

KANSAS CITY REGIONAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS (COAD) 2026-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

Leadership

- **Chair: Dr. Jennifer L. L'Heureux**, Chief of Children's Community Operations-NW, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health.
- **Immediate Past Chair:** Michael O'Neal, Retired Deputy Sheriff/Assistant EM Coordinator.
- **Vice Chair:** Sue Johnson, Volunteer Recruitment Unit Leader, Medical Reserve Corps of Greater Kansas City.
- **Recording Secretary: Dr. Jennifer L. L'Heureux (Interim)**, Chief of Children's Community Operations-NW, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Behavioral Health.
- **Membership Secretary: Cheryl Gates**, CPM and Founder of KC Home Birth.
- **Treasurer:** Allison Breeze, Director of Emergency Management, City of Raytown.
- **Planners:** Dan Reece, Emergency Planner and Training Expert, Independent.
JD VanWay, Project Manager-Managed Security Services, Burns & McDonnell
Sadaf Nezami, Student Planner Assistant
- **Logistics Specialist:** Dante Gliniecki, Manager, Emergency Preparedness Division, City of Independence.

In 2026, the COAD has the goal of filling the Recording Secretary position. Two additional positions will be created and those respectively are PIO or Public Information Officer and a Grant Writer.

Overview

The KC Regional COAD is a body of voluntary agencies and faith-based groups and people who Serve and Care: These non-profit agencies and faith groups seek to follow the values of the Whole Community concept of Emergency Preparedness. In times of mitigation, preparedness, planning, training, exercise, response and recovery of disasters. The 4 C's, as they are known by COAD members, are the essential actions needed to effectively serve, in the event and time of a disaster. Through collaboration, cooperation, communication, and coordination of goods and services, time, energy, and funds are better utilized, and the victims of disasters are better served. When disasters take place, the COAD provides an immediate structure, thereby making service delivery more effective with less duplication.

Overall Focus in 2026

- **Continuous Membership Expansion:** Continue the formal membership plan put in place in 2025. That plan increased membership by 38% in just 11 months. The goal for 2026 is to increase membership by an additional 10%. The industry standard is 6 or 8-10% yearly coupled with a retention rate of 80% or higher. The COAD's retention rate is above 90% (versus first-year renewals typically only being around 63% and this was the current executive team's first year), the goal for 2026 is to maintain such. Accounting for attrition in the forms of people retiring, moving away, etc., the COAD will continue the following formula: For every 3 people that leave, 6 new people will be added. Focusing on high retention is a cost-effective means to maintain operations.

A comparison of our COAD membership roster with the membership roster of National VOAD will be completed. This is done to strategically focus on prospective new members pertinent to our mission thereby ensuring ample coverage during disasters.

<https://www.nvoad.org/members-capabilities-matrix/>

- **Increase communication and information sharing:** In 2025, the COAD established a new, comprehensive, and more secure website. Regular membership emails were sent to inform all pertinent developments, and an organizational brochure was developed. The brochure is for dissemination at community events and presentations to further increase communication. From a foundational standpoint, this methodology will continue to continue to cultivate transparent operations that maintain synchronicity with the 2026 Strategic Plan. The COAD's Executive Team will continue to meet at a minimum, monthly and more frequently as needed including regular weekly emails or calls. This will also continue to include the Chair sending out a weekly update to the Executive Team to ensure constant communication.
- **Provide a colloquy for all members:** This is for everyone to learn from other subject matter experts about pertinent issues in disaster response and recovery. In 2025, general membership meetings were increased from bi-monthly to quarterly. This tactical approach will continue as will the meetings being hybrid. The average attendance for meetings was approximately 38 in 2025 and the goal for 2026 is 40.
- **Advance existing committees and subcommittees:** This will continue to be accomplished by filling vacancies, meeting regularly, and having a work plan with objective, measurable, and obtainable goals relating back to the mission of that group. Report outs from the committees will continue at each general membership meeting. Because these committees are the foundation of the COAD and lead by volunteers, it is essential that they be well-supported. In that way, there will continue to be open, regular dialogue with committee leads, but also support as it pertains to development. The COAD Chair will sync a larger human services group (SOCCEED) or Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters (SOC for short) with each of the COAD's committees. The SOC's membership stands at over 400 people representing dozens of organizations, schools, religious institutions, and more. Collectively, the members of the SOC provide many of the human services needed in disasters and would be excellent additions to the COAD's committees. Currently, the two groups overlap however lack a means to formally unite. The immersion of SOC members into pertinent COAD committees resolves this issue and creates a much more effective and efficient merging of two groups that need to be but often are not at the same tables.

