



State of South Carolina
Department on Aging

Henry McMaster
Governor

Connie D. Munn, MSW
Director

PROGRAM INSTRUCTION FOR: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RELIEF POLICY

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR: Area Agencies on Aging

SUBJECT: PROGRAM INSTRUCTION (PI) for EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RELIEF POLICY

DATE: August 10, 2026

AAA COMPLIANCE DATE: July 1, 2027

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RELIEF POLICY	POLICY NUMBER
REFERENCE(S): 45 CFR 1321.97, 45 CFR 1322.33, South Carolina Code of Regulation 58-101	
RELEASE DATE: July 1, 2026	AAA COMPLIANCE DATE: July 1, 2027

Purpose:

Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies is essential to ensure safety, minimize harm, and restore normalcy as quickly as possible. This involves anticipating potential threats, having plans and resources ready, acting swiftly during an emergency, and supporting long-term recovery efforts. Older adults are at a disproportionately high-risk during emergencies and disaster due to various contributing factors, mobility, internet and communications access, lack of financial means, and fixed incomes.

Policy Statement

Emergency planning and preparedness for aging services is governed by federal regulation 45 CFR Part 1321.97, which requires that SUAs and AAAs maintain plans for emergency preparedness.

The State of South Carolina, in accordance with statutes implemented by South Carolina Regulation 58-101, is required to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters. Emergency response and designated personnel, equipment, and facilities will maintain a state of readiness to save lives, prevent or minimize damage to property, protect public health, and aid older adults, their family caregivers and individuals with disabilities threatened by an emergency or who become victims of a disaster or public health threat.

As mandated in the State Emergency Operations Plan (SCEOP), the SCDOA is charged with primary or support responsibilities for the following emergency response activities; Emergency Support Function (ESF)-6/Mass Care (Support), ESF-8/Health and Medical Services (Support), and ES-15/Public Information (Primary).

SUA Responsibility

- **Risk Assessment:** The SUA shall utilize the risk assessment completed by the South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD), who works in conjunction with the Hazards Vulnerability and Resilience Institute, University of South Carolina, to conduct all-hazards risk assessments and to determine the counties and populations most at risk. The SUA shall adopt an all-hazards approach, rather than deferring to individual county priorities.
- **Coordination with Stakeholders:** The SUA shall coordinate emergency response activities with AAAs, service providers, local emergency response agencies, relief organizations, the Catawba Nation, and State agencies responsible for emergency and disaster preparedness.
 - Oversight of AAAs is identified as a critical function of the SUA during emergencies and disasters. The SUA shall follow a detailed communication protocol outlining the when and how to communicate with the AAAs, as well as the information to be exchanged. This protocol is documented in the communications plan of the SCDOA Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Manual and Operating Procedures.
- **Public Health Emergency Operations:** The Department of Social Services is the lead agency for ESF-6/Mass Care, coordinating the capability to meet basic human needs (sheltering to include pets, food, distribution of emergency relief supplies, and disaster welfare inquiries) in disaster situations. The SUA is identified as a support agency for ESF-6; to maintain communications with the AAAs before, during and after a disaster,

to collect and provide essential information to determine operating conditions, to ensure that vulnerable seniors receiving services through the Aging Network, who are affected during an emergency/disaster, are identified, safeguarded, and shared securely with the appropriate emergency officials to receive assistance as needed, to coordinate with other agencies and organizations to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of older adults and those with disabilities to the extent possible, and to provide information, referral and assistance services as well as advocacy and assistance for applying for State and Federal assistance programs, as requested.

