

New Jersey COAD Quick Guide

Purpose

What is a COAD?

Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) are coalitions based within a community or geographic area that serve to enhance a community's ability to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. They are comprised of and convene organizations and agencies from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors—for the purpose of planning, training, and relationship building in advance of future disasters, and coordinating and collaborating relief efforts during and after disasters.

What is the goal of a COAD?

The primary mission of a COAD is to promote community resilience and empowerment. Building upon the assets of the community, the COAD fosters working relationships among organizations to come together to leverage their available resources and provide effective services (with minimal duplication of efforts) to the community. They accomplish this through:

Cooperation: *Identifying common goals and creating shared solutions*

Coordination: *Effectively utilizing resources to help communities prepare and recover*

Communication: *Developing and maintaining effective channels for sharing information*

Collaboration: *Working together to identify and overcome challenges*

COADs are part of a larger VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) network—which includes National VOAD and 56 state and territory VOADs. Local COADs should collaborate with their state VOAD to gain support and guidance through the resources and partnerships available to them at the state and federal levels. As well, local COADs should connect with other county and regional COADs to share ideas, resources, and trainings throughout the disaster cycle.

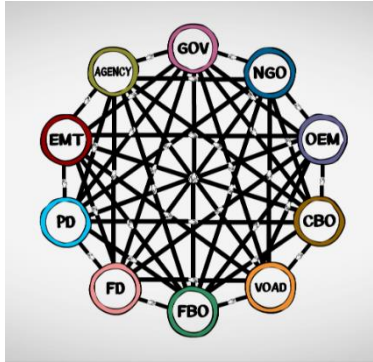
Note: *In New Jersey, all county and regional COADs are eligible to be Associate Members of New Jersey VOAD. Visit <http://www.njvoad.org/resources/> for more information.*

Fundamentals

WHO should be a part of the COAD?

COADs can include any agency or organization with a role to play in any phase of the disaster cycle. The strongest COADs are those who have participation from organizations who – together – represent the whole community. Some common organizations include:

- Local Emergency Management Agencies
- Local Non-Profits and Disaster Relief Agencies
- Houses of Worship
- Local Government
- Businesses



- Civic Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Public Libraries
- Utility Companies
- Hospitals
- Information and Referral Services
- Local Media

Image taken from “Stronger Community, Better Response Connecting Community Organizations During Disaster,” created by Regional Catastrophic Planning NY-NJ-CT-PA. <https://youtu.be/qhurBdMXraM>.

WHAT role can the COAD play?

COADs are active during every phase of the disaster cycle. However, what they do can vary depending on the community they serve. Rather than choosing a role to fill and then finding the resources to support this task, COADs should focus on what their communities and members can contribute and collaborate to enhance and strengthen these roles.

Listed below are some common tasks COADs should consider:

Before disasters, COADs should...

- Decide on the geographic area they’re covering;
- Get to know their community and its resources;
- Develop communication plans; and
- Make plans for volunteers, donations, or any other functional areas that are applicable.

During disasters, COADs should...

- Connect with their county Emergency Management Agencies and NJVOAD to establish information flow;
- Convene member agencies to gather information on needs and available resources;
- Compile information to share with all relevant parties; and
- Facilitate connections to meet needs.

After disasters, COADs could...

- Continue to facilitate connections between needs and resources;
- Help set up a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) as needed;
- Establish a long-term recovery committee/group, if needed; and
- Evaluate the execution of plans to make adjustments for next time.

Note: *It is important to remember, all organizations maintain their individual autonomy and carry on their individual missions as members of the COAD.*

Functional areas that COADs may consider participating in or undertaking include:

- Coordinating trainings
- Supporting collaborations of community preparedness events
- Community/public health
- Citizen Corps programs
- Child care for first responders/disaster workers
- Donations/volunteer management
- Emergency assistance (information and referral assistance, debris removal, damage assessment)
- Long-term recovery group/committee (volunteer coordination, resource coordination/development, construction services, disaster case management)
- Multi-Agency Resource Center
- Mass care (sheltering, feeding, bulk distribution, pet preparedness/sheltering)
- Emotional and spiritual care



Image taken from "National VOAD: 101," published by Bethanie Greene. <https://slideplayer.com/slide/5307107/>.

WHERE should a COAD be formed?

COADs can be county or regionally based. Every state is different, so the area covered by a COAD should be determined based on the needs and resources of the area.

WHEN is a COAD active?

COADs are active all the time, whether or not there is a disaster. The activities that a COAD engages in will change based upon which phase of the disaster cycle they are in (e.g. planning and training during non-disaster times; response and recovery activities during disaster times). Keep in mind that using the network of relationships to support organizational missions outside of disaster times is a key way to maintain interest and engagement and to keep the COAD healthy and functional.

WHY should a COAD be formed?

Most disasters and emergencies begin and end locally. So it is important that community organizations and local emergency management work collaboratively in order to quickly respond to and fully recover from disasters.

HOW does a COAD get started?

To begin, gather a core group of community members who are committed to the cause. Next steps will include inviting as many organizations as have roles in the disaster cycle to the table. Then, get to know your community – it's resources and gaps; it's shared goals and needs. From there your group can create a shared vision that will help guide the priorities and functions of the COAD.

Key Considerations

Sustainability and continued investment from organizations is key to the success of the COAD. Burnout during disaster times, or disinterest during non-disaster times, are real threats to the consistency and longevity of the COAD. There are several key considerations to help work through these potential pitfalls.

WHOLE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Get everyone involved! Find out who is in your community and what matters most to them. What skills and resources do they offer the community and what gaps still exist. The more diverse and complimentary the organizations in the COAD are, the easier the lift and the more you'll be able to accomplish. Utilizing existing strengths of the community to collaborate and accomplish common goals – throughout the whole disaster cycle – will help create buy-in from organizations and extend the resources in the community.

TRAINING

Planning and providing trainings that are relevant and pertinent to participating organizations – including the enhancement of their daily operations – will give organizations an incentive to continually stay involved in the COAD. Trainings are also a way to educate the organizations in your COAD about the disaster cycle and what their roles may be when the next disaster occurs.

ROLES & TASKS

Disasters are ever-changing and complex situations. Consequently, what works for one COAD may not work for another. This applies to the roles that a COAD may undertake, or the way they are structured and organized. Every decision should be informed by the needs of the community rather than traditional norms or modus operandi. Always remember that the COAD is formed to support and serve the community and not the other way around.

Resources

COADs –

New Jersey VOAD/COAD Manual: <http://www.njvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/New-Jersey-COAD-Manual.pdf>

National VOAD Quick Organizing Guide:
<https://njvoad.communityos.org/cms/system/files/National%20VOAD%20VOAD-COAD%20Quick%20Organizing%20Guide.pdf>

Sample Regional COAD Presentation: <http://www.njvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Why-COAD-Presentation.pdf>

Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) –

MARC Manual: <http://www.njvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MARC-Guidelines-NJVOAD-2019.pdf>

MARC Guidelines & Considerations: <http://www.njvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MARC-Guidelines.pdf>

Long-Term Recovery (LTR) –

New Jersey Long-Term Recovery Guide:
<https://njvoad.communityos.org/cms/system/files/NJ%20VOAD%20LTRG%206-26-16%20.pdf>

Other COAD, MARC and LTR resources can be found at
<http://www.njvoad.org/resources/> and <https://www.nvoad.org/resources-center/>.