

Kansas City Regional COAD Six Month Report

June 27, 2025

Good afternoon,

It is hard to believe, but we are now right at about six months into the new KCR COAD's Executive Team tenure. Much has happened behind the scenes, and in the interest of transparency, the leadership team wants to ensure that you, our valued members, are fully informed. The following is a synopsis of the prior six months (January-June) of activity:

Executive Team

The executive team formally meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month. Communication is maintained via emails and calls throughout the week as needed to ensure that operations continue to move forward. The following are the leadership changes since January:

- Jennifer L. L'Heureux was elected to the Chair position of the COAD, replacing outgoing Chair Mike O'Neal, who retired.
- Stephanie Spitz, Senior Project Manager, accepted and was appointed to the position of Membership Secretary.
- Shayna Deitchman, Disaster Case Manager, was elected to the position of Recording Secretary.
- The Vice-Chair and a newly created PIO (Public Information Officer) position are open, and we are actively recruiting for both.

Every Friday, a summary is generated for the Executive Team to review of the week's activities. This is done to ensure total transparency within the leadership, solid communication, and that time is not wasted on misunderstandings or uncertainty. As a team, we need to work well together so that we can put the COAD in the best possible position to respond to disasters.

Committees

The COAD committees are at the heart of what we do and a primary focus in growing our capacity. The committees are now all active, meeting regularly, and working on at least one project about response and recovery. The Executive Team maintains continuous contact with all committee Chairs and attends their respective meetings as schedules permit, not to micromanage, but to support them and stay constantly aware of their evolving needs. We maintain a comprehensive list of all committees and their members. Pro-active, not reactive!

Each committee meets as determined by the respective Chair(s) and are working on specific goals and projects that relate back to the COAD's Strategic Plan for 2025. Recruitment for each committee is ongoing. The committees have been structured with expectations for meeting as mentioned on a regular basis (as determined by the Chair or Chairs), be actively engaged in one project that relates back to the COAD's 2025 Strategic Plan, provide report outs for the bi-monthly General Membership Meetings, and have someone available to cover for them in the event of an extended absence. Membership expansion is ongoing and is a partnership between the COAD's Executive Leadership Team and the committee Chairs. The following are brief synopses for each committee:

Long-term Recovery:

- Greg Topping was appointed to and accepted the Chair position.
- The RRF or Regional Recovery Framework is being used for improving the recovery and resiliency of communities.
- Mission analysis is ongoing to identify any gaps in recovery.
- The Executive Team assists with increasing local partnerships to expand our capacity insofar as response and recovery.
- Meetings are scheduled by Greg as deemed appropriate. He remains in consistent contact with the Executive Team and has participated in meetings including those pertaining to the Aspen Place response and the Independence Apartment fire.
- Last met on April 23rd. Meetings being scheduled.

Mass Care:

- John Ezell and Emma Boyd were appointed to and accepted the Chair positions.
- The meetings are now the first Tuesday of every other month from 11-12 on Webex.

- Connected with Steph, Membership Secretary, to coordinate efforts to increase committee membership, and I (Jennifer) provided two dozen contacts at organizations requested by John.
- Draft of Mass Care committee description was completed.
- Active in the Aspen Place response.
- Planning and coordinating the provision of emergency supplies.
- Completed and continuing to complete MRPs or Mission Ready Packages for onboarding of new members.
- Last met on 4-18 and June 3rd. The next meeting is August 5th.

Behavioral Health:

- Bary Kramer and Josette Mitchell were appointed to and accepted the Chair positions.
- The Disaster Mental Health Response Committee was drafted and posted to the website.
- Posted documents on the website about disaster mental health
- Planning for the full inclusion of mental health supports in disasters.
- Active in the Aspen Place response and outreach to ensure that connections were made to MH services and appropriate 988 signage.
- Now connected with the COR in Leawood, specifically, Dr. Rebeca Chow, Resurrection Clinical Counseling & Mental Health Director. Dr. Chow does fantastic work with children who have been traumatized by disasters and other events. She has offered to share her wealth of resources for kids in disasters and is a new member of the committee.
- The last meeting was on June 25th. Meetings to be scheduled.

