

Disaster Advocacy: A Training Program

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR DISASTER ADVOCATES	1
MODULE I: OUTREACH	10
Self-Test for Module I	21
Answers to Self-Test for Module I	23
MODULE II: CASE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT	24
Self-Test for Module II	31
Answers to Self-Test for Module II	33
MODULE III: LIFE INTERVENTION	34
Self-Test for Module III	42
Answers to Self-Test for Module III	44
MODULE IV: CENTRAL ROLE OF THE ADVOCATE	46
Self-Test for Module IV	54
Answers to Self-Test for Module IV	56

INTRODUCTION

You have been chosen for training as an advocate for the elderly who have been the victims of a disaster. You have been chosen for an important job, and this manual is designed to teach you how to do that job. In addition to providing immediate training, it also has been designed to serve you as a reference tool to help you as you encounter specific problems. For this purpose, the training manual has many sub-headings to help you locate specific information quickly.

But we are getting ahead of our story--so let's begin at the beginning.

The Elderly

During the decade of the 1960's, special attention began to be focused on the older people in our society as social scientists and government leaders began to recognize that the United States was undergoing an important social change. For the first time in the history of the world, we were entering a period when people who were more than 60 years of age were going to constitute a major part of the population. Simply put, more people than ever before were living to a ripe old age.

There are many reasons that this change has occurred. For one thing, advances in public health simply make life healthier than ever before. This is the result of improved sewage and garbage disposal, safer drinking water, and greater public knowledge of how to protect one's health. Another factor is that developments in medical science in the last 60 years have made physicians more able to prevent or control and treat disease processes which were fatal in an earlier time. And, also of importance, is the fact that there have been major advances in improving the quality of life of people in our society--things like the 40-hour work week, labor-saving devices, healthier working environments, and the development of the belief that everyone is entitled to at least some rest and recreation.

In fact, late in the 1970's, it became clear that changes in health and lifestyle were producing a group of people who were not necessarily worn out by the age of 65, and laws were changed to allow many people to keep working past the age that had once been considered as mandatory retirement age for most people.

Attention to the Elderly

In the face of all this information, government agencies were established to concern themselves with the special needs of the aging population. But even before this, a variety of social scientists--sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and others--had begun to study older persons. In some areas of these sciences, there are people who devote their whole careers to understanding how older persons live, what they think, how they feel, and what their special needs are.

The material you are about to study will take advantage of these efforts to learn a great deal about older people, and will use some of that knowledge to guide you in your new work as an advocate for the elderly.

For our purposes in this training package, we will refer to the "aging population." For us, this will mean people who are at least 60 years of age, and who generally are 65 years of age, or more. But beyond that distinction, intended to set apart the people to whom you will be giving special attention, it is difficult to generalize.

The Differences

Indeed, the differences between members of the aging population sometimes seem to be more important than the ways in which they are similar. This is the thing that makes it hard to talk in general terms about the aging population--and something you will have to keep constantly in mind as you begin to work with the elderly.

There is no magic transformation that takes place at age 60 or 62 or 65, or even at age 70, that suddenly makes a person into a so-called senior citizen, or older person, or elderly person. It sometimes seems safer to talk about "retired persons" when we are looking for a general, categorical term--but even this is misleading. As it turns out, some people who worked at boring, routine jobs were just waiting for the day they could retire and become really active. People like this are important leaders in the aging population, acting as the "spark plugs" that excite other older persons into getting involved in life.

By way of contrast, of course, there are people who have done just what many people think older people are supposed to do. They sit back and draw a retirement check, pull a shawl around their shoulders, and let the world pass them by.

But these are the extremes. The vast majority of older persons fall somewhere between these two groups. And, just like everybody else, older people have good days and bad days. They have days when they are happy, full of energy, and busy doing things. On other days, they are sad, depressed, troubled with health problems, and they withdraw from contact with other people.

It is true, of course, that a lot of people in the aging population do have health problems. These range from minor problems, such as the need to watch what they eat, to major problems, such as heart trouble, which severely restricts them in what they can do.

So keep in mind, both while you are studying and while you are working as an advocate, that no single description fits all members of the aging population. Some will need a lot of time, and a lot of your help. And there will be others who will need very little assistance. But be careful - the ones who are quickest to refuse help are often the ones who need it most.

The Disaster

The reason you were selected for training as an advocate for the elderly, of course, is that there has been a disaster which has affected at least some members of the aging population.

We have attempted to generalize in the training package to enable you to deal with any kind of disaster--floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, ice storms, blizzards, etc.--but you may have been hired for a special kind of problem that we had not anticipated. So please bear with us, and attempt to use your own imagination where necessary to fill in the gaps.

Because of our need to make this training package useful for a variety of people dealing with a variety of problems, we have not provided you with specific solutions, but we have attempted to provide you with a general way of thinking that should provide flexibility in dealing with whatever problems you come up against.

In general terms, a disaster can be identified as any event--natural or man-made--which involves so many victims and so much damage that the usual resources of the community are not adequate to deal with the problems created. For that reason, a disaster was declared, and a set of special procedures was put into action.

As we indicated earlier, the growing number of older persons in our society has made it necessary to develop special programs which deal with their special problems. You are now a part of that process.

The Need for Advocates

Indeed, you are a very important part of the disaster relief operation. You will be responsible for linking people with a need to those agencies which have some ability to fill the need that you have helped identify.

It will be possible, through your work, to direct older persons to those sources of help which are most appropriate for them. Also, you will help them deal with some problems for which no prior plans have been made--and this will require you to use your creative skills to their very best.

But keep in mind that you are part of a team. You will be working with others who regularly work with the aging population, both as volunteers and as full-time staff. Do not assume that you have to become an instant expert on everything. Instead, this training package, and the other training you will undergo, is intended to help you identify problems. But you may have to get help from a variety of people to respond to these problems. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

In fact, it is this very group of people who regularly work with the elderly who identified the need for disaster advocates after they themselves had to take on that job in earlier disasters. They found that many members of the aging population are not aware of the services that are available to them after a disaster, and they even found that some of the people who knew about the availability of these services were reluctant to use them.

After their own experiences in working with the elderly after disasters, these people suggested that a system be set up to train advocates to go out into the area of the disaster to locate people in need of disaster services, and to show them how to go about getting these services.

The Training

This training package, which is intended to be part of a general period of training that should last about four hours, will help you learn how to seek out those who need assistance. It will show you how to persuade those in need of help that they should make use of the available help, how to manage those people you become responsible for, and how you connect them with the available services.

You are not expected to become an instant expert, but you will be given some basic information that should be helpful to you in understanding the elderly and their special needs after a disaster.

However, this does not mean that you are expected to memorize all the information that you will be given. It is known that people learn best by doing. Therefore this training package is only intended to be a starting point for you. After you have handled two or three cases, you will learn some shortcuts, develop your own special techniques, and you will learn where to find certain kinds of help when you need it.

In an effort to get you started, this training package includes three types of material:

1. A cognitive component--*Knowledge and information* to be acquired by an advocate dealing with the elderly after a disaster.
2. A psychomotor component--The *activities* to be performed by advocates dealing with the elderly after a disaster.
3. An effective component--The *attitudes* to be developed by advocates dealing with the elderly after a disaster.