- **Increase community involvement:** This is accomplished by regular community service, speaking at events, and outreach. Learn *before* disaster strikes what the challenges and assets of a community may be, and form trusted relationships to affect a more efficient disaster response. The COAD is scheduled to speak at the Independence schools and will expand school partnerships in 2026 through the Children and Youth in Disasters committee at the COAD. The COAD will further leverage its partnerships with local Chambers of Commerce to increase participation in community events. Taking a “Whole Community” approach, the COAD will create at least 3 town hall sessions in sync with already established groups to engage all sectors in preparedness efforts.
- **Continuous revisions to the completed EIOG or Emergency Incident Operations Guide:** This is done to create an ongoing analysis of community needs to organize efforts best in support of Regional, County, and Local Emergency Management Response and Recovery Operations during critical events.
- **Continue to develop and market the internship program in partnership with local colleges, universities, and training programs:** This is done to supplement committees and subcommittees, provide valuable learning opportunities, and shape the future of emergency management. The COAD will begin to receive interns in the Spring of 2026 and accept them on a revolving basis thereafter. To assess programmatic quality, the COAD will develop and implement, a system to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the internship program and its impact on disaster planning, response, and recovery. Adjustments will be made to the internship program based on the data received and best practices to match participant and community needs.
- **Capitalize on our 501 c3 nonprofit status:** Apply for grants to expand capabilities during times it is most needed. The COAD will secure a volunteer grant writer on at least a part-time basis to assist with this function.

In addition to the pursuit of grants, the COAD will implement the following fundraising plan to raise additional monies for disaster preparedness and response:

Key Components:

1. **Messaging & Storytelling (The "Why"):**
 - **Reposition:** Shift from "we need help" to "we provide stability" during crises.
 - **Show, Don't Just Tell:** Use real-time photos, videos, and human stories to show the impact on beneficiaries.
 - **Clarity:** Clearly articulate the urgent need and how *exactly* donations solve problems (e.g., "Your \$50 provides a family with water for a week").
2. **Audience Engagement (The "Who"):**
 - **Core Donors:** Personally check in with supporters.
 - **Broad Base:** Use social media, influencers, and hashtags for wider reach.
 - **Peer-to-Peer:** Empower advocates to fundraise among their networks.
3. **Fundraising Tactics (The "How"):**
 - **Digital Focus:** Utilize crowdfunding, social media campaigns, and virtual events.

- **Recurring Gifts:** Emphasize small, regular donations for predictable funding.
- **Targeted Appeals:** Segment communications based on donor preferences and past giving.

4. Operational & Ethical Framework (The "Trust"):

- **Transparency:** Document every donation and expense meticulously (IRS requirement for disaster relief).
- **Designated Funds:** Allow donors to choose where their donations are directed.
- **Stakeholder Alignment**

Plan Structure:

- **Phase 1: Preparation (Ongoing):** Build donor database, create content templates, develop core messaging, train staff, set up digital platforms, plan annual campaigns (e.g., Preparedness Month).
- **Phase 2: Response:** Launch crowdfunding, issue press releases, personal outreach to major donors.
- **Phase 3: Sustained Relief:** Run social media campaigns, host virtual events, provide regular impact reports, encourage recurring giving.
- **Phase 4: Recovery & Future Planning:** Host targeted appeals for long-term projects, analyze campaign success, thank all.
- The COAD will also as previously stated merge more with the SOC who has a strong base of consistent major donors that are interested in funding COAD endeavors.
- **Further support community partners, organizations, and teams:** This will be accomplished by continuing to attend their meetings and promoting their respective missions through our platforms including posting event flyers on the COAD website. This is critical because never should we operate in isolation.
- **Continue to complete a mission analysis in the LTRC:** This is done to identify capacity gaps in recovery. The nature of this is ongoing to stay current with the changing needs of our respective communities.
- **Continue to focus on people who have access and functional needs:** These are people that may need additional assistance during times of disasters and plan for such. The COAD now has an AFN committee that will specifically focus on this critical issue.

Committee/Subcommittee Plans

- **Long-term Recovery Committee**

Overview:

Long-term recovery in emergency management is the phase focusing on rebuilding communities, restoring critical services, and addressing the lasting impacts of a disaster. The aim is to achieve a "new normal".