Planning, Training, and Exercise:

- EIOG completed and posted on our website.
- Keeping full, unredacted MRPs filed by ESFs so that when one of our EMDs from KS and/or MO stands up their ESF, we can begin reviewing our KCRCOAD Members' MRPs, by ESF, to determine what we can send their way if they, the EMDs, need support.
- Was active in the Aspen Place response meetings and coordinating efforts with JOCO EM.
- Provided consultation on a variety of COAD programs and policies.
- Meetings are being scheduled.

Donations Management:

- Karen Whitson was appointed to and accepted the Chair position.

- Developing a comprehensive plan for managing donations, receiving, sorting, storing, and distribution.
- Establishing an interagency collaboration to build strong relationships with all pertinent entities further.
- Developing a system for clear communication with the public about what donations are needed.
- Was active in the Aspen Place response and attended meetings offering coordination of donations and supplies.
- Presented on Donations Management at the MEMC on June 12th.
- Last met on April 24th. Meetings are being scheduled.

Volunteer Management:

- The Chair position is still open, and in the interim, I (Jennifer) am overseeing this, so it does not get lost because it is quite critical.
- Developing a plan for managing volunteers, including assigning duties. This will further include a determination of the skills and roles needed during different phases of emergencies. Working on a volunteer code of conduct and a Disaster Volunteer Deployment Plan/Manual.
- Develop a process for recruiting and screening volunteers, ensuring that each volunteer meets the qualifications and capabilities required for their assigned role.
- Established an account with Track it Forward that enables volunteers to log their hours and record the activities they complete easily. Furthermore, the system allows scheduling of events and assigning volunteer sign-up slots to manage tasks effectively and prevent duplication.
- Established an account with Choice Screening for comprehensive volunteer background checks. The system that the COAD now has further assures compliance with all laws and regulations pertaining to background checks and maintains an electronic record of everything.
- Ordering custom-made shirts for COAD team members and volunteers to wear when activated and responding to a disaster. We must be easily identified.
- Meets every third Thursday at 9 a.m.

Health and Medical:

- John Ezell was appointed to and accepted the Chair position
- Connected with Steph, Membership Secretary, to coordinate efforts to increase committee membership.
- I (Jennifer) connected the committee to KC Care and their Director, who expressed interest in joining the COAD.
- Ongoing active recruitment for members.

- Completed draft description of the committee, and this is posted on the website.
- Was active in the Aspen Place response.
- Completed and will continue to complete MRPs for onboarding of new members.
- Last met May 29th. Now meets on the first Tuesday of every other month at 11. The next meeting is on August 5th.

General Membership Meetings

- Increased meetings from quarterly to bi-monthly to improve connections, communications, and build a stronger COAD.
- We met on March 12th, and David Whelan presented on people with access and functional needs in disasters. There is a possibility that we, as a COAD, could fund at least one Disability Awareness Training in 2026. Other updates and announcements were provided.
- We met on May 21st, and John Ezell presented on public health preparedness. The committee report officially started, and there were other updates and announcements.
- We will meet again on July 9th, with a focus on the unique needs of children in disaster situations.
- September is Disaster Preparedness month, and this will be recognized in our meeting. More to come on this!
- All meetings are offered on Webex and in-person at a partner agency. This is done to make it maximally available to members and to highlight the importance of the work of our partners.

