Warren County Community Reception Center Planning Guidance

A Community Reception Center (CRC) is designed to provide an assembly point for citizens to gather due to a natural or man-made event where they may have been evacuated from homes or businesses, need provisions for basic services such as electric or water, or to receive emergency information when other means are unavailable. These centers will serve as a location for people to be safe in hazardous conditions, allow the jurisdiction to determine what services are needed, and allow time for longer-term shelters to be established if needed. Additionally, a jurisdiction may also utilize a CRC as a temporary warming or cooling center during extended power outages or spells of extreme temperatures.

The following guidance and considerations can be utilized to aid jurisdictions in outlining how they will operate a CRC. This document can be referenced to complete a CRC Plan utilizing the *Warren County Community Reception Center Plan Template*.

A. PRE-PLANNING

CRC facilities should be pre-established by the jurisdiction and prepared to receive citizens during emergencies or disasters. At a minimum, a CRC facility should include:

- A safe facility away from the hazard with proper heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC), and fire alarm systems.
- Adherence to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.
- Sufficient restrooms for the occupants.
- An area for people to sit.
- A location within the facility for privacy (for nursing mothers, to have private conversations with citizens, etc.).

Considerations should be made to have backup power systems for CRC facilities. This would ensure CRC operations could continue if the jurisdiction / area was affected by widespread power outages.

Jurisdictions should also consider primary and secondary locations for CRCs that are geographically separated for the continuity of CRC operations if the primary site becomes compromised.

To begin the planning process for a jurisdictional CRC, the following should be considered:

- Assign a representative who will lead the development of the CRC Plan.
- Gather a planning team of representatives from:
  - Jurisdictional leaders
  - Businesses
  - Schools and Churches
  - Private and Non-Profit Organizations in the Community
  - Citizens
- Determine a list of possible CRC locations.
- Begin designing the plan elements.

B. PLANNING

Creating a CRC plan should be a collaborative approach. Successful CRC operations will rely on community assistance. Besides providing a safe location for people to gather, CRCs could also provide:

- Transportation services (to get people to the CRC or established shelters).
- Water and snacks.
- Outlets and equipment (to run medical and charge electronic devices).

1. Activation and Considerations:

When developing the CRC plan, the following items should be considered:

- Determine activation triggers for opening a CRC (i.e., prolonged power outages during periods of excessive heat or extreme cold, evacuation, etc.).
  - Consider services and needs that become compromised such as homes utilizing well-water or residences without air conditioning units.
- Determine who has the authority to activate the CRC.
- Develop a demographic model of the jurisdiction. This will help determine the amount and types of resources needed to communicate with and shelter displaced citizens. Demographic information could include:
  - Total population of the jurisdiction
  - Estimates of those with access and functional needs (i.e., physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities, older adults, low-income households, non-English speaking population, transportation accessibility, children, etc.)
  - Understanding of long-term care populations and their needs
  - Understanding of school operations and number of students
- Establish who will make the appropriate notifications once it is determined a CRC will be activated.

2. CRC Facilities:

CRC facilities should be sufficient to support the jurisdiction's operations. Some of the considerations for CRC facilities should include:

- Sufficient utilities including power, water, and HVAC systems.
- Enough restrooms for the occupants.
- Places to sit.
- Access for the public to charge electronic devices.
- Provisions for household pets (if allowable).
- Wireless internet (if needed for CRC operations).
- At least one (1) private room (for nursing mothers, those experiencing trauma, etc.).
- A twenty-four (24) hour contact (with a backup) to provide access to the facility.

Communities wishing to utilize a business, school, or other location for a CRC facility need to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the facility owner that outlines when the building is permitted for CRC use, who is the facility representative responsible for opening the building, the staff the facility representative requires to have on-site during CRC operations, and other components that need consideration.

3. Transportation Services:

During emergencies and disasters, the public may not have access to dependable transportation to get them to the CRC. Jurisdictions should develop a transportation plan that helps get citizens to a safe space. Considerations for a transportation plan include:

- Partnering with mass transportation providers such as schools, county, or regional busing systems.
- Partnering with taxi services or other public transport services.
- Soliciting volunteer transporters from community leaders and members.