With these three kinds of information, you should be prepared to begin helping people today.

The Training Process

In order to train you as quickly as possible, four major topics have been dealt with in a self-teaching, modular format. You will move through each module (or section) of the training package as quickly as you are ready to. If you find that certain sections need more time than others, you can spend the extra time, and then move quickly through those sections that you find to be easier.

For each module, or section, you will be given a self-test review. This self-test is intended to do two things:

1. It will help you find out how much, or how little, you know about the particular section.
2. By showing you what you *do not* know, it will give you clues as to which parts of the section you should go back and review in order to increase your learning.

Hopefully you have recognized by now that the self-test is to guide *you* as you teach yourself.

The instructor may ask you some questions to verify that you have completed all the necessary units of study, and the instructor may have some additional information to give you before you go into the field.

When you do go to work, take this manual with you, and refer to it as you feel you need to. Of course, if you have questions that are not answered in the training package, or for which you cannot figure out the answers, be sure to ask your supervisor for guidance.

Good Luck!

You are now ready to move on to the actual training sections of the package.

Remember--you are an important person with an important job to do. We hope we have provided you with a starting place, but we want you to keep in mind that we all make mistakes, and mistakes provide us with new chances to learn.

One of the most important questions we asked people in the early stages of disaster was if they knew of anyone who had been affected by the flood who had not registered with FEMA. We were most anxious to touch base with those who did not understand the procedure for registering with FEMA, or who were hesitant to do so because they thought that they had to be low-income, or be participating in a federal crop insurance program, or didn't think they had as severe damage as others.

We also found that it was important to address the perceptions of damage by each individual in the household. Often a man and a woman sharing the same home viewed their losses from very different angles. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. C were a farming couple. They lost a tremendous amount of wheat and soybeans in their 400 acres by the river. Their cellar was completely flooded and they had water to the very threshold of their main living area. Mr. C emphasized the loss of crops and grain in storage that the family had suffered. He wanted information about where to go to talk about agricultural loss. Mrs. C was really bothered by their loss of food she had put up and stored in the basement and by the upheaval in and around the house. She wanted help getting the sandbags hauled from around the foundation and was bothered by a door that had been broken when family and neighbors had helped the C's evacuate their furniture.

Mrs. C's concerns appear more minor because they don't have the economic significance of her husband's concern for a year's loss of crops, but in terms of her emotional comfort, finding help to lug the soggy bags of sand and scrub salvageable canning jars was just as important as getting answers about agricultural programs.

Contributed by the North Central - Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging

MODULE I - OUTREACH

Introduction

One of the jobs of the disaster advocate for the elderly is to seek out those members of the aging population who are potentially eligible for public assistance after a disaster, but who have made no move to take advantage of these services.

At first, of course, it may seem curious that some people are reluctant to take advantage of whatever assistance may be available to them after a disaster. But extensive experience by workers in the aging network has demonstrated time after time that some members of the aging population are hesitant to ask for help--especially public assistance.

Because of the widespread nature of this reluctance, one of the major roles assigned to disaster workers is to seek out those persons who may be able to qualify for disaster assistance and help them obtain that assistance.

The "Welfare" Stigma

One of the major reasons for this reluctance to seek help is that such assistance is perceived to be "welfare." To many people in our culture, "welfare" is a very disagreeable concept. It is used as a label for those people who are unable or unwilling to help themselves.

One of the tasks of the advocate is to explain that disaster assistance is **not** welfare. Rather, disaster assistance has many components that function for different reasons. For our purposes, we will take two examples of programs normally included in disaster assistance centers, and demonstrate that they are not "welfare," at least not in the way that "welfare" is commonly defined by those persons who are critical of government assistance.

The first is the service provided by the Internal Revenue Service. The Internal Revenue Service staff which works in disaster assistance centers is there to assist victims of disasters in identifying which of their losses may constitute income tax deductions, and to help the victims file the appropriate forms to claim these losses for deductions.

The second service to be considered here is provided by the Small Business Administration. This agency of the federal government functions to help victims of disasters with *loans* to replace or repair businesses and homes damaged in the disaster. This is a special service of the Small Business Administration not provided under normal circumstances. These loans must be paid back to the government--but they are available at an interest rate that is well below the interest generally charged by commercial lending institutions such as banks, savings and loan companies, and small loan firms.

Certainly it should be clear from this information that neither of these programs can be reasonably described as "welfare."

In fact, this designation is difficult to attach to any of the programs provided in a disaster assistance center. It is more appropriate to understand the programs provided as one way that the state and federal governments use the taxes that they collect from all of us each year. At both the state and federal levels, taxes are collected in order to pay for services which are generally helpful to a broad segment of the population--services which usually are so expensive that we could not afford to pay for them individually, but services that we can afford if we pool our tax money.

The kinds of services that become available after a disaster are all a part of this system.

Finding Victims

Disaster workers must find the victims of the disaster before they have anyone to explain this to, however.

This may not always be the job of the disaster advocate. Sometimes this will be the task of the regular staff of the area agency on aging, or some other group. But the job does sometimes fall to disaster advocates, and therefore it will be discussed here so that you will be able to perform the task if it is assigned to you.

Depending on the kind of disaster you are hired to work in, the warning notice before the disaster may have ranged from none to several days. Indeed, it is possible that you are reading this material, and getting your training, even before a disaster has occurred, but after one has been predicted. This might be true of a flood, for example, where the National Weather Service has been able to predict that a flood will occur in your area because of heavy rains or melting snow or some other such event far up a river which runs near your location.

If there has been considerable time between the warning of the disaster and the occurrence of the disaster, some orderly evacuation program may have occurred, and all the victims may be located in emergency shelters.

It is more common, however, to have limited warning of a disaster, and little time for evacuation. This will mean that many of the victims still were in their homes when the disaster occurred, and those who were not at home are widely scattered and will be difficult to locate.

Certainly the local news media should be used to alert the victims of the disaster to the fact that a special center has been established to assist them. But experience has shown that such information will bring in only a portion of those persons who need assistance, and who are entitled to it.

Therefore it is the task of the disaster advocate to find those members of the elderly population who need help, and are entitled to it, and help them find the agencies they should contact.

It is important to undertake this job with a sense of urgency. The victims of disasters--and especially the elderly--often become the victims of a variety of crooks, especially those who charge high prices for shoddy repair work. If the advocate can reach the victims quickly, the advocate may prevent these people from suffering additional losses.

Outreach Work

The term "outreach" is used here to describe the process whereby the disaster advocate leaves the disaster assistance center and goes out into the community to locate older citizens who need help. It also includes the process whereby the advocate attempts to explain the functions of the disaster assistance center to victims in a way that persuades them that they should use the services available.

Here we will list a number of approaches to locating the victims of the disaster. Some of them may not be appropriate to your particular disaster, and you may think of others which will work just as well, or even better. The purpose of this list is to demonstrate that there are several ways to do the job you have been hired for, and the best approach may be to combine several approaches.

