

# Focus Group Protocol – Tribal Human Services Program Representatives

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Tailor the following interview guide by: (1) skipping sections or questions not relevant for the respondents; or (2) asking appropriate follow-up questions or probe into participant responses as needed to obtain additional information or clarification. If time is limited, the facilitator will prioritize the most important questions.

Before beginning the focus group, the facilitator will read the introduction to describe the purpose to respondents, answer any questions they have about the session, and ask for their consent to record the focus group.

### Purpose

The mission of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is to promote the economic and social well-being of diverse communities across the United States. ACF programs provide services to communities and individuals across the nation. Its programs include disaster human services, which support communities with a range of services such as shelter, food, water, clothing, family reunification, and other critical economic and social support areas. ACF firmly believes that engaging individuals impacted by disasters from all backgrounds is crucial because it prioritizes real-world experiences and fosters empathy, inclusivity, cultural humility, and innovation.

The purpose of this focus group is to learn from tribal human services program representatives who have assisted with the planning, response, or recovery of disasters. Engaging tribal human services program representatives with disaster human services experience will enrich ACF's understanding of their needs, contribute to more informed decision-making, and help ACF ensure it keeps the well-being of those it serves at the center of ACF's work.

This learning will be used to inform the development of OHSEPR's Disaster Human Services Capabilities Framework, a key document in guiding the nation's human services in disasters.

### Desired Outcome

This activity will help improve future human services disaster preparedness and response by establishing a common standard for disaster human services planning and provision by state, tribal, local, and territorial partners and community-based service providers. The capabilities framework will reflect the experiences of communities that have experienced disasters.

### Method

The facilitator will conduct two 90-minute focus group sessions, each with a group of approximately 10 individuals who are tribal human services program representatives that have assisted in the delivery or

coordination of human services during emergencies. These sessions will be held using an online platform (e.g., Zoom or MS Teams). In addition to group discussion, participants will engage in the session through polling questions and chat function. Facilitators will follow the facilitation discussions below, and adapt the questions based on the participants and direction of the discussion as advised in the Instructions for Facilitators section above.

Participation is voluntary. Responses will not be attributable to a specific individual. Categorical responses (e.g., polling questions) will be aggregated. The information received through this session will be combined with other data sources to inform the Disaster Human Services Capabilities Framework. If quotes are used in the framework, they will be anonymized to protect the individual contributor.

## Focus Group Discussion

### Introduction [10 minutes]

#### Contractor Intro

My name is [co-facilitator's name] and this is [co-facilitator's name], and we are contractors supporting the Administration for Children and Families, specifically with the Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response also called OHSEPR. We will be facilitating this discussion session today. We would like to thank you for joining us and sharing your experiences.

For background, OHSEPR is an office within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. OHSEPR's mission is to lead, strengthen, and synchronize human services to prepare, respond, and recover from emergencies and crises.

Human services are economic and social programs that support Americans with shelter, food, water, clothing, case management, family reunification, childcare, early childhood development, cash assistance, refugee support, home energy assistance, and transportation. Human services may also include support related to domestic violence, human trafficking, child welfare, child custody, and runaway and homeless youth. Disaster human services, specifically refers to the provision of human services to individuals in need before, during, and after a disaster such as a hurricane, flooding, or even a public health emergency like COVID-19. This work aims to create a capabilities framework that informs STLT human services programs about the essential components for providing successful disaster human services.

OHSEPR seeks to learn from tribal human services program representatives who prepare for and respond to emergencies requiring the provision of human services. Your participation is essential to supporting this work. We are relying on your insight and feedback to shape the Disaster Human Services Capabilities Framework into a guiding resource for state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) human services entities to better provide services following a disaster. The purpose of this effort is to develop a capabilities framework to help STLT human services programs plan, prioritize, and act in future emergency responses.

We would like to understand the activities and practices of tribal human services representatives in disaster preparedness and response as well as any impediments to successful disaster human services

response. Also, we would like to obtain your feedback on our draft capabilities and how we can make them more relevant to Tribes.

We will focus on the following areas in today’s discussion:

- Planning and Preparedness;
- Incident Management and Service Delivery;
- Resource Management;
- Training; and
- Our initial Capabilities Framework Outline and tribal considerations for the capabilities.

There may be sensitive information discussed here today. Nothing shared today will be attributed to an individual and all answers will be kept private. We will combine your inputs with those of others for the sole purpose of improving human services for communities experiencing disasters.

We would like to record this conversation to assist in documenting this discussion. The recording will only be viewed and heard by our immediate team. The files will be deleted once all notes have been taken. Do we have your consent for the session to be recorded?

Do you have any questions for our team before we begin?