If partnering with outside organizations to provide transportation, consider establishing MOUs to outline when / how transportation services will be utilized, liability, etc.

4. Resources:

Running a Community Reception Center will require a variety of resources. These resources include people, equipment, and ancillary items that will ensure the safety, security, and smooth operation of the center. Some considerations for CRC resources include:

- ***People***
  At a minimum, consider the following staffing for the CRC:
  - CRC Manager / Leader who is responsible for the entire operation.
  - Intake Person responsible for welcoming residents and determining their short- and long-term needs.
  - Security for the site.
  - Liaison between Incident Command / jurisdiction, county EOC, and the CRC.
  - Facility Representative to address building issues (i.e., janitorial staff, maintenance staff, building administrators, etc.).
  - Public Information Officer to relay CRC operations to the public.

  Emergencies and disasters are stressful events. Occupants of a CRC may appreciate additional efforts to provide a calm environment. Some additional staffing considerations for this could include:
  - Someone to read books or provide activities for small children.
  - People to assist citizens with emergent needs (i.e., contacting loved ones, finding shelter for pets, obtaining clothing or transportation from the CRC, etc.).

- ***Equipment***
  CRCs may need a variety of equipment for successful operations. Consider the following:
  - Television to provide entertainment or updates.
  - Telephone(s) to contact emergency assistance.
  - Paper / Pens to help with general notes, messages, etc.
  - Radios, cell phones, or other methods of communication for CRC staff.
  - Provisions for people to plug in their electronic devices. This could include outlet strips, extension cords, etc.
  - Generator or back-up power source. This will allow pre-identified CRCs to remain operational when the community experiences a disaster.

- ***Ancillary Items***
  Ancillary items may include things that will help meet basic human needs, provide for a calm environment, or help citizens deal with stress. Some considerations for ancillary items include:
  - Water
  - Snacks (consider food allergies)
  - Coloring books or toys for small children
  - Blankets

5. Documentation and Additional Planning Considerations:

Prior to activating a CRC, the planning team should determine the level of documentation required and who will be responsible for it. Some considerations for documentation include:

- A sign-in sheet for those seeking CRC operations. This will help with accountability, reunification of families, and determining CRC supply needs (i.e., food, water, etc.).
- A sign-in sheet with roles identified for CRC staff.
- Financial records associated with CRC operations (may be reimbursable by certain disaster assistance programs). In the CRC planning phase also determine:
  - Who will pay for equipment and ancillary items?
  - Who will pay for any damages to the facility caused by CRC operations?
- A repository for all documentation related to CRC operations. Determine who will bring it to the CRC upon activation, who will oversee the completion of documentation, and who will maintain it when CRC operations are concluded.

C. OPENING – PLAN EXECUTION

The following is an outline of steps to be considered when opening a CRC:

1. Identify the need for a reception center.
2. Assign an operational leader for each CRC location.
3. Activate the CRC location.
4. Document everything with data and photographs.
5. Activate all resources to operate the CRC.
6. Distribute supplies that will be provided by the CRC.
7. Notify County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) about the opening of the CRC location(s), to assist with situational awareness.
8. Execute public information plan.

* Each step should have someone pre-identified to complete the task.

D. OPERATION

The following is an outline of steps to be considered when operating a CRC:

1. Determine the approximate length of time the CRC will be operational.
2. Determine the resource needs for the CRC.
3. Complete an in-take form in preparation for transfers to shelters.
4. Provide timely updates to EMA on possible shelter needs.
5. Monitor occupant health, safety, and well-being as a high priority.
6. Distribute water and snacks.
7. Ensure all documentation, financial records, receipts, etc. are compiled together during the operational periods.

* Each step should have someone pre-identified to complete the task.

*Many steps may need to be completed multiple times throughout the duration of the operational period of the CRC.

E. CLOSING

The following is an outline of steps to be considered when closing a CRC:

1. Ensure all community members who checked into the CRC have been accounted for through a check-out process or referral to another agency providing shelter.
2. Return all unused equipment and supplies.
3. Return the facility to its original condition.
4. Document everything with data and photographs.
5. Complete the financial wrap-up.
6. Recognize the entire team.

* Each step should have someone pre-identified to complete the task.