

KANSAS CITY REGIONAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS (COAD) 2025-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN YEAR END REVIEW

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:** Awaiting final acceptance from candidate.
- **Recording Secretary:** Shayna Deitchman, Disaster Case Manager, Americorps and Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph.
- **Membership Secretary:** Stephanie Spitz, Senior Project Manager, UMKC/Americorps.
- **Treasurer:** Allison Breeze, Emergency Management Coordinator, Office of Emergency Management, City of Kansas City, MO.
- **Planner:** Dan Reece, Emergency Planner and Training Expert, Independent.
- **Logistics Specialist:** Dante Gliniecki, Manager, Emergency Preparedness Division, City of Independence.

The current KCR COAD leadership is the same as above except for:

- *The Recording Secretary is now open and, in the interim, has been completed by the Chair.*
- *The Vice Chair is now, Sue Johnson.*
- *The Membership Secretary is now, Cheryl Gates, CPM.*
- *There is now a second Chair on the Planning team and that is J.D. VanWay. This team has also added another Planner and that is Assistant, Sadaf Nezami.*
- *The search is underway for a PIO 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 2025

- **Increase membership:** Devise and implement an outreach plan to attract new members from various disciplines and organizations. This will be an ongoing, continuous process.
 - *A formal membership plan was developed to attract members and organizations from an array of disciplines. In 11 months, 68 new people from more than a dozen new organizations were added to the COAD membership roster. This represents a 36% increase in membership. Industry standards are organizations seeking growth only achieve between 8 and 10% the first year.*
- **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.
 - *The new website on a more secure platform was activated in February 2025. It remains updated on at least a weekly basis and is generally updated much more often than that. It contains multiple new categories of information when compared to its predecessor such as links to all the COAD committees, calendars, and more. Emails consisting of meeting reminders, updates, and announcements are sent to the membership on a regular basis. The brochure was developed and is available for download on the website. The website further took on a new address and is: www.kansascityregionalcoad.org. Printed copies of the brochure are available on request.*
- **Provide a colloquy for all members** to learn from other subject matter experts about pertinent issues is disaster response and recovery. Increase general membership meetings to bi-monthly instead of quarterly.
 - *The general membership meetings were increased from quarterly to bi-monthly. The meetings are offered hybrid on Webex and in-person. Each of these meetings has had at least one subject matter expert presenting on a pertinent EM topic. The average attendance at General Membership meetings was approximately 15 overall. The current average attendance at those same meetings is approximately 38.*

- **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 group. Report outs from the committees or subcommittees at every general membership meeting.
 - *At the start of the 2025 year, the COAD had two active committees. It now has nine such committees, all meet on a regular basis and provide report-outs at the general membership meetings. Each committee has a “one pager” on the website explaining who they are and what they do. The respective Chair or Chairs have measurable goals and objectives that all relate back to the 2025 Strategic Plan.*
- **Increase community involvement** 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 engaged in monthly community service through various projects, speaking engagements (church groups, social service agencies, etc.), and is available to appear as a team at community events, schools, etc. We are currently in discussion with the Independence Schools about speaking engagements there pertaining to children in disasters and this is tentatively scheduled for March 2026 to begin.*
- **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 was finalized but will remain in continuous review to ensure that the COAD is best meeting the needs of the communities served.*
- **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.
 - *The internship program was created and has a brochure for such on the COAD’s website. An MOU was developed, reviewed by legal counsel, and revised. The COAD is actively marketing the internship program and is poised to begin receiving interns in 2026.*
- **Capitalize on our 501 c3 nonprofit status** and apply for grants to expand capabilities during times it is most needed.
 - *The COAD received a \$1500 grant that is solely for the LTRC at the COAD to assist with supporting people with AFN. The COAD is exploring finding a volunteer grant writer that could devote more time to looking for applicable grants.*
- **Further support community partners, organizations, and teams** by attending their meetings and promoting their respective missions through our platforms.
 - *The COAD has and will continue to post flyers on its website from partner organizations. The Executive Team at the COAD attends multiple community-based meetings such as (but not limited to) MEMC, CDRN, and other COADs such as the St. Louis COAD, SLARCC.*
- **Complete a mission analysis** in the LTRC to identify capacity gaps in recovery.

- *This is ongoing and the lead for this committee is Greg Topping. Potential gaps in housing and transportation have especially been of focus.*
- **Focus on the access and functional needs** of populations that may need additional assistance during times of disasters and plan for such.
- *The COAD created an additional committee especially devoted to AFN. It meets monthly and has given multiple community-based presentations. That new committee also acquired SPICE which formerly was with AmeriCorps. This is a program specifically for senior preparedness in disasters.*

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:

- Completion of a mission analysis to identify capacity gaps in recovery.
- Improving community recovery and resilience via community planning and based on the mission analysis and using a RRF or Regional Recovery Framework.
- Increase local partnerships to expand capacity.
- To be announced.