1. **Contact existing aging programs, especially those in the area where the disaster occurred.** You should attempt to contact those agencies in the disaster area which carried out programs for the elderly before the disaster. Such agencies would include those which provide housing for the elderly, those which provide meals for the aging population in a group setting, those which provide special recreation programs for the elderly, and those which are responsible for providing transportation for older persons. Each of these programs should be able to provide you with the names and addresses of some of the older persons they served, provided their records were not destroyed in the disaster.
2. **Contact older persons living outside the disaster area.** If there is a problem with the availability of records from aging programs within the disaster area, try contacting programs for the elderly *outside* the immediate disaster area, and talk to the older persons who use those services. Ask these persons if they had friends who lived inside the disaster area and try to get names and addresses of those persons. (Be cautious here; the people you are asking for information may be very worried about the well-being of their friends. Explain that you need their information in order to get into the disaster area to check on the victims. If specifically requested to do so, you may take a message to give to the person being identified for you. However, you probably will not have time to re-contact your information source to report on the well-being of a friend. Further, if the report must be negative, such as severe injury, death, etc., this is a task that should be handled by others who are skilled in such matters.)
3. **Visit the disaster area.** If conditions permit, you should begin a driving tour of the area, looking for homes which are damaged or destroyed. At the homes, attempt to contact the occupants. If no one is at home, ask neighbors who live in the houses, and try to find out if one or more of the occupants is elderly. If you find that one or more residents is elderly, and did survive the disaster, then you should attempt to learn from neighbors where the person is and how you may contact the victim. Of course, many of the houses you check will not have elderly occupants. You may take the time to tell the occupants that the disaster assistance center is operating, and where it is, but you should complete your visit as rapidly as possible so that you may move on in search of persons for whom you have real responsibility. Naturally you should ask all the people you encounter if they know of elderly persons who suffered disaster losses.

4. **Contact local politicians.** Local area politicians - either those who have been elected to office, or those who ran for election and were defeated -may have developed a special file identifying members of the aging population so that they might get special attention during the campaign. Request the politician who has such information to allow you to copy it from his or her files, and return it. If the politician does not have this information personally, he or she may be able to direct you to a neighborhood campaign worker who has the information.
5. **Contact the U.S. Postal Service.** Most letter carriers, especially those who have been carrying mail on the same route for quite some time, know quite a bit about their patrons, especially those who are retired and often chat a minute when the letter carrier makes the daily delivery. Go to the local postmaster and ask for help in identifying the carriers whose routes go through the disaster area, and then request the help of the individual letter carriers in compiling lists of names and addresses where older persons lived. (You should be certain to have good identification here because the Postal Service is usually quite reluctant to give out information about its patrons for fear of violating their privacy rights. If you identify yourself properly, and explain your mission carefully, though, you may be able to gain very helpful information.)
6. **Hire a sound truck.** In some areas of the country, a common practice in political campaigns is to hire trucks or cars with public address systems to drive through neighborhoods broadcasting messages. Find out if this is a common practice in the community where you are working. If so, you should be able to hire a sound truck to broadcast a message to older residents, encouraging them to visit the disaster assistance center.
7. **Contact local government officials.** Local government officials, especially those who administer programs involving older persons, often maintain files on the elderly in a local community. Check on the availability of such files.

8. **Contact law enforcement agencies.** Older persons often have problems that bring them in contact with law enforcement officers--requests for police to watch their houses closely in passing, frequent problems with neighborhood children damaging their property, etc. Check with law enforcement authorities to see if they can direct you to such persons. (Again, you will need to identify yourself properly, and carefully explain your job. The police will be watching for those unscrupulous persons who attempt to take advantage of the victims of disasters, especially older persons. This also is an opportunity for you to acquire any police passes necessary to get into the disaster area.)
9. **Contact transportation services.** Agencies which provide transportation - both public and private - often have considerable contact with older persons who no longer drive. You should contact any service which provides transportation for the elderly as its primary mission, but you may also need to check with commercial transportation services, such as taxi companies, to identify elderly persons who frequently use the service.
10. **Contact churches and ministers.** Many members of the aging population have important ties with their churches. You should check with churches and ministers in and around the disaster area to identify those elderly persons who were members. Such inquiries may lead you into a whole social network of older people who need your help.
11. **Contact senior citizen clubs, or Older Americans' Clubs.** Clubs especially designed to meet the needs of older persons can be important sources for you in identifying those persons who need your services. They can be expected to have rosters that identify their members and tell you where to find their homes.

This does not identify all the possible resources you may use, but it should suggest to you that there are a variety of ways to locate elderly persons who live in the disaster area. Talk to the people who regularly work with the aging population to find out about other local agencies which may be especially helpful to you.

In addition, as you begin making direct contact with older persons, use them as key informants. As them if they have older friends who live in the disaster area--then ask the friends, when you contact them, if they have friends who live in the area. This process can rapidly snowball, giving you long lists of persons to contact. In fact, you may get so many leads that you need to share them with other advocates so that help can reach the victims more quickly. Check with your supervisor for specific instructions if you begin to collect a lot of names.

Making the Contact

Merely locating a member of the aging population who has suffered a loss in the disaster is not enough, of course. You have to move in and begin working with the victim if you are to be a successful advocate.

You should present your identification in all contacts. It is especially helpful to have some identification that you can leave with the persons you visit. A photocopy of a form letter inviting the victim to contact you at the disaster assistance center is fine, and it should include your name and telephone number where you may be contacted at the center.

It is helpful in making a contact to have a brief speech of introduction prepared. It could be reprinted in the form letter you leave with the victim to explain how you may be contacted later. You may wish to memorize something like the following example to introduce yourself:

Hello. My name is _____.

I am a disaster advocate hired by the _____ Area Agency on Aging.

It is my job to help persons who are 60 or older in using the disaster assistance center. A number of services that may be useful to you are available in the center. I would like to take a few minutes of your time to explain the services available.

In addition, I can help you in getting help if you have suffered damage to your home, or some other loss. It is my job to help you get all the help you can so you can get your life back to normal.

You may, of course, find it necessary to repeat your name, and even repeat your message of introduction, to insure that the victim understands why you are there.

Keep in mind that the victim has just been through a very traumatic experience, and may be very upset.

The Rejection Response

Do not expect to be welcomed with open arms.

Certainly some people will be very happy to see you, and will be eager to fill out the forms, and claim whatever assistance is available to them.

But experience has shown that many older persons will be very cautious in dealing with you. In fact, they may refuse to talk to you about their losses the first two or three times you visit with them. One of the reasons that we suggest you leave a copy of your letter of introduction is to give the reluctant victim a chance to think about your visit, and what it may mean.

Some advocates involved in disasters in the past have found that they have to return four or five times before the victims become comfortable with them, and come to believe that they are really interested in helping.

You may want to begin your contact with a general conversation. Certainly it is reasonable to talk about the disaster. That is likely to be the subject uppermost in the mind of the victim, and something that you know about, so it provides you a common ground for discussion.

But *do not* spend all of your time talking. Spend time listening. Many people who have just been through a crisis want to talk to others about it. This is a way of testing their perception of reality. They want to be sure that what they experienced is what other people experienced. This means that they are not "different," or making a mountain out of a mole hill.

Psychologists call this kind of "talking out" of a problem "catharsis." This means the victim is opening up and letting out the stress that has built up in the traumatic event. Many psychologists think this kind of catharsis is healthy and helpful to the victim.

