

Oklahoma Conference of Churches Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care

April 2017 Update



For more information about OCC's Disaster Program go to

<http://okchurches.org/emotional-and-spiritual-care/>
or contact

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As a national benchmark program in disaster spiritual care, the Oklahoma Conference of Churches continues to respond to disasters across the state. Our disaster emotional and spiritual care program, launched in response to the Central Oklahoma 2013 tornadoes, has now expanded state-wide thanks to the financial support of local, state, and national faith-based partners. Our disaster spiritual care team now includes more than 150 trained and credentialed disaster spiritual care providers representing 32 denominations and interfaith partners, as well as several non-denominational churches.

Serving Disaster-Affected Oklahomans

In addition to numerous preparedness events, trainings, and presentations, OCC has responded to an exceptionally large number of Oklahoma disasters over the past two years, many of which we continue to work in long-term recovery. Many of these disasters could be described as "low-attention disasters." OCC has responded to fifteen recent Oklahoma disasters:

- March 25, 2015: Moore EF-2 Tornado
- March 25, 2015: Sand Springs/Sapulpa Tornado
- May 1, 2015 through June 22, 2015: Flooding in 45 Oklahoma counties
- May 6, 2015: South OKC, Moore Tornado
- May 6, 2015: Bridge Creek Tornado
- October 24, 2015: Oklahoma State University Homecoming Parade crash
- December 26-27, 2015: Flooding
- March 30, 2016: Tulsa, Claremore, Verdigris Tornado
- May 9, 2016: Central Oklahoma Tornado
- May 9, 2016: Southeast Oklahoma Tornado
- June 12, 2016: Flooding, Lawton area
- June 12, 2016: Flooding, Maysville area
- September 3, 2016: 5.8 Earthquake, Pawnee
- November 6, 2016: 5.0 Earthquake, Cushing
- March 6, 2017: Northwest Oklahoma Wildfires began (800,000+ acres)



Training Academies

OCC launched a new Disaster Spiritual Care Academy training format in 2016 which trains three categories for credentialed Disaster Spiritual Care Providers, each with specific training courses, qualifications, and accountability requirements. Academy participants work toward credentialing as "Local Spiritual Care Responders," "Deployed Spiritual Care Responders" (responding to disasters outside of their local areas), and "Disaster Spiritual Care Team Leaders." Training is consistent with National VOAD training competency and ethical standards.



Vital Partnerships



Some of our greatest accomplishments have emerged as a result of our strong cross-agency relationships with governmental and non-profit partners such as the Oklahoma National Guard, the Mental Health Association Oklahoma, Tinker Air Force Base, the Oklahoma Medical Reserve Corp (particularly their Stress Response Team), the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Salvation Army, the Oklahoma Chapter of the American Red Cross, and our valued faith-based partners. Numerous multi-agency initiatives continue to bear fruit through shared deployments and cross-agency trainings.

National and Statewide Profile

OCC's disaster spiritual care program continues to attract national attention. We are piloting the National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) "Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines" in Oklahoma, in part due to the fact that OCC's director of Emotional and Spiritual Care was chair of the national writing group for these high profile Guidelines. As a result, OCC regularly receives requests for consultation from other states. OCC's Director of Emotional and Spiritual Care, Mary Hughes Gaudreau, serves on

the Executive Committee of the National VOAD Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee and as chair of the Oklahoma VOAD Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee.

In August of 2015, OCC co-sponsored the National Disaster Spiritual Care Summit in Chicago, an event which brought together "thought leaders" from across the nation to explore and create strategic application, implementation, and operationalization of the National VOAD Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines.

Tinker Air Force Base Memorandum of Understanding

In February of 2016, OCC signed a first-of-its-kind Memorandum of Understanding with the Tinker Air Force Base Chaplain's Office. This MOU has been sent to the Pentagon as a national prototype. OCC's disaster spiritual care team can now be called upon to serve Tinker civilian workers during crisis events, allowing OCC's trustworthy, previously vetted, and trained spiritual care providers to supplement the work of Tinker chaplains.



Ongoing Need

Due to the cumulative nature of traumatic events, communities and states that have been impacted multiple times by disasters have emotional and spiritual care needs that cannot be clearly tied to one single event. We are so very thankful for those who provide funding for our program and recognize the importance of emotional and spiritual care efforts far beyond the most immediately visible needs.



Photo Credit: Stephen Hale