- **Plan Development and Updates:** The SUA shall incorporate emergency and disaster preparedness into its Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) as outlined in the SCDOA Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Manual and Operating Procedures. The SUA is also covered under the broader SCEOP Base Plan and associated Annexes 6, 8, and 15, which details the department's role and responsibilities during state and local emergencies. The SCEOP is maintained by the South Carolina Emergency Management Division with input provided by the SCDOA on an annual basis. SCDOA annually reviews and updates its disaster preparedness and response plan.
- **Leadership Involvement:** The involvement of the SCDOA Director in the development, revision, and implementation of emergency and disaster preparedness plans is outlined in the SCDOA COOP. The Director is the lead individual responsible for activating the emergency operations plan and managing emergency response activities. Updates to this plan shall be coordinated with the Emergency Management Coordinators.
- **Identifying vulnerable older adults:** The Department of Public Health is the lead agency for ESF-8/Health and Medical Services, organizing the capabilities to provide medical care, medical material management, public health, behavioral health, fatality management, medical transport, and healthcare facility evacuation in disaster situations. The SUA is identified as a support agency for assisting with the identification of medically vulnerable senior adult populations. The SCDOA Client Assessment is designed to document factors that may increase an individual's risk during emergency situations, including, but not limited to, living alone, absence of support networks, dependence on powered medical equipment, requirement for medication refrigeration, need for transportation, and/or utilization of a hospital/specialty bed.
- **Dissemination of Public Information During Emergencies/Disasters:** The South Carolina Emergency Management Division is the lead agency for ESF-15/Public Information, generating and coordinating timely public information with the appropriate level of government to avoid or minimize loss of life and property if a disaster is imminent or has occurred. The SUA is identified as a primary agency to provide information to disseminate

information related to the incident for the health, welfare, and safety of older adults, family caregivers, and those with disabilities.

- **Coordination with AAAs and Service Providers:** The SUA's COOP details the coordination with AAAs and service providers for essential functions and continuity of services.
- **Coordination with Tribal Governments:** The Catawba Nation is the only federally recognized Tribe in South Carolina, and it has sovereignty over tribal reservation lands located in York County. The SCDOA will maintain contact with Catawba Nation emergency personnel and assist as needed with emergency and disaster preparation, response, and recovery efforts. SCEMD coordination with the Catawba Nation is also a component of the SCEOP Base Plan.

AAA Responsibility

- **Partnership with Emergency Management Divisions:** The AAA shall have a good understanding of the emergency management division operations in all counties in the region and shall attend local meetings held by county emergency management divisions or other related assemblies, when appropriate. The AAA shall meet at least annually with local county emergency managers to convey the emergency needs of the AAAs, providers, and the regional aging network.
- **Emergency Plan Development:** Each AAA must develop a plan and maintain an emergency plan that addresses categories of activity: prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters. The plan is to be updated annually and submitted to the SCDOA by April 1 or the next business day.
 - Such plans shall include:
 - A COOP and an all-hazards emergency response plan based on completed risk assessments: essential functions, maintenance of vital records and databases, roles and responsibilities, alerts and notifications, continuity of event communications, alternate locations, activation and relocation directives, etc.
 - The State Emergency Management op-con levels determine what emergency functions should be performed at each op-con level in order to ensure that emergency responses are coordinated properly.
 - Information on how the SUA will be notified regarding changes in AAA and/or provider operational statuses, inability to provide essential services such as meals and well-check calls, unmet client needs, etc. i.e. completion of the SCDOA AAA Status communications form.

-
- Information regarding emergency meal provision to vulnerable older adults – see Emergency Meals Policy.

Preparation:

- Identification and description of coordination activities with federal, local, state emergency response agencies, service providers, relief organizations, local and state governments, and any other entities that have responsibility for disaster relief service delivery.
- As appropriate, describe coordination with Tribal Governments. The Catawba Nation is the only federally recognized Tribe in South Carolina, and it has sovereignty over tribal reservation lands located in York County.
- Include Mutual Aid Agreements between AAAs. AAAs to establish Memorandum of Agreements amongst regional AAAs for the purpose of continuity of operations. Should any regional AAA become inoperable, a team or staff from AAAs not impacted by the event will be assembled under a MOA to operate as the affected AAA until the office is re-established.
- Identify primary essential staff, staff duties and responsibilities, including specific chain of command and alternates, if agency leadership is unavailable.
- Identify locations of operations centers and alternates when primary offices are affected.
- Include assurances of the availability of office supplies for alternate locations, staff identification badges, and the like.
- Maintain current and up-to-date emergency contact information for AAA staff, provider directors, and county emergency management officials.
- Process for ongoing maintenance and updating of resource databases.
- Protocols for viable communications process to exchange information between the AAA and providers before, during and after an emergency situation in order to collect/provide essential information to determine operating conditions, interruption of services, and clients' needs for assistance.
- Process for ensuring that clients directing services through the aging network who are affected during an emergency/situation disaster are identified and shared