But even though the victim is willing to talk about the disaster experience, he or she may not be willing to show you the damage suffered until you have returned two or three times. Your repeated visits may help wear down any resistance, and may serve to show the victim that you are truly interested in helping.

The Grief Response

Another reason the person may not be willing to show you the loss, of course, is that the victim is actually grieving.

This kind of emotional response to the loss of personal property has been identified among the victims of extensive fires in the home - fires which destroyed precious belongings.

It is important to keep in mind that people place different values on material possessions. The photograph of a son or husband killed in war, for example, may be more valuable to the victim than an entire house.

Despite much study and research, the human mind is not fully understood by scientists. But it does seem clear that we all assign meanings to the things around us. Some of these things are identified as being useful, but not particularly valuable. Other things have no practical use at all, but they are associated with important memories. These values are individual responses, and should be respected.

For example, a statue of the Empire State Building may be an important keepsake. And, although it has little value in terms of money, it may serve as the trigger that allows the person to remember all the details of a long ago, once-in-a lifetime trip to New York City.

Under normal circumstances, the person probably does not even take notice of the statue. But if the statue is lost in a disaster, it may make the person feel threatened - fearful that he or she never again will be able to recall all of the memories associated with a very important event.

In response to such a loss, the victim may exhibit all the signs of grief that we usually see in a person whose best friend or close relative has died.

You should never take such a situation lightly, just because you feel no loss. Instead, you should attempt to demonstrate that you understand the victim's concern. This is easy to do if you think of some personal possession of yours that you would especially hate to lose.

It is also possible that you will encounter a victim who indeed *did* suffer the loss, through death, of a loved one in the disaster, or a victim who at least has a loved one who is hospitalized with serious injuries.

This will be important to the victim, and may be something the victim wants to talk about, perhaps in great detail. Try to be patient, and try to respond in the way that you would like someone to respond to you if you were in the victim's place.

Coping with grief is difficult. And not all the victims you encounter will be handling it well. You may encounter some victims who are so grief-stricken that you feel they need professional counseling. In such situations, remove yourself from the situation as gracefully as you can and notify your supervisor that special help is needed. Then move on to another case where your skills may be more properly used.

Keep Moving

Keep in mind that you need to stay on the move, especially during the initial period after a disaster when you still are trying to locate victims.

It is important to develop the best possible estimate of the number of persons who will be needing disaster assistance. This number must be generated as early as possible so the disaster assistance center can be properly staffed to handle the workload.

One of the functions of the outreach effort, of course, is to help turn up those persons who need assistance but who might not know it is available, or who might be unwilling to use the available services without some explanation.

Therefore it is important for you to reach as many people as possible. If you uncover more victims than you can help, some of the load may need to be shifted to other advocates, but this decision cannot be made until the outreach task has been finished.

Again it is important to stress that this work needs to be done as rapidly as possible so that you can help older persons avoid the crooks who move into disaster areas to take advantage of the victims.

As you identify the victims who need advocacy help, you should report their names and locations to your supervisor so that a central file can be established. This will enable supervisors to make the best possible use of advocates by cross-checking the names of the victims to insure that everyone is being helped, but that there is little or no duplication of effort.

It also is helpful to the total disaster assistance effort if you are able to begin producing an assessment of needs of the victims you contact as early as possible. If you can begin this needs assessment process on your first or second visit, then the agencies involved in disaster aid can better plan their work so that all needs are met.

Congratulations! You have completed the Outreach module. You are now ready to move on to the self-evaluation quiz. If you are not able to answer all the questions on the quiz, you may review the module to find the answers you are unsure of.

When you feel you are familiar with the material, then you should ask your instructor for the post-test.

When you complete the post-test successfully, you are ready to move on to the next module.

SELF-TEST FOR MODULE I

1. The aid that is provided after disasters should not be identified as:
 - a. Government assistance
 - b. Public assistance
 - c. Welfare
 - d. Public aid

2. Efforts to notify victims about the availability of disaster assistance should include:
 - a. Radio and television broadcasts
 - b. Outreach workers
 - c. Contacts with community organizations
 - d. All of the above

3. When making the first contact with an elderly victim of a disaster, the advocate should:
 - a. Make his or her identification clear
 - b. Leave some information for the victim to study
 - c. Tell the victim how to reach the advocate later
 - d. All of the above

4. In making a contact with a victim, the advocate should:
 - a. Do all the talking
 - b. Not talk, but only listen
 - c. Both talk and listen
 - d. All of the above

5. The advocate making the first contact with a victim can expect to:
 - a. Always be accepted on the first visit
 - b. Always be rejected on the first visit
 - c. Encounter different reactions from different people
 - d. None of the above

6. One reaction of disaster victims may be to feel _____, just like they would feel over the death of a loved one.

7. The advocate must be prepared to deal with people who need assistance, but who do not seek help because:
 - a. They do not know help is available
 - b. They think the help is welfare and don't want that
 - c. They need some explanation before they are willing to take help
 - d. All of the above
8. The disaster advocate who is trying to locate victims should:
 - a. Sit around the center, waiting for people to come in
 - b. Sit around in the disaster area, waiting for victims to appear
 - c. Stay on the move in the disaster area, looking for victims
9. The job of getting out and looking for victims is called _____ work.
10. The names and locations of victims discovered through outreach work must be recorded in a central _____, available to all disaster workers.

ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST FOR MODULE I

1. The aid that is provided after a disaster should not be identified as (c.) welfare. This often has a negative meaning for people, and should be avoided. Besides, this is not an accurate description of disaster services.
2. Efforts to notify victims about the availability of disaster assistance should include (d.) all of the above, it should include radio and television broadcasts, outreach workers and contact with community organizations.
3. When making the first contact with an elderly victim of a disaster, the advocate should (d.) all of the above. The advocate should make his or her identification clear, leave some information for the victim to study, and tell the victim how to reach the advocate later.
4. In making a contact with a victim, the advocate should (c.) both talk and listen. The advocate must talk to explain why he or she is there, but the advocate should also be a good listener.
5. The advocate making the first contact with a victim can expect to (c.) encounter different reactions from different people. Some victims will accept the advocate on the first visit, but other victims may not accept the advocate until two or three visits have been made.
6. One reaction of disaster victims may be to feel grief, just like they would feel over the death of a loved one.
7. The advocate must be prepared to deal with people who need assistance, but who do not seek help because (d.) all of the above. Some victims will not know help is available, some will think disaster assistance is welfare and won't want that, and some will need an explanation of disaster assistance before they are willing to accept help.
8. The disaster advocate who is trying to locate victims should (c.) stay on the move in the disaster area, looking for victims. Waiting for victims to ask for help will cause many persons who need assistance to go without aid.
9. The job of getting out and looking for victims is called outreach work.
10. The names and locations of victims discovered through outreach work must be recorded in a central file, available to all disaster workers.

MODULE II - CASE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems in a disaster is confusion. This is true both for the victims of the disaster and for those persons like you, who are attempting to help the victims.

This module will deal with the mechanics of organizing your work in order to reduce the confusion that could greatly complicate your efforts to help victims. It is here that you will be given some clues on how to set up and manage your caseload.

Establishing Order

A carefully organized management system for advocates can make an important contribution toward bringing order to a confused situation. An important key to accomplishing this is the development of files which reflect **all** the contacts that advocates have with the victims of disasters.