## PRA Statement

“OHSEPR is collecting this information to identify areas of improvement and support for disaster human services preparedness and response efforts. This discussion will last approximately 90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. All information will be kept private. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and no individual or entity is required to respond to, nor shall an individual or entity be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. The OMB # is 0970-0630 and the expiration date is 3/31/2027.

## Roles and Organization [15 minutes]

*We’ll begin by listing the names and titles and organization of participants. If we don’t call your name, please provide your name and contact information in the chat.*

Attendees			
Name	Role	Organization	Email

1. Please describe your organization, the services it provides, and the communities it serves.

2. Could you briefly describe the structure of emergency management and disaster human services for your Tribe and community? For example, who is responsible for leading planning, incident management, delivery of services, etc.?

## Planning and Preparedness [15 minutes]

*We would like to hear about your experience with issues, challenges, and gaps in human services planning and preparedness. Preparedness efforts occur before the disaster and may include emergency planning or coordination with emergency management officials.*

1. Could you describe how your Tribe's preparedness and planning occurs?
  - o Does your planning occur within the Tribe or with local entities outside the Tribe?
  - o Does tribal planning integrate with or engage state-level, county-level, or other local jurisdictions in their planning? If so, how?
2. What challenges, if any, have you experienced in preparing for human services delivery following a disaster?
3. What has worked well for you in preparing for human services delivery following a disaster?
4. Does your disaster human services planning include coordinating with other relevant sectors such as emergency management, health, etc.? If so, please describe.
5. Many government agencies, associations, and other organizations have developed guidelines to strengthen emergency preparedness and response. Do you use any standard guidance or technical documents to help you plan and deliver human services following disasters?

## Incident Management and Service Delivery [15 minutes]

*Next, we would like to hear more about how your programs operate during a disaster response. Response refers to providing services during or after the disaster, including in a prolonged disaster. Our objective with these questions is to determine how services are delivered and how you coordinate with other government agencies and service providers.*

1. Are there any challenges you have experienced in delivering disaster human services to your community?
2. What has worked well in your community for delivering disaster human services?
3. Do you call anyone during a disaster human services response if you need to escalate urgent assistance requests? If so, who?
4. Who do you currently coordinate with when you are preparing for or responding to a disaster?
  - a. Who else would you like to coordinate with?
  - b. What guidance could we provide that could help coordination between your community's responders and other public and private organizations in your area?

## Resource Management [10 minutes]

*Now we'll spend some time discussing resource management, particularly how your programs access support and your experiences scaling human services efforts in a disaster.*

1. Could you describe the federal, state, or other human services programs you utilize during a disaster response (e.g., D-SNAP)?
2. Do you use flexibilities that may be available through federal programs following a disaster?

## Training [10 minutes]

*Next, we'll discuss training.*

1. Does your organization receive training or other support from local government on topics such as human services, emergency management, or others?
2. Are there platforms where Tribes work together to develop their emergency management or disaster response knowledge, skills, and abilities, or share best practices etc.?
3. Have you or your staff been trained in standard incident management approaches such as those published through FEMA's National Incident Management System program? Others?
4. Is there any type of training or other organizational strengthening support would you like to receive (besides funding)?

## Draft Capabilities [15 minutes]

*OHSEPR has developed draft capabilities for STLT human services programs. A capability is a specific focus area where a combination of resources, skills, and processes come together to enable effective delivery of services with regards to that focus area. We would like to get your feedback on the capabilities we have outlined for successful provision of disaster human services.*

*[share screen with capabilities outline]*

1. Which of these capabilities are important for disaster preparedness and response?
2. Is there anything critical to your work in disaster preparedness and response that's missing here?
3. Is there anything in this framework you would say is low priority for your Tribe?
4. Should any specific tribal considerations be included in the capabilities? If so, what are they?
  - o How should these be included in the capabilities? For example, should there be separate capabilities for Tribes, or should tribal considerations be woven throughout these capabilities where relevant? Or is there no need for special tribal considerations in the framework?

## Wrap Up [10 minutes]

*Before we wrap up, the team would like to give you the opportunity to say any final thoughts.*

- Is there anything else you'd like to share with us today regarding disaster human services?

*Thank you for your time and input! Our team really appreciates the feedback you have shared with us today and your part in shaping this impactful work.*

*After this call, you will receive an email from us with our contact information. Feel free to contact us if you think of anything else.*

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) STATEMENT OF PUBLIC BURDEN: The purpose of this information collection is to identify areas of improvement and support for disaster human services preparedness and response efforts. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per respondent, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. This is a voluntary collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB # is 0970-0630 and the expiration date is 3/31/2027. If you have any comments on this collection of information, please contact Bridget Miller at [Bridget.Miller@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Bridget.Miller@acf.hhs.gov).