with the appropriate emergency officials to receive assistance, as needed.

- Process for sharing timely and accurate notices with the providers in-regards to weather watches/warnings, hazardous conditions/situations, disaster resources, and/or emergency related public notifications, as received by local emergency management officials and/or the Department on Aging Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordinator.
- Process for disseminating critical emergency related information pertaining to evacuation orders, emergency evacuation plans/routes, road closings, emergency/temporary food sites, and any other crucial information that shall assist clients during a disaster/emergency. Public notices, helpful resources, and recovery information shall be promoted and shared via any feasible means, such as agency website, providers, outreach opportunities, and/or applicable social media.
- Process for provision of Information, referral and assistance services for senior disaster survivors and the survivors' families, such as advocacy and assistance with applying for State and Federal assistance programs, as requested.
- Process for the continued delivery of aging services in the event that the contracted service provider is unable to operate or deliver services. Information should also document provisions established in advance, including back-up emergency agreements for essential services such as meal delivery, shelf-stable meals, and related supports.
- Process for identification of "high risk" and medically vulnerable adults receiving services through the aging network.
- Demographic profiles of older adults in the area for targeting of specialized assistance.

Response

The initial reaction to ensure safety, hygiene/sanitation, and security, either in advance of an impending emergency or immediately following, will include:

- Initiation of planned communications strategies and determination of impact of disaster on staff.

-
- Assignment of duties.
 - Contact with key providers.
 - Initiation of disaster-specific record-keeping, including, but not limited to, records of:
 - staff time, including overtime
 - supplies used
 - documentation of contacts with older adults
 - type of services provided
 - personal expenses
 - specific telephone logs
 - Preliminary assessment of scope of impact, including, but not limited to:
 - geographic scope and numbers of affected older adult/other target populations and their short- and long-term needs
 - kinds of services needed, including impact on transportation resources
 - identification of service gaps
 - provision of information to SCDOA
 - Employment, training, and deployment of field and outreach workers.
 - Follow-up contacts with all older adults/others initially assisted to determine additional needs which have developed, appropriateness of additional available resources, and need to advocate for additional resources.
 - Plans to promote continuity of services in the event that a contracted service provider is unable to operate or to deliver services.

Recovery

Recovery involves sustained care over a longer period, for the purpose of assisting people in re-establishing as normal a life as possible. Recovery includes:

- Shifting from emergency response to providing answers to more complex, long-range and long-term problems, including

arranging for psychological/mental health services for disaster victims;

- Providing access to increased resources that have become available;
- Providing Information, Referral and Assistance services for disaster survivors and the survivors' families; such as advocacy and assistance with applying for State and Federal assistance programs, as requested;
- Participation in long range planning and coordination with other agencies;
- Maintaining contact and providing services, including meeting non-immediate needs identified during the response phase
- A description of coordination activities for both development and long-range emergency and disaster preparedness plans and other information as deemed appropriate by the AAA.

See also:

SCDOA Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Manual and Operating Procedures – Do not link – “For Official Use Only” (contains private phone numbers and processes)

SCEMD Emergency Operations Plan

2023-sc-state-hazard-mitigation-plan.pdf

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/non-federal-continuity-plan-template_083118.pdf

<https://dph.sc.gov/sites/scdph/files/Library/00132-ENG-CR.pdf>

Emergency Meals Policy



Connie D. Munn, MSW
Agency Director, SCDOA