But the development of files is only one part of the process of service management. This job of service management can be broken down into six major tasks. These are:

1. *Assessment*
2. *Development of a service plan*
3. *Arranging for service*
4. *Follow-up*
5. *Re-assessment*
6. *Case recording*

To help you understand each of these terms, we shall define them.

Assessment. Needs assessment is the collection of information about a person's situation which allows identification of a person's problems in major functional areas. The needs assessment is done to learn about the victim's situation and service needs in order that something might be done to bring about change as requested or accepted by the victim. The coverage of all areas of a victim's situation is essential in order to get a total picture of the needs to be filled. This will make it unnecessary for the victim to bounce from one agency to another seeking resolution of problems.

Development of a service plan. A service plan is an agreement between the victim and the advocate regarding the problems identified, goals to be achieved, and services to be pursued. This allows the advocate to outline the various tasks that must be performed to provide necessary assistance to a given victim. However, this is not a task that should be performed by the advocate alone. The victim and the advocate should work together to decide which of the service alternatives will be selected. The victim should consent to accept the services agreed upon.

Arranging for service. Arranging for service is defined as the contacting of service providers and negotiating with them for the delivery of needed services to the client in the manner prescribed in the service plan. This obviously is a key step, because the development of a service plan is useless if there is no effort made to put the service plan into operation.

Follow-up. The follow-up task consists of contacting service providers and victims to see that service delivery has begun, or is scheduled to begin as planned. Failure to provide this follow-up can cause major problems.

Reassessment. Reassessment is defined as the scheduled re-examination of the victim's situation to identify changes which have occurred since the initial assessment. It measures progress toward the goals outlined in the service plan needs to be up-dated, or the pattern of service delivery changed in some way.

Case recording. None of the other tasks can be carried out well, unless there is adequate recording of each case that the advocate has. Thus case recording is vitally important in each of the components. Every contact with the victim, or service providers, should be recorded in the case file that the advocate keeps. In fact, case recording is so important that the whole next section will be devoted to the details of the job.

Maintaining Files

It is important to maintain two sets of files. One set of files is maintained by the advocate for personal use. The other set is maintained in a central place - usually the disaster center.

It is important that the two files contain the same information. This is usually best handled by having the advocate photocopy all of his or her notes, reports, contact observations, etc., and put the originals into the central file.

The advocate uses his or her files for day-to-day contacts with the victims. It is also very likely that there will be instances in which the victim will call or visit the disaster center when the advocate is not there. In such a situation, another worker needs to be able to pull a copy of the victim's file and assist the victim. It would be difficult to maintain continuity of service with all clients if the advocate were to be constantly interrupted when with one client in order to help another. Therefore some back-up assistance from the disaster center is highly appropriate and adds to the efficiency of the advocacy effort.

The file is initially created when the advocate has the first contact with the victim. The first contact report should reflect as much information as possible. This should include disaster needs, health-related and nutritional needs, and other needs which seem important. After that, a new entry is made in the file every time the advocate makes contact with the victim. Such an entry should indicate the time, date and nature of the contact, services provided, additional services needed, and any new observations which seem appropriate.

Similarly, the staff working in the disaster center also has a responsibility for contributing to this developing file by recording any contacts that the victim has with the center. This would include filing a copy of any telephone messages that the victim might leave for the advocate, or a contact report on any visit that the victim might make to the center.

In addition, the file should include copies of any records or forms that are developed during the course of helping the victim. This should include copies of papers filled out for the victim, reports submitted to other agencies in support of the victim's request for disaster assistance, reports developed by damage appraisers, and virtually any other paper work involved in dealing with the victim. These copies are important because it may be difficult for the victim to provide security for such papers in a damaged home. Also the older person sometimes becomes confused over the processes involved in making claims. These copies also provide a means of following the flow of assistance given to the victim. Such files will help in identifying situations in which inappropriate delays are occurring in responding to the needs of the victims.

After the disaster, there will be a need to evaluate the performance of the disaster relief efforts, and advocate files can tell a very important part of the story.

After an initial flurry of activity involving a number of people, the advocate staff will gradually be reduced to only a few people. The files should be as complete as possible so that those who remain can do the best possible job for the victims. If you are one of the persons who remains on staff for considerable time, you will certainly appreciate the efforts of others who leave good, solid information on each case you must complete.

Your supervisor will provide you with copies of certain forms to be used, and these usually are a major part of the file. However, the structure of forms does not always allow for all the necessary, appropriate and desired information. One way to deal with this is to add sheets of notebook paper, or sheets from pads, to your field materials so that you may make initial notes beyond the information contained in forms, and include that in the client files.

The Right Involvement

A filing system is just one aspect of an organizational response which encourages effectiveness. The filing system can be an important aid in ensuring that the right level of involvement is maintained with each victim. One function of the frequent staff meetings, which should be held in the disaster center, is that advocates and their supervisors may exchange information on the cases which are actively being worked on. An examination of the files will make this easier.

Here again the value of a good file system is readily apparent. With a good case file, the new advocate can be made aware of all the details surrounding the case, and can have a better chance of dealing with it successfully.

Naturally the opposite kind of situation also can crop up. In fact, it is common for the advocate to become so well trusted by an older person, and so appreciated, that the victim will then tell the advocate about deeper levels of personal needs, or will want the advocate to intervene in unresolved problems in the lives of acquaintances. Here the advocate will want to move cautiously, checking to insure that there is no inappropriate interference in the case of another advocate, and using the available referral network to deal with those problems that are not related to the disaster.

But it is just such a relationship which may lead victims to offer the advocate gifts, ranging from money to prized personal possessions. Obviously such gifts must be refused. However, there have been instances in past disasters in which an advocate and victim developed a lasting relationship, which resulted in periodic social contacts long after the disaster problems had been dealt with. Obviously each case will require careful judgment to insure that the level of involvement is appropriate to the situation.

Being Reachable

The advocate will not develop these close relationships if he or she is difficult for the victim to contact. As we suggested in Module I on Outreach, it is highly desirable for advocates to carry cards, or short pamphlets, that tell who they are, what they are doing, and where they may be reached. Many people will try to reach the advocate by walking into the disaster center; others by telephone. In either instance, it is important for the staff on duty at the disaster center to offer help with immediate problems. The advocate who is working the case must then be made aware that the victim contact has been made, and should make a follow-up visit to insure that all necessary services were provided. Other victims, especially those who develop a close relationship with the advocate, will only deal with the advocate. In such cases, it is vital that telephone calls and other messages be relayed to the advocate as quickly as possible for follow-up. This may make it necessary for the advocate to check in with the disaster center several times a day to see if there are messages. When the victim takes the time and effort to request assistance, this request should be treated as a high priority item.

A Variety of Services

The range of services which the advocate can provide - either directly, or through use of a referral network - is very broad. And, almost inevitably, some victims will ask for aid that was never anticipated when these training modules were developed. Yet, if the request is legally and ethically appropriate, the advocate should attempt to find a way to fill the request. This call for help may vary from assistance in arranging for the safekeeping of very valuable possessions to notifying friends or relatives that the victim has survived the disaster. (These contacts should be logged in the files; after all, the victim may forget where the advocate arranged for the same valuable property to be stored.)