Projects:

- Continue to complete a mission analysis to identify current capacity gaps in recovery.
- Continue to identify action steps that address identified capacity gaps.
- Further incorporate the RRF or Regional Recovery Framework into planning efforts.
- Continue to recruit new members and partners.
- Participate in the COAD/FIFA World Cup Planning.

Contact(s):

Greg Topping, Chair, Greg@uickc.org or Jennifer L'Heureux, KCR COAD Chair, Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

Second Tuesday of each month at 2 on Webex.

- **Mass Care Committee**

Overview:

In emergency management, "mass care" refers to the coordinated provision of life-sustaining services, including sheltering, feeding, and the distribution of essential supplies, to individuals and families affected by a disaster or emergency. Mass care aims to address the immediate needs of disaster survivors who have been displaced or otherwise impacted by an event that disrupts their ability to provide for their basic needs.

Projects:

- **Develop a self-sustaining Sheltering Subcommittee.** This subcommittee will be made up of organizations specializing in sheltering, pet sheltering, housing and subject matter experts in sheltering fundamentals. Responsible include the following:
 - Networking and recruiting amongst KC regional sheltering and short/long term housing organizations to build connections with the KCR COAD
 - Coordinating shelter response activities during a time of Mass Care COAD activation
 - Pet sheltering activation (if necessary) and coordination
 - Rental and utility assistance
 - Short- and long-term housing solutions for vulnerable populations transitioning from shelter locations
- **Develop a self-sustaining Feeding Subcommittee.** This subcommittee will be made up of feeding organizations, food pantries and subject matter experts who have experience in mass feeding fundamentals. This group would be responsible for the following:
 - Networking and/or recruiting KC regional feeding organizations to build connections with the KCR COAD
 - Ensuring access to food and water for those affected by a disaster during a time of Mass Care COAD activation

Contact(s):

John Ezell, Chair, John.Ezell@uhkc.org or Emma Boyd, Co-Chair, Boyd, emma.boyd@redcross.org

Meeting Information:

Every other month at 11 on Teams

***Special note: These meetings have been combined with that of the Health and Medical Committee at the COAD.

- **Behavioral Health Committee**

Overview:

In emergency management, behavioral health care focuses on addressing the psychological, emotional, and substance use needs of disaster survivors and responders, ensuring mental health support is integrated into preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. It recognizes the unique needs of individuals and communities in the aftermath of a disaster, addressing potential long-term behavioral health consequences.

Projects:

- Ongoing research into best practices for supporting disaster survivors and responders.
- Continuous planning for the full inclusion of mental health supports in preparedness, incident response, and recovery.
- Continue to build a resource library for the committee.

Contact(s):

Bary Kramer, Chair, Bary.Kramer@dmh.mo.gov or Laurie Cox, Co-Chair, LCox@swopehealth.org

Meeting Information:

Fourth Wednesday of every other month at 11 on Webex

- **Planning, Training Exercise Operations Committee**

Overview:

In emergency management, planning, training, and exercise operations are critical for effective disaster response and recovery, forming a continuous cycle that enhances preparedness and resilience.

Projects:

- Ongoing assessment of the now completed EIOG.

- Continue to keep full unredacted MRPs filed by ESFs so when one of our EMD from KS and/or MO stands up their ESF we can begin the review of our KCRCOAD Member's MRPs, by ESF, to see what we can send their way if they, EMD(s), need support.
- Continue to conduct exercises where valuable experience in exercise planning, development, and execution will be had working with Federal, State, Regional, local EM and KCRCOAD exercise partners. This will be using a prebuilt scenario that will be run annually with a different focus KCRCOAD capability each year.

Contact(s):

Dan Reece, Chair, danntab1@msn.com or J.D. VanWay, Co-Chair, jd.vanway@1898andco.com

Meeting Information:

To be announced, please contact Mr. Reece or Mr. VanWay for further information.

- **Donations Management Committee**

Overview:

Donations management in emergency management involves efficiently and effectively managing the influx of goods, services, and cash donations to support disaster relief efforts, ensuring they reach the right people at the right time. Confirming needs before collecting donations to see what is needed in the affected area is critically important as is the utilization of existing networks to streamline donations management.

Projects:

- Continue to develop a comprehensive plan for managing donations, receiving, sorting, storing, and distribution.
- Continue the interagency collaboration to further build strong relationships with all pertinent entities.
- Maintain a system for the clear communication with the public about what donations are needed.

Contact(s):

Karen Whitson, Chair, karen@kswhitson.com or Charles Gerhart, Co-Chair, charleswithacs@gmail.com. Todd Jordan is the Chair of Financial Management, todd.jordan@uwgkc.org.