Contact(s):

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

Meeting Information:

- Third Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. on Webex (Subject to change with new Chair, Greg Topping's schedule).

(Greg remains as the Chair and is meeting monthly. He is actively working to complete a mission analysis as this is ongoing as is membership development. He has participated in calls where the COAD was activated).

- **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:

- Research into affordable and rapid sheltering options for disaster survivors.
- Plan and coordinate local and national resources to ensure disaster survivors have access to food and water.
- Plan and coordinate for the provision of emergency supplies.
- Reunification support to reunite individuals with their families.
- To be announced.

Contact(s):

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

Meeting Information:

- First Thursday at 9 a.m. on Webex

(John continues as Chair and has combined these meetings with the other group that he Chairs for the COAD, Health and Medical. Emma Boyd has joined John as the Co-Chair of Mass Care. They are now meeting on the Teams platform. John is active in the projects noted and having MRPs (Mission Ready Packages) for all members and has begun the work to have a subcommittee involving pets in disasters. John and Emma both have participated in calls when the COAD was activated and Emma was at the MARC that the COAD set up when it was activated for the second time in 2025).

- **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.

- Planning for the full inclusion of mental health supports in preparedness, incident response, and recovery.

Contact(s):

- Bary Kramer, Chair, Bary.Kramer@dmh.mo.gov or Josette Mitchell, Co-Chair, jmitchell@swopehealth.org. For backup, please reach out to the KCR COAD Chair, Dr. Jennifer L'Heureux at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

- To be announced, please contact Mr. Kramer or Ms. Mitchell for further information.

(Bary remains as the Chair and has a new Co-Chair, Laurie Snyder. They continue to meet every other month and are working on membership development, connecting with the community mental health centers, and building a library under their tab on the website. Bary has been available for and participated in calls when the COAD was activated. Laurie has joined as Co-Chair within the last month).

- **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:

- Completion of the EIOG.
- Internship research and build KCRCOAD internship program.
- 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.
- 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 Paul Gerard Marx, Co-Chair, paulgmarx@outlook.com. For backup, please reach out to the KCR COAD Chair, Dr. Jennifer L'Heureux at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

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

(Dan remains as a Chair and has a co-Chair now, J.D. VanWay. They have also added a student assistant, Sadaf Nezami. The EIOG has been completed, work is ongoing with MRPs, and an exercise is being planned for January 2026. The committee is active in a multitude of additional ways including developing various guides it supports the mission of the COAD. Dan has participated in calls when the COAD was activated and planning efforts).

- **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:

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

Contact(s):

- Karen Whitson, Chair, karen@kswhitson.com. For backup, please reach out to the KCR COAD Chair, Dr. Jennifer L'Heureux at: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov

Meeting Information:

- To be announced, please contact Ms. Whitson for further information.

(Karen remains as the Chair and Charles Gerhart is the co-Chair. Joining them is Todd Jordan as the Chair of Financial Management. Karen presented at an MEMC meeting and gave a very thorough accounting of how donations management works. The committee continues to build partnerships and stands ready to assist when needed. Karen was present for calls for the first activation of the COAD in 2025 and was available if needed for the second activation).

- **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:

- Develop 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.
- Construct a process for the recruitment and screening of volunteers ensuring the qualifications and capabilities of each volunteer for the role assigned.
- Develop a system for unaffiliated volunteers to ensure all activities are coordinated.
- Develop appropriate training and education protocols on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Develop protocols for the regular monitoring of volunteer activities.

Contacts:

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

Meeting Information:

- Third Thursday at 9 a.m. on Webex.

(I, Jennifer remain as Chair. Meetings continue monthly. The committee has instituted a system and has an account to perform instant background checks. There is also now an account and system for logging volunteer hours. We conducted a mini exercise to test our capabilities insofar as assembling volunteers with little to no notice. There is a plan in place for assigning volunteers to the best match insofar as opportunities based on a strengths model. Protocols continue to be refined, work is ongoing for responding to unaffiliated volunteers, and regular monitoring).

- **Citizen Corps Outreach Liaisons**

Overview:

Citizen Corps outreach liaisons in emergency management, like those in Missouri's Citizen Corps Program, are key to connecting communities with emergency preparedness resources and fostering collaboration between government, community leaders, and volunteers.