But the truly successful advocate will be the person who develops real skills in using the referral system well and who finds the most appropriate resources to deal with whatever problem arises. It is through such an approach that the advocate arranges for legal advice for the victim, professional appraisal of property damage, and care for emotional, medical, or religious needs.

It is not unusual, for example, to find a victim who believes that the disaster was directed at him, or his community, because he or the community (in the view of the victim) has violated religious traditions. In such a situation, the disaster is seen as the penalty exacted by God. Rather than arranging for a referral to a mental health worker the advocate may first consider involving a clergyman in the case. The victim is perceiving the disaster in religious terms, so why shouldn't the response be made in the same terms? This is the kind of reasoning that may be produced by the advocate who really attempts to put himself or herself in the shoes of the victim and sees the situation in the same light as the victim. Obviously this takes some artful effort if the advocate is responsible for a large number of cases, but it often can prove to be a worthwhile effort; each case file might contain an entry which briefly summarizes the way a particular victim looks on the disaster so that the advocate may remind himself or herself of this perspective before each contact with the victim (and such a note would be helpful in the event someone else has to take over the case.)

Doing the Whole Job

It should be obvious from everything you have read up to this point that the job of the disaster advocate is a complex one. But take heart. Many cases are uncomplicated, and can be handled with a minimum of problems.

This module, and the Outreach Module, have attempted to look at the problem from the point of view of the "worst possible" situation. This seems defensible because very difficult cases will be found, and they, too, must be dealt with.

The disaster advocate for the elderly is an important person--one who is performing at the cutting edge of social work. The advocate is expected to facilitate the provision of a broad-spectrum of assistance, and is expected to insure that such assistance is of high quality.

The advocate will be working in a setting where emotions are intense, and the need is often severe.

But the job can be done. These modules were constructed on the basis of experiences reported by advocates actually working in disasters, plus the theory and data developed by social scientists who are concerned with the problems of the aging population.

You will not find an answer to your every need in this module, or even in the whole set. But you gradually are being exposed to basic information, and approaches to thinking, that should help you deal with most of the problems you will encounter. When you find a problem you cannot solve, reach out to others - just as the victim has reached out to you - for help. Call on your supervisor, and explain the problem to other advocates in staff meetings. Collectively, thinking humanistically, you should be able to develop a solution to even the toughest problems.

Congratulations! You have completed the Case Assessment and Management Module. You are now ready to turn to the self-assessment quiz. If you are not able to answer all the questions on the Case Assessment and Management self-assessment quiz, you may review the module to find the answers you are unaware of.

(Note: The authors found the service management manual developed by the Philadelphia Geriatric Center to be especially helpful in preparing portions of this module.)

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST FOR MODULE II

1. A carefully organized management system for advocates can:
 - a. Help bring order to a confused situation
 - b. Improve the delivery of services to clients
 - c. Help the advocate in managing his or her caseload
 - d. All of the above
2. The advocate should maintain ____ sets of client files.
3. Maintaining two sets of client files enables the advocate to:
 - a. Maintain one for personal use in the field
 - b. Maintain a back-up file in the disaster service center
 - c. More easily turn a case over to another advocate
 - d. All of the above
4. Group meetings of the advocate staff and supervisors should be:
 - a. Just an excuse to kill time
 - b. A time for exchanging important information
 - c. An opportunity to exchange jokes
 - d. All of the above
5. The advocate should:
 - a. Spend more time on casework than on keeping records
 - b. Spend more time on keeping records than on casework
 - c. Keep as few records as possible
 - d. Keep records sufficient to accurately reflect what casework has been done
6. The advocate should:
 - a. Always work strictly alone
 - b. Never do anything without supervisory approval
 - c. Demand total control over all clients
 - d. Be creative and flexible enough to meet client needs
7. The advocate should expect to:
 - a. Become lifelong friends with all clients
 - b. Never develop any personal relationship with a client
 - c. Maintain the same relationships with all clients
 - d. Develop different types of relations with different people

8. An advocate may need to have a client transferred to another advocate because:
 - a. The client does not like the advocate
 - b. The advocate does not like the client
 - c. The client and advocate cannot communicate well
 - d. Any of the above

9. If an advocate is asked for a kind of disaster assistance not readily available in the center, the advocate should:
 - a. Seek guidance from his or her supervisor
 - b. Consider how this request may be referred elsewhere
 - c. Talk the matter over with other advocates for advice
 - d. All of the above

10. The advocate must be willing to help in providing:
 - a. Only those services available in the disaster center
 - b. Only the services he or she is familiar with
 - c. Any service which is ethically appropriate
 - d. Only those services he or she approves of

ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST FOR MODULE II

1. A carefully organized management system for advocates can (d.) all of the above. It can help bring order to a confused situation, improve the delivery of services to clients, and help the advocate in managing his or her caseload.
2. The advocate should maintain two sets of client files.
3. Maintaining two sets of client files enables the advocate to (d.) all of the above. The advocate can maintain one set of files for personal use in the field, one set for back-up in the disaster service center, and use these files to more easily turn a case over to another advocate.
4. Group meetings of the advocate staff and supervisors should be (b.) a time for exchanging important information.
5. The advocate should (d.) keep records sufficient to accurately reflect what casework has been done.
6. The advocate should (d.) be creative and flexible enough to meet client needs.
7. The advocate should expect to (d.) develop different types of relations with different people.
8. An advocate may need to have a client transferred to another advocate because (d.) any of the above. This need may arise because the client does not like the advocate, because the advocate does not like the client, because the client and advocate cannot communicate well, or some combination of factors.
9. If an advocate is asked for a kind of disaster assistance not readily available in the center, the advocate should (d.) all of the above. The advocate should seek guidance from his or her supervisor, consider how this request may be referred elsewhere, and talk the matter over with other advocates to see if they have had to deal with similar situations.
10. The advocate must be willing to help in providing (c.) any service which is ethically appropriate - not just those that the advocate personally approves of, or those services which are easy to provide.

MODULE III - LIFE INTERVENTION

INTRODUCTION

The disaster advocate is called upon to intervene in the lives of others, often with dramatic impact. This is a large responsibility, and one the advocate should understand before entering the field to begin work.

One of the things that you must remember is that the job of being a disaster advocate may have an important, and long-lasting, effect on the people you are trying to help. This module will attempt to provide guidance for you on how to conduct yourself in your job. It will try to help you better understand this special segment of the population you are going to be working with.

The Psychological Impact

It is important to understand that the victims of a disaster (whatever their age) have suffered an intense emotional experience. As a result, the victims may well require anywhere from a few days to several months merely to sort out the details of what has happened. This *does not* mean that the victims are ignorant or incompetent. Rather, it means that they have been overwhelmed by their experience, and they are attempting to make some sense out of it in regard to the way they understand the world.

Perhaps it would be helpful here to point out that if a hundred people undergo exactly the same experience, they may well describe that experience in a hundred different ways. Police long have recognized this fact as being a problem in getting different people to describe what they saw when they witnessed a crime.

Another way to look at this matter - the way some sociologists look at it - is to say that reality is socially constructed. This means that people think about events, talk about them with other people, and compare these events to their previous knowledge, in an effort to make sense out of them. In this process, each person involved may come up with a slightly different "definition of the situation" - or a slightly different conclusion as to what has happened, and what it means.