Meeting Information:

To be announced, please contact Ms. Whitson or Mr. Gerhart for further information.

- **Volunteer Management**

Overview:

Effective volunteer management in emergency management involves planning, training, and coordinating volunteers to support disaster relief efforts, ensuring their safety and effectiveness, and leveraging their skills and resources to aid communities.

Projects:

- Continue to monitor the plan for managing volunteers including assigning duties. This will continue to include a determination of the skills and roles needed during different phases of emergencies.
- Continue to oversee the process for the recruitment and screening of volunteers ensuring the qualifications and capabilities of each volunteer for the role assigned. Background checks will continue to be conducted through the account that the COAD has through Choice Screening.
- Continue to refine the system for unaffiliated volunteers to ensure all activities are coordinated.
- Continue to develop appropriate training and education protocols on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Continue to refine, the protocols for the regular monitoring of volunteer activities.
- Continue to use the COAD's account with Track it Forward to enter and keep track of volunteer hours.

Contact:

Jennifer L'Heureux, KCR COAD Chair, Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

Third Thursday at 9 a.m. on Webex.

• Children in Disasters

Overview:

In emergency management, children in disasters are particularly vulnerable and it is crucial to include their unique needs and perspectives in all phases of disaster planning, from preparedness and response to recovery and mitigation. This is necessary to strengthen coordination, promote public awareness, provide guidance, and conduct research to ensure that children's well-being is a central focus in disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Projects:

- Develop plans that address the increased vulnerability of children in disasters. Children are physically and psychologically more susceptible to harm during disasters due to their developmental stage, reliance on adults, and limited ability to understand and cope with stressful events. Specific plans to address these issues and children's specific needs are essential. Consideration given to the long-term impacts of disasters on children.

- Develop programs that build resilience in children. Including children in preparedness efforts can empower them, reduce their anxiety, and foster their resilience during emergencies.
- Develop partnerships with the local schools, mental health centers, and related agencies to further ensure the needs of children are met during disasters.
- Address gaps in preparedness, such as access to medication, durable medical equipment, and appropriate shelter for children with disabilities, is essential.
- Provide age-appropriate education and training to children, families, and community members on disaster preparedness and response.

Contact:

Jennifer L'Heureux, KCR COAD Chair, Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

The fourth Monday of every month at 9 a.m. on Webex.

- **Access and Functional Needs (AFN)**

Overview:

Access and functional needs (AFN) in emergency management refers to the planning and preparation for individuals who may need additional assistance during disasters or emergencies due to various factors, including disabilities, chronic conditions, language barriers, age, socioeconomic status, and more. This approach focuses on addressing the functional needs of individuals rather than solely on their specific diagnoses or labels.

Projects:

- Provide age-appropriate education and training to children, families, and community members on disaster preparedness and response.
- The KCR COAD's AFN will continue to include the recent incorporation of the SPICE (Seniors Positive Impact in Community Emergencies) Project. This seeks to improve disaster preparedness for community dwelling older adults in Missouri. It is very important to focus on the older adult population who may have access and functional needs which are increased during disasters. Also, and as important, the older adults are a source of resilience for our communities due to past lived experiences and utilization of these unique individuals during a disaster will strengthen our response during a difficult disaster. This process will continue to include coordinating community partners, assisting in programming, disaster evaluations, post-disaster recovery plans, conducting preparedness seminars, and more.
- AFN will be incorporated into all aspects of emergency planning and in part accomplished through a comprehensive system under development by the COAD in 2026.
- Continue to outreach and speak at community functions to further promote the critical issue of AFN and senior preparedness in emergency preparedness.

Contact:

Jennifer L'Heureux, KCR COAD Chair, Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

Second Friday of every month at 9 a.m. on Webex

- **Health and Medical**

Overview:

In emergency management, a health outreach team plays a crucial role in promoting public health and safety by providing medical care, disseminating information, and supporting local health systems during emergencies and disasters. These teams, often composed of doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other health professionals, are deployed to provide immediate medical assistance, support local health systems, and ensure the health and safety of affected populations.

Projects:

- Develop a self-sustaining Clinical Support Subcommittee:
 - Networking and/or recruiting KC regional Health & Medical organizations to build connections with the KCR COAD.
- Coordinating providing volunteer medical care response activities during a time of Health & Medical COAD activation.
 - Such as medical triage, emergency care, staffing medical stations or assisting at shelters, and providing info on local health resources.
 - Logistical support for movement of medical supplies and personnel.
- Assist the COAD in the creation of a remote MARC or MARC support package (printed materials, supplies and/or resource directory) that would supplement a COAD response and provide relief short of a full MARC deployment.

