivors

2. Identifying Potential Disaster Response Partners

Government & Emergency Management Agencies

Partner	How They Help
Local Emergency Management	Coordinate alerts, resources, and response teams
State Emergency Management (e.g., GEMA)	Connect agencies to state-level coordination and funding
FEMA & Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs)	Provide funding, technical assistance, and access to federal recovery efforts
VOAD (State/Local)	Coordinate nonprofit response and distribute emergency supplies
Public Health Departments	Provide PPE, medication access, and sanitation planning support

Peer Domestic Violence Programs

- Reciprocal Shelter Agreements: Share shelter space during evacuations or capacity crises
- Crisis Line Backup Agreements: Maintain continuity if your lines go down
- Shared Training & Supply Networks: Collaborate on drills and supply stockpiling

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9.

Train & Assign Staff for Emergency Response

Part 1: Building a Disaster-Ready Organization

Ready to Respond Training Series

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM ROLES

- INCIDENT COMMANDER**
Overall leadership and decision-making
- COMMUNICATIONS LEAD**
Information sharing and notifications
- OPERATIONS LEAD**
Response actions and coordination
- SAFETY OFFICER**
Hazard assessment and staff safety
- LOGISTICS LEAD**
Resources, supplies, and support

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN
PEOPLE. ROLES. READINESS.

STAFF ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☒ Review Roles
- ☒ Confirm Coverage
- ☒ Share Procedures
- ☒ Practice & Train
- ☒ Communicate
- ☒ Document
- ☒ Follow Up

Team Meeting Notes

- ☒ Roles & Responsibilities
- ☒ Communication Plan
- ☒ Response Procedures
- ☒ Drills & Training
- ☒ Review & Improve

Our Mission ♥
Safety.
Support.
Empowerment.

We Plan.
We Prepare.
We Protect.

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Staff Roles

- Plans rely on people
- Clarity and confidence matter
- Training is essential
- Integrated into onboarding, supervision, training, and everyday operations

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Key Elements of Staff Readiness

- Role clarity and built-in redundancy
- Ongoing, scenario-based training
- Cross-training for flexibility
- Emotional preparedness and decision-making confidence
- Centralized binder with all needed information

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Who Does What?

- What disaster roles are already clear in your organization?
- Which roles depend too heavily on one person?
- Who is the backup?
- What responsibility needs to be cross-trained?

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Appendix L: Sample Training Schedule

Appendix L: Sample Disaster Training Schedule
Provides a framework for integrating disaster preparedness into ongoing staff orientation, training, drills, and annual readiness activities.

Appendix L: Sample Disaster Training Schedule

A consistent, role-specific training schedule ensures all staff are prepared to respond to emergencies using trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices. This sample annual plan supports domestic violence programs in meeting funder requirements, maintaining compliance, and strengthening team-wide readiness over time. To reduce training burden, agencies are encouraged to combine related topics into broader sessions (e.g., integrating confidentiality, safety planning, and remote services into a single disaster response training). Customize the content, frequency, and format based on your agency's size, structure, and staff capacity.

Annual Disaster Training Plan
This schedule is an example and should be adapted to agency size and capacity.

Training Topic	Target Audience	Frequency	Training Method	Lead Staff/Trainer
Disaster Preparedness Orientation	All Staff	Annually	In-person or virtual session	Disaster Response Coordinator
Evacuation & Shelter-in-Place Protocols	All Staff & Shelter Residents	Semiannually	Live Drill & Tabletop Exercise	Operations & Logistics Manager
Emergency Role & Communication Chains	Leadership & Response Team	Annually	Scenario Walkthrough	Disaster Response Coordinator
Survivor Confidentiality in Disasters	Advocates & Shelter Staff	Annually	Case Study & Discussion	Survivor Services Lead
Emergency Equipment Use (Generators, Fire Extinguishers, Radios)	Shelter Staff	Annually	Hands-on Demonstration	Operations & Logistics Manager
First Aid & Trauma-Informed Response	Direct Service Staff	Annually	CPR/First Aid Certification	Local Medical Partner/Trainer
Remote Crisis Line & Outreach Continuity	Crisis Line Staff & Outreach Staff	Annually	Virtual Simulation	Crisis Communications Manager
Data Security & Remote Work Protocols	Leadership & Staff Working Remotely	Annually	Tabletop Review	Operations & Logistics Manager

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From Action to Learning

- One gap we noticed today
- One appendix or tool we want to review
- One person who needs to be part of this work
- One next step we can take before Session 2:

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Final Takeaway

- Preparedness is iterative
- You don't need to do everything today
- Small steps build readiness

The goal is not a perfect plan. The goal is a team that knows how to respond.

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Closing

Thank you for the work you're doing!

Next Webinar: Leading During a Disaster on September 18, 2026

We'll explore:

- Activating emergency protocols
- Decision-making under pressure
- Staff communication and responsibilities
- Survivor safety
- Shelter-in-place and evacuation
- Partnerships and financial accountability
- Well-being during active response

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