Several responses can be expected in such a situation. One response may be the adoption of the attitude that there is no hope for the future. This may be related to the attitude that things are so horrible that they can never be put back in order, or it may be related to the attitude that there is no use in trying to put things back in order because another disaster probably will come along and ruin it again.

Another response, and the one that has allowed humans to bounce back after problems for thousands of years, probably will be that the disaster was only a "freak" occurrence; something that likely never will happen to the victims again. People who adopt this attitude probably will want to get on with the job of cleaning up, fixing up, and returning life to normal.

Confusion in the Elderly

Any of the responses suggested above may be found in the elderly population, just as they may be found among any other group.

But the problems may be worse among the elderly because of some condition that already existed before the disaster. The elderly may already have significant problems, such as housing, financial, health, medications, drugs, alcohol or family. Any of these problems is only compounded by the disaster. This adds to the confusion that the advocate may have to help the victim sort out.

The advocate may have to distinguish problems related to the disaster from problems that already existed. The advocate must watch for evidence that the victims of a disaster already had problems that needed attention. These may be social work, or something else. If pre-existing problems are identified, they must also be dealt with - but those problems should be delegated to others who have responsibility for these concerns. In a situation like this, the advocate should rely on the professional staff of the area agency on aging for guidance in referring the non-disaster problems to other persons and agencies who have responsibility in these areas. When this task is accomplished, the advocate can then make better progress in helping with the disaster-related problems.

It is vital that the advocate learn to recognize the difference between these problems which are related to the disaster and those problems which are not. It also is important for the advocate to understand that some clients will attempt to establish dependency relationships, or other kinds of relationships, with the advocate. These would demand more time than the advocate will be able to give. The advocate is responsible for caring for many people in a rather specific way, and must not become overly involved with any single case.

Advocates must work to achieve a reasonable balance between the job of being an advocate and the desire to respond to the needs that some victims will have for friendship. While it is true that warmth and friendliness are characteristics that an advocate should have and use, it is also true that these aspects of personality cannot be exercised as fully as some people would like.

Filling the needs of some victims for the companionship and friendship of individuals - as important as they may be - will prevent the advocate from reaching those victims who have more immediate needs directly related to the disaster.

Some General Characteristics

As we said in the introduction, it is impossible to generalize about older people, just as it is impossible to generalize about younger people. This means that - as we have suggested repeatedly - different people will respond to the same event in different ways. But it also means that not all old people hear poorly, or have any other impairment. Yet it still is useful to know that there are certain *tendencies* that advocates should watch for, so that they may best help disaster victims.

If the advocate has these tendencies clearly in mind, he or she can then compare each victim to this list and see if any of these tendencies apply to this specific victim. If a victim is found to have one or more of these tendencies, then the advocate should be aware that the special efforts must be taken to address these problems so that disaster assistance can more easily be provided.

For ease of discussion we are going to list some of the most common problems in functioning:

- 1. Communications deficits.** The ability to hear and see well tends to decrease with age, and older persons often require a higher level of stimulation for communication. For example, more than half of all men over the age of 65, and a third of all women over 65, have been found by researchers to have some hearing loss. This may make the physical event of a disaster more threatening to the older person, and it may make it harder for the advocate to communicate with the victim.

2. **Learning impairment.** The ability of older persons to learn may be diminished--especially when they are exposed to new information for only a short time. Therefore you should exercise patience when you seek to explain programs or obtain information you need to fill out forms. Some individuals may take more time to understand the meaning and intent of your questions and explanations.
3. **Problem-solving deficiencies.** Research has shown that some older people have difficulty in figuring out ways to solve problems. One result of this is that they often prefer to do things in their usual ways and are reluctant to adopt new ways of doing things. You may get more understanding, and a better response, if you exercise great patience in explaining alternative strategies for solving problems.
4. **Slow memory function.** Older persons may require more time to retrieve and organize information from their memory. You should provide plenty of time for victims to remember as you seek to learn about things that have been lost, or things which may be needed.
5. **Limited formal education.** The generation of Americans now identified as "senior citizens" generally has had less formal education than you have received. The average person over age 65 today may only have completed the 9th or 10th grade. This varies from one state to another, and from one region to another. This is important to understand because you should recognize that the formal education of many victims, as well as their life experience, has not acquainted the victims with the complexity of government responses to social problems. You should not assume that the victims are aware of all available disaster programs. You should be prepared to explain *why* such programs exist, *how* they work, and *what* they may mean to the victim.

6. **Psychological depression.** The most common psychological problem among older persons (especially those over the age of 70 or 75) is depression. The symptoms may be sadness, lack of interest, pessimism, and difficulty in making decisions - all of which may be made worse by the trauma of a disaster. The advocate cannot be solely concerned with repair of physical damage to the victim's property. The advocate should attempt to use whatever resources the victim needs - including aid in overcoming emotional or psychological problems - as well as physical and economic assistance. Depression may come and go, and it may be brought on by a distressing event in life. The repeated visits of the advocate may serve to identify changes over time that would not be observed on a single visit. The advocate must be careful not to impose his or her values on the situation. Things that an outsider may view as trivial concerns may be extremely significant for the older person and may produce emotional distress that will lead to social isolation. This may increase needs for the services of the advocate.
7. **Different values.** The present group of older Americans grew up at a time when the most cherished values in American society were independence and self-reliance. They were teenagers and young adults before Social Security and most of the present public assistance systems were developed. As a result, many members of the aging population have very negative views of these programs because they think their independence and self-reliance will be diminished. Part of the job of the advocate may be to help these people overcome their doubts about the appropriateness of participating in government disaster programs.
8. **Welfare Stigma.** In other disaster situations, it has been found that some older people refuse help from federal programs because they view such assistance as "welfare." Among many people in the United States--and especially older people--being identified as "being on welfare" is very objectionable, and suggests that the person is lazy and not willing to work. For people who value independence and reliance this is a real stigma. As we indicated in the Outreach Module, it is important to convey to disaster victims that the programs you are suggesting to them are not welfare programs. You may need to explain to the victims that the aid they are being offered is nothing more than a return of some of the federal tax dollars they have paid over the years. If this explanation is rejected, you may need to seek help from your supervisor in devising ways to distinguish between disaster assistance programs and so-called "welfare."

The Low-Key Approach

Nothing in this module, or any of the others, should suggest that advocates are expected to force disaster programs on the victims. Nor should any approach be adopted which tends to "push" the victims into any action. Advocates should keep in mind that they are dealing with adults, and not assume that all older persons have lost their ability to think and function.

The clues offered in this module are intended only to help the advocate in overcoming barriers to communication. The advocate should recognize that a hearing deficiency, or the perception of all government assistance as welfare, may be the reason that the victim does not readily accept assistance. If this turns out to be the case, then the advocate is expected to identify this factor, and develop a way to deal with it in a helping fashion.

If at first the advocate finds the victim unwilling to cooperate, it might be well for the advocate to leave a written message about who he or she is, and why the visit was made. The advocate then can withdraw and move on to visit with another victim. After some thought is given to the reluctant victim's case, the advocate may be better prepared to try again to approach him or her in a way that is more understandable to the victim. As indicated before, it may take several visits with the same victim before the advocate earns the required degree of acceptance to help the victim obtain needed aid. It is the repeated demonstration of interest and concern in the victim that is more likely to break down resistance than any "hard-sell" approach.