Contacts:

John Ezell, Chair, John.Ezell@uhkc.org or Jennifer L'Heureux, KCR COAD Chair, Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

Every other month at 11 on Teams

***Special note: These meetings have been combined with that of the Health and Medical Committee at the COAD.

- **Specific FIFA World Cup Planning (What we can do now to prepare for a potential activation)**

A. Risk Assessment & Asset Planning

- **Identify Potential Hazards:** This may include both natural disasters (e.g., extreme heat, local severe weather events) and human-caused incidents (e.g., crowd surges, terrorism, civil unrest, cyberattacks, public health crises). What types of hazards exist that the COAD could potentially be activated for?
- **Identify Community Assets:**
 1. **Utilize People & Skills Mapping**
 2. **Places & Facilities Mapping:** Map the locations of schools, libraries, community centers, churches, parks (potential shelters/distribution points), and local businesses (food, supplies). This is important to identify potential resources as well as obstacles to such.
 3. **Networks & Partnerships:** List existing community groups, faith-based orgs, businesses, and government agencies that can help. If not already a part of the COAD, reach out to them!
 4. **Economic Assets:** Note local grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, and suppliers for immediate needs. Reach out to these entities and incorporate them into the COAD and FIFA planning efforts.
 5. **Identifying Potential Vulnerabilities:**
 - A. **Hazard Vulnerability Analysis (HVA) to include:**
 - **Physical:** Map infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, power grids), housing types, and flood/fire zones. Where might the COAD be called to assist?
 - **Social:** Identify vulnerable populations (elderly, disabled, non-English speakers, low-income) and where they live. This will include an analysis of where unhoused individuals and families are predominantly temporarily staying and may lose such arrangements during FIFA. Where could potentially large numbers of people be housed, how would they get there, supplies for such, etc. What about pet sheltering and people that have AFN, language barriers, etc.?
 - **Communication:** What forms of communication do we have available to us? What if the cell system crashes, what then, etc.
 - **Economic:** Assess for any businesses or critical services that might close and impact supply chain availability. Knowing this, what are alternative resources in the event these are not available?
 - **Data Collection:** Analyze past disaster impacts, use GIS mapping to overlay hazard zones with vulnerable populations, and check critical facility locations. Again, where might the COAD be potentially called to help?

- **Community Workshops:** Host meetings and/or conduct surveys to let residents share their concerns about the world cup, access to needed resources, etc. Incorporate their feedback into the planning process.
- 6. **Analyze Risks:** Evaluate the potential impact of identified hazards on vulnerable assets, considering the likelihood and severity of each risk. Use a risk matrix to prioritize concerns.
- 7. **Summarize Vulnerability and Develop Potential Response Strategies:** Document the most significant risks and develop possible response plans, focusing on the highest-priority risks. Map Vulnerabilities that identify fan zones, stadiums, public transport hubs, hotels, and areas with high populations of vulnerable residents (elderly, disabled).
- 8. **Coordination:** Continue to build connections with local police, hospitals, event organizers (FIFA/local), and other NGOs. If we needed to stand up a MARC, where, how would we organize needed partners, etc.

B. Emergency Operations

Consider if there were an emergency and the COAD was activated, what would the following look like:

- **Command Center:** Where would a central point for coordination, communications (radio, satellite phones if needed) go and what might resource allocation look like? Do we have the needed resources, To-Go Boxes, etc.
- **Coordination with Partner Agencies:** What would this look like. Who does what, when, etc.?
- **Rapid Response Teams:** How would we deploy trained volunteers to high-traffic areas for immediate first aid, crowd control, and locating missing persons?
- **Information Hubs:** Where could these be set up? Physical or virtual locations for trusted info, reducing panic from rumors.
- **Support:** How could we provide ongoing emotional support for affected community members or families?
- **Debrief:** Review how things went, identify gaps, and update for future events.
- **Additional Activities**
 - The KCR COAD will continue to participate in other COADS to support them such as the St. Louis COAD.

- The COAD will continue to offer t-shirts, insulated tumblers, and lanyards, all available free of charge to members who would like such.
- The COAD Chair will sync a larger human services group (SOCCEED) or Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters (SOC for short) with each of the COAD's committees. This will be done to better connect human and social service providers with Emergency Managers and Planners before a disaster occurs.