Financials/Secure Communications

- The COAD received a \$1500 grant for meeting the needs of people with access and functional needs insofar as long-term recovery. That money is in the possession of Aly, COAD Treasurer, and it is in the COAD checking account. This was a grant that was applied for and obtained within the first three months of the new leadership team.
- I switched the COAD's meeting and website platforms to something with better security and more features. The COAD switched from Zoom to Webex and from GoDaddy to Wix. This was done not only to provide a more secure means of doing business, but it was also more financially prudent. Because I (Jennifer) Chair another group (Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters) that uses Webex and Wix, I was able to get substantial discounts for adding another group (the COAD). It is now costing less than half what it did before the switch to operate meetings and a website.
- The SOC that I also Chair is connected with Virtual Guardians, cybersecurity experts. They have designed systems for Disney World, Carnival Cruises, and

Cisco, to name a few. Virtual Guardians designed a system with top-tier security to ensure that the KCR COAD will not suffer lapses in communication when it is most needed. The new system allows for the incorporation of a phone system, should it be required, as well as multiple meeting and breakout rooms, and a mass email system. There was no cost to the KCR COAD due to the association between the SOC and Virtual Guardians.

Activation

- On approximately May 7th, the COAD was formally activated via an RFA from Hunter Morgan, JOCO EM Planner. The specifics were for ESF 6 Mass Care and ESF 7 Resource Management. This was about the situation that evolved from the mass evictions at Aspen Place in Gardner. The total estimate was between 600 and 700 people, plus pets, who were given 48 hours to vacate due to unsafe conditions. Many of these residents had limited (if any) resources, were seniors, had access and functional needs, and had school-aged children.
- Before this formal activation, the COAD and JOCO EM had been in contact and briefed about the forthcoming RFA. I, in turn, briefed likely needed COAD committees, and we were on standby and then activated, immediately available to respond.
- The COAD and committee Chairs attended multiple staffings about the situation with Aspen Place and were fully involved throughout the activation.
- Using the formula created by the Independent Sector (<https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>), the value of the assistance provided by the COAD during this brief activation was more than \$3,000. The reason this was tracked was because it is essential to be able to tangibly show potential funders the value in dollars of what we do and, above all else, the impact of what we do.
- Feedback on the COAD's activation was very favorable by JOCO. We have discussed the Aspen Place activation as a leadership team so that we may continue to refine our practices and be as well-prepared as possible for the subsequent activation and similar events.

Membership

- Since January, approximately 11 new members have been added from about six new organizations to the COAD. The other six new members were from organizations already a part of the COAD.
- There is a formal membership plan in place, and it is ongoing.

- The executive team identified gaps in the membership as it pertains to disciplines involved, functions performed, etc., and those specific gaps were of primary focus in recruitment.
- Some of the key outreaches are listed under “Partnerships/Outreach” in this report.

Internship

- The COAD has started to develop an internship program for a multitude of reasons. Our goal is to shape the future of emergency management and all the disciplines involved through the provision of real-world experiences. We and the communities served benefit by having students who are advanced in their studies and trained in the latest in their respective fields.
- An MOU was written, reviewed by legal counsel, and revised. With this in hand, the COAD has reached out to multiple schools and universities and met with UMKC specifically to begin potentially accepting interns as early as 2025.
- Accepted interns will be assigned to a committee/relevant function pertinent to their respective disciplines (e.g., medical students to the Health and Medical Committee or psychology/social work/counseling students to the Behavioral Health Committee).
- Interns will work within a committee and under the supervision of the Chair(s); however, to avoid over-burdening our leads, the Executive Leadership team will provide support, and I, as the Chair of the COAD, will assume ultimate responsibility for this program.
- Our internship program is customizable to meet the needs of both the student and COAD, and it features a built-in level of flexibility that other programs lack. Our goal is to integrate this into an ongoing part of what we do, shaping and contributing to the field of EM and best serving our communities.

Website/Related

- The prior COAD website was on the GoDaddy platform. As mentioned, it is now on the Wix platform and has been completely redesigned. The new website is at: www.kansascityregionalcoad.org. This change was made to enhance the site's security, introduce additional features, and achieve cost-effectiveness by spending less while delivering more.
- Aly has co-access to the website so that it is never 100% under any specific person (be it Chair or otherwise). This is done so that if someone is not available, moves on, etc., the COAD is never left without a way to access its own site.