Projects:

- Promote emergency preparedness training and education via a comprehensive outreach plan. The plans will focus in large part on increasing preparedness and resiliency.
- Build partnerships between various entities to ensure coordinated responses during disasters.
- Develop a community building and engagement plan to engage citizens in all-hazards emergency preparedness.
- To be announced.

Contacts:

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

Meeting Information:

- First Friday at 9 a.m. on Webex.

(This committee was combined with another and no longer exists).

• **Emergency Assistance**

Overview:

In emergency management, emergency assistance refers to the support provided to individuals and communities affected by disasters, encompassing services like shelter, food, medical care, and financial aid, often coordinated by organizations like COADS, FEMA, the Red Cross, and local authorities.

Projects:

- Develop a strong coordinative and collaborative plan between all entities and levels of government for an effective emergency assistance response. This is to take into consideration the various kinds of assistance that may be needed.
- Increase awareness of EMACs.
- To be announced.

Contacts:

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

Meeting Information:

- Second Friday at 10 a.m. on Webex.

(This committee was combined with another and no longer exists).

• **Health Outreach Team**

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:

- Collaborate effectively with various public health organizations, local government, LE, schools, hospitals, and healthcare organizations.
- Increase preparedness through planning and coordination efforts to ensure that health outreach teams stand ready to respond when needed.
- Conduct trainings that prepare health outreach teams to be adaptable and able to work in various challenging conditions.

Contacts:

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

Meeting Information:

- Second Monday at 10 a.m. on Webex.

(This committee was renamed “Health and Medical.” John remains as the Chair and has combined these meetings with his other committee, “Mass Care.” This committee remains very active and meets bimonthly, and the noted projects are in progress. John routinely attends additional meetings, is seeking to create a subcommittee pertaining to animals in disasters and is active in recruitment).

That concludes the review of the COAD's 2025 Strategic Plan. Some highlights and additional activities from or since that plan are the following:

- There were two additional committees added (bringing the total number of committees to nine): AFN or Access and Functional Needs and Children in Disasters. Both meet monthly and have given multiple presentations in the community. I (Jennifer) am the Chair of both committees.
- The newly created AFN committee incorporated the former AMERICORPS SPICE program that focuses on seniors in disasters.
- Our General Membership meetings increased from quarterly to bi-monthly.
- General Membership meetings always have a featured presentation and report-outs from each committee. Agendas and meeting reminders are distributed at least a week prior to meetings.
- The COAD created a new website on a different platform moving from Go Daddy to Wix. The new website has been up and running since about February. The link is:

www.kansascityregionalcoad.org. The website has many features that the former one did not and is updated on at least a weekly basis.

- The Executive Team meets monthly and communicates regularly throughout the week.
- An internship program is set to launch in January 2026 when applications can be accepted.
- The COAD was activated twice in 2025. The first was in approximately, May by JOCO EM because of a mass eviction of residents in a Gardner, KS apartment complex. Hundreds including many who were seniors, had AFN, and low-income individuals and families had 48 hours to leave after the complex was condemned. The COAD partnered with many organizations and sent volunteers to assist the SA with sheltering. So many wonderful organizations and people came together to ensure needs were met. The COAD was again activated in approximately July by Independence, MO EM. This was in response to unprecedented flooding in Independence that destroyed homes and displaced many. As a part of this response, the COAD was asked to stand up a MARC. This was completed and included 12 organizations. After this formal activation, an additional need by a senior resident of Independence came to light. Her basement flooded with sewage and debris. Mold growth was very active and the damages were significant. The COAD partnered with Missouri Baptist Disaster Relief and other agencies and the lady's basement was mucked out and fully restored at no cost to her. The other group that I (Jennifer) Chair, SOCCEED or, Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters or, SOC for short, paid for the commercial size dumpster that was needed as well as lunch for the volunteers on the first day of work, and provided some funds for an additional 3 lunches. After a few weeks of work, the basement was fully restored at no cost to the senior lady who had no financial resources and just lost her husband earlier in the year. The COAD was almost activated a third time, and that time would have been by Olathe, KS EM, fortunately, the issue that was at hand was successfully resolved without needing activation.
- The Chair sends out a weekly update to the Executive Team to ensure constant communication. Bi-monthly reports (reports in between our bi-monthly meetings) are provided to the general membership and posted to the COAD's website. This is done in the interest of transparency.
- The KCR COAD participates in other COADS to support them such as the St. Louis COAD.
- The COAD now has t-shirts, insulated tumblers, and lanyards that are all available free of charge to members who would like such. We have table runners with our name and logo when we appear at community functions.
- In membership outreach, the COAD has specifically reached out to Chambers of Commerce as they play a vital role in EM.
- The COAD is involved with multiple endeavors related to FIFA World Cup Planning.