- This is primarily maintained by the Chair and updated at least weekly. It includes a variety of new features such as one-pagers for each committee, calendars, our EIOG, and more.
- Libraries under each committee are forthcoming, allowing users to click on a committee, view the one-pager, and access other pertinent documents individually.
- A COAD brochure was developed and is also posted on the new website, which was launched in February (roughly). The purpose of the brochure is to have something tangible to distribute at community events, when speaking, or similar occasions. We will be printing the brochures once our PO Box and COAD phone are in place and the brochure can be updated. It is vital that, as the COAD grows and leaders come and go, there is a central address and phone that does not constantly change. Along this way, it will be easy to identify who is with the COAD as we are ordering shirts with our name and logo.

Partnerships/Outreach

- Registered with the Tool Bank. Their disaster services can, within 48 hours, ship trailers full of desperately needed tools of all sorts to expedite the recovery process. They do so many amazing things; the KCR COAD is very fortunate to have this connection now.
- KC Care
- Children's Mercy Hospital
- Central Library and others. This is especially critical because libraries are social service hubs with excellent communication systems and are trusted partners in their respective communities. Some have large campuses that could potentially serve as distribution sites. This partnership has multiple possibilities.
- Krucial Rapid Response. This is a non-profit organization that rapidly prepares, mobilizes, and deploys medical personnel and critical resources to communities across the U.S. They are developing a Krucial volunteer faction that could serve in several capacities. The KCR COAD is fortunate to have now this connection to supplement its response and recovery capabilities.
- Tetra Tech
- Heart to Heart International. We are back connected with Heart to Heart, and the specific connection is Maddie Atwell.
- Tracie Smith, Assistant Divisional Social Services Director of the Salvation Army.
- PCs for People. Can provide up-to-date technology to help field staff more effectively and efficiently provide an array of services.
- Possible funding opportunities through the Children's Trust Fund. This is a newer partner of the SOC that I also Chair. During a meeting with them, I was informed of their strong desire to expand further into the KC area. The COAD is

a nonprofit organization, and the Trust Fund offers multiple funding opportunities for initiatives related to children. I also spoke about the Behavioral Health committee, as well as the LTRC, both of which could address the needs of children in disasters. This is a solid opportunity for us and one I will continue to pursue. They specifically said that we sounded like an excellent fit!

- Carrie Coogan, Deputy Director for Public Affairs and Community Engagement for the Kansas City Public Libraries
- Jim Staley, Director of Community Relations and Planning, Mid-Continent Public Libraries
- Shelley O'Brien, Executive Director of the Johnson County, Kansas Library Foundation
- Connected with Loretta Bonds, R7 Regional Disability Integration Specialist, to enhance our response and recovery work with people who have access and functional needs. My last day as Co-Chair of the AFN was May 7th. I will continue as a member. I will NOT, however, be leaving behind the issue of people with AFN in disasters. I see that as something that we can increase the focus on right here in the COAD.
- Just Serve
- Bob Potemski KSART or Kansas State Animal Response Team
- Reached out to Answering the Call and am awaiting a reply. This is a nonprofit that focuses on care for first responders and related people. I thought it would be a good idea to form a partnership with them for many reasons. If we had a mass scale response such as what we are seeing in St. Louis, first responder fatigue is very real. If we expect volunteers to do what they do which truly makes the COAD, then we need to take care of our volunteers. My thoughts. Along this way, I attended: Preventing Staff Burnout – Retention Strategies
- Global Care Force (<https://globalcareforce.org/about-us/>).

Community Involvement

- In order to best serve our communities, the COAD believes that it is important to understand who they are and their specific challenges. With this knowledge, we can tailor response and recovery planning to what may arise in a disaster for that particular place. One way to get to know our communities better is through regular service. This should be happening more regularly than it is but, we are working on that. In August, we are booked to have a table at a Resource Fair in Raytown.
- Inquiries have been made with Just Serve to see about potential opportunities for assisting them or a partner agency.

Preparedness Efforts

- EIOG, as mentioned, is now posted in the final draft on the COAD's website. The EIOG is tentatively scheduled for presentation at the July MEMC.
- To-Go Boxes. At one point, these existed but over the years, track was lost of them. I (Jennifer) made an effort to find out what happened to them, but to no avail. I have since re-created two To-Go Boxes (minus the forms). The forms that go with them still need to be replaced. I (Jennifer) have possession of the newly created To-Go Boxes, as we have no permanent place to store them. The boxes are consequently located in Raytown, but within a 5-minute drive of Independence and Kansas City.

Miscellaneous

- Language services
- Reached out to Chad Muir about templates that we can incorporate into our bylaws/revisions of such.
- Created a free account for a Nonprofit Grant Tracker (<https://baserow.io/templates/non-profit-organization-management>). This provides an efficient way to manage and monitor grants as we continue our efforts to identify potential funding sources. Along those lines, we are considering having an intern research possible grants.
- Giving thought to GIS to map all hazards, better understand the affected areas, and thereby develop more targeted preparedness and recovery strategies. There is an ESRI program available for nonprofits to receive discounted software: <https://www.esri.com/en-us/industries/nonprofit/nonprofit-program>.
- Had a meeting with Carl Hopkins, Volunteer-Disaster Response, Church of the Resurrection, and we discussed several things such as the Go-Boxes, volunteer training, etc. He advised that he would further connect me with leaders within the COR. That meeting occurred on June 4th. At that meeting, key stakeholders in disaster response and recovery were present. Discussed were our respective roles and responsibilities, disaster response teams, volunteer reception centers, shelters, counseling, children in disasters, response gap analyses, and our next steps.
- I (Jennifer) completed: [Intentional attack awareness for special events training for volunteers and staff – Prepare Metro KC](#). Also completed was Remarkably Resilient Together (RRT) Workshop on June 25th.
- Nonprofit Connect: We are pursuing membership to expand our capacity, allowing us to include volunteers who have perhaps retired from EM or related fields but would like to remain active in some capacity, and more. Membership affords us multiple benefits, including leads on potential funding opportunities. The link to benefits is: <https://www.npconnect.org/membership/>

- The COAD bylaws are being reviewed for potential revision.
- IAEM Conference. The COAD will be represented with attendance at the event, and I (Jennifer) am giving a presentation on Children in Disasters.
- SLARCC. We have regularly attended these calls to show support for the extensive tornado damage in the St. Louis area. It has also been an opportunity for us to refine our own response and recovery plans, seeing some of the challenges experienced in St. Louis.
- A directory of the current COAD membership has been started that will mirror that (in form) of what I (Jennifer) have for the SOC or Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters. As Chair in that group, I divided our membership by categories so it is easy to find who does what when something specific is needed.
- Central reporting source in the event of a disaster so people do not have to complete survey, forms, etc continuously. Thought being considered.
- Permits needed for temporary housing in the event of a disaster...what can we do now? Thought being considered.
- 20% of payments from insurance issue. This was an issue in regards to the St. Louis disaster response. Just when homeowners desperately need every penny, there is an ordinance that many were unaware of that requires insurance to withhold up to 25% of a payout in an escrow account. See here for details: <https://www.firstalert4.com/2025/05/29/mayor-spencer-says-city-is-working-suspend-ordinance-which-holds-part-insurance-claims-tornado-victims/>. What can we do now to prepare (assuming this is a policy here in our region) and educate homeowners?
- Using GIS to map numbers in a disaster. Considering how this would be incorporated into our overall response.
- Shirts to identify us as the KCR COAD. I (Jennifer) am getting an estimate on this on June 20th. Since we don't have ID tags or any other identification at this point, I think it's essential that we are readily identifiable as the KCR COAD.

Six Month Check-In with the 2025 Strategic Plan

- The overall focus for 2025 is in the COAD's plan and the progress to date is as follows (in bold):
 - Increase membership: Devise and implement an outreach plan to attract new members from various disciplines and organizations. This will be an ongoing, continuous process. **Membership as previously mentioned in this document has increased by 17 people and 6 new organizations not previously involved with the COAD. There is an ongoing membership drive plan in place.**

- Increase communication and information sharing: Establish a new, secure website that is kept current. Regular membership emails informing of upcoming events, meetings, or emergencies. Develop a brochure that explains who we are, what we do. **A new secure and expanded website has now been in place for a few months. Membership emails are at a minimum sent out 2-4 weeks prior to meetings and in between as needed. These communications occurred more frequently when the COAD was activated for instance. A summary of those activities was sent out to the membership. A brochure was developed and is posted on our website. This will be formally printed once the COAD has secured a PO Box and a phone number specific to the COAD. The logic behind this is to have a consistent address and phone number that does not change every time leadership changes.**
- Provide a colloquium for all members to learn from other subject matter experts about pertinent issues in disaster response and recovery. Increase general membership meetings to bi-monthly instead of quarterly. **The General Membership Meetings are now occurring bi-monthly and always include a guest presentation on a pertinent EM topic followed by report outs that are now required from each committee lead, and our usual protocols.**
- Advance existing committees and subcommittees by filling vacancies, meeting regularly, and having a work plan with objective, measurable, and obtainable goals relating back to the mission of that particular group. Report outs from the committees or subcommittees at every general membership meeting. **This is occurring as stated and we continue to expand our membership and build these committees with the ultimate goal of them being completely full at some point soon. The committees are at the heart of what we provide, and they need to be as strong as possible. Each committee is active, has at least one lead, and members that are working on at least 1 project pertinent to response and recovery.**
- Increase community involvement by regular community service, speaking at events, and outreach. Learn before disaster strikes what the particular challenges and assets of a community may be, and form trusted relationships to affect a more efficient disaster response. **We are scheduled to have a table at a Resource Fair in August. We have reached out to Just Serve to see if there are projects that we could also participate in.**
- Finalize the EIOG or Emergency Incident Operations Guide to organize efforts in support of Regional, County, and Local Emergency Management Response and Recovery Operations during critical events. **The EIOG is finalized and posted on our website.**
- Create an internship program in partnership with local colleges, universities, and training programs to supplement committees and subcommittees, provide

valuable learning opportunities and shape the future of emergency management. **We have written and revised an MOU that was reviewed by legal counsel. The COAD has met with UMKC and will continue to meet with them and other potential partners. There is a possibility that we may be ready to receive interns the latter part of this year or the early part of 2026.**

- Capitalize on our 501 c3 nonprofit status and apply for grants to expand capabilities during times it is most needed. **This is ongoing. We had pursued a grant through Verizon Wireless very recently however, we did not qualify because we do not have 4 full-time paid employees as a nonprofit. We were however successful in getting a \$1500 grant for the LTRC to address AFN. We continue to explore funding options.**
- Further support community partners, organizations, and teams by attending their meetings and promoting their respective missions through our platforms. **The COAD regularly participates in other meetings such as those with the MEMC, SOC, etc. We are a regular presence at the SLARCC calls that occur daily and have been for a few weeks.**
- Complete a mission analysis in the LTRC to identify capacity gaps in recovery. **This has been done and is an ongoing process to stay on top of changing needs and resources.**
- Focus on the access and functional needs of populations that may need additional assistance during times of disasters and plan for such. **As mentioned the COAD got a \$1500 grant for the AFN and the LTRC. We are also talking with Dr. Sharon White-Lewis about the possibility of incorporating the SPICE program into a newly formed COAD committee to specifically focus on AFN/Seniors in Disasters.**

The KCR COAD wishes to thank everyone for their ongoing support and participation. We welcome and encourage feedback, thoughts, suggestions, etc. as we continue to grow our capacity. Please reach out to any member of the Executive Team with your ideas.