Careful Judgment

Once the advocate does gain acceptance from the victim, and it is allowed to explain the availability of assistance, the advocate may be asked for advice about what the victim should do. If these questions relate directly to the programs that the advocate is trained to deal with then the advocate should be able to respond rather easily.

But it also is reasonable to expect that once you are accepted in an advice-giving role, the victim may call on you for advice about things which lie beyond your specific competence or outside the scope of your job. When such situations arise, you must keep in mind that no one is an expert on all things. Therefore you should feel no sense of failure if you cannot answer the question that is asked. This is the reason that the aging network is funded to hire experts in a variety of areas to assist elderly persons. The job of the advocate is not to know all the answers, but the advocate is expected to know where to obtain reliable information for victims.

An important service that has been offered in past disasters, through the aging network, has been the service of professional damage appraisers. They have been used to help victims of disasters get full value from their property damage insurance.

In some disasters, attorneys have been hired with public money to provide limited advice to victims.

Other kinds of advice may be obtained from a variety of sources. Some of these are regular public agencies which already exist.

It is the job of the disaster advocate to keep in mind that he or she needs to turn to others for specific, expert advice on many questions.

The advocate, then, should use careful judgment when asked questions by victims. If the advocate does not have real knowledge sufficient to answer the question correctly, then the advocate should explain to the victim that the advice of a specialist is needed, and explain how this may be arranged. Frequently the advocate will need to refer such a question to the supervisor in order to obtain expert assistance.

It **is not** the job of the advocate to be all things to all people. Instead, the advocate is intended to be one who facilitates--one who sees that the proper resources are brought to bear at the proper time.

This is another way of making the point that we made at the beginning of this module: intervening in the lives of other persons is a large responsibility that may have important and long-lasting effects. Thus it is more desirable for the advocate to admit that he or she does not know the answer to a particular question than to give the wrong answer. A good advocate will not merely decline to answer the question, but will indicate to the victim that efforts will be made to obtain the answer from an appropriate source and transmit the information to the victim later. This should be followed up later, so your credibility is maintained.

The Full-Service Advocate

This module has attempted to cover a broad range of issues. It has attempted to help you understand the mental processes that are likely to be encountered in dealing with the victims of disasters, and how to cope with them.

This module has not only outlined some of the problems that you may encounter, and how you may resolve them, but it has attempted to teach you problem-solving.

In brief, the module has undertaken these tasks:

1. *It has explained how important your job is;*
2. *It has described what the effect of a disaster may be on the victims;*
3. *It has identified problems common to older persons;*
4. *It has identified strategies for responding to these common problems; and,*
5. *It has pointed out secondary resources that you may use.*

In short, the module has attempted to give you some real skills as you work to become a helpful, efficient problem-solver.

Congratulations! You have completed the Life Intervention Module. You are now ready to turn to the self-assessment quiz. If you are not able to answer all the questions on the Life Intervention self-assessment quiz, you may review the module to find the answers you do not know.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST FOR MODULE III

1. Being the victim of a disaster may have psychological impact; the job of sorting out the meanings of this event may take:
 - a. Very little time
 - b. A great deal of time
 - c. Different amounts of time for different people
 - d. No time for the mentally competent

2. Some victims of disasters may feel:
 - a. There is no hope for the future
 - b. There is no use to restore things since another disaster probably will come along any way.
 - c. All of the above

3. The disaster advocate may find some elderly victims to be confused. This may be caused by:
 - a. Some condition they had before the disaster
 - b. Problems in understanding what happened in the disaster
 - c. Medications or alcohol
 - d. All of the above

4. When the advocate is asked for a personal judgment by a disaster victim, the advocate should:
 - a. Answer those questions about which the advocate has real knowledge
 - b. Seek help with those questions the advocate can't answer
 - c. Suggest other sources for opinions on things not related to the disaster
 - d. All of the above

5. All older people hear poorly
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. All older people see poorly.
 - a. True
 - b. False

7. There are certain tendencies that may be seen among older people, such as having poor hearing or poor eyesight.
 - a. True
 - b. False
8. All older people are slow to remember things.
 - a. True
 - b. False
9. When people get older, they lose the ability to think and function on their own.
 - a. True
 - b. False
10. The disaster advocate should try to be all things to all people.
 - a. True
 - b. False

ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST FOR MODULE III

1. Being the victim of a disaster may have psychological impact; the job of sorting out the meanings of this event may take (c.) different amounts of time for different people. Two people very seldom respond in exactly the same way to a situation.
2. Some victims of disasters may feel (d.) all of the above. They may feel there is no hope for the future, that things can never be restored to be like they were, and that there is no use to restore things since another disaster probably will come along any way.
3. The disaster advocate may find some elderly victims to be confused. This may be caused by (d.) all of the above. Some conditions the victims had before the disaster may cause them to be confused, problems in understanding what happened in the disaster may cause problems, and the use of medications or alcohol may contribute to their confusion.
4. When the advocate is asked for a personal judgment by a disaster victim, the advocate should (d.) all of the above. The advocate should answer those questions about which the advocate has real knowledge, seek help with those questions the advocate can't answer, and the advocate should suggest other sources for information on things not related to the disaster.
5. (b.) False. Not all older people hear poorly. It is true that many older people have poor hearing, but each person must be evaluated individually by the advocate.
6. (b.) False. Not all older people see poorly. It is true that many older people have poor vision, but each person must be evaluated individually by the advocate.
7. (a.) True. There are certain tendencies that may be seen among older people, such as having poor hearing or poor eyesight.

8. (b.) False. Some older people are slow to remember things, but not all older people are. Further, some people may remember things from several years ago better than things that happened yesterday.
9. (b.) False. Some older people have a diminished ability to think and function on their own, but this is not true for most older people.
10. (b.) False. The disaster advocate takes a certain set of skills into the job situation; to attempt to go beyond those skills is wrong for the advocate, and may cause future problems for the victims because they have been given poor advice. No one can be all things to all people.

MODULE IV - The Central Role of The Advocate

INTRODUCTION

We have attempted in many ways to illustrate the important role the advocate has to play in the delivery of services to the aging population after a disaster. In this, the final module in this training package, we focus heavily on the key task of advocates - working with other agencies.

As an advocate for the elderly, you are hired as a temporary staff member for the area agency on aging. But your job is to work with all of the agencies which provide assistance to disaster victims - including other agencies of government, and private organizations. The major function of the advocate is to insure that your clients get the maximum assistance to which they are entitled.

It is your job to keep uppermost in your mind your responsibilities to your client. We have outlined ways in which you get people to trust you and ways in which you gain access to quite personal information; but gaining trust and collecting information is helpful only if you can use this trust and information to assist the victims who become your clients.

In this module, we will first outline the characteristics of a good advocate, and then we will discuss your role in working with agencies which can provide assistance to your clients.

Note that we have adopted the term "client" here, and elsewhere in the modules, in the same way that it is used by professional social workers. This is appropriate because you perform many of the same functions that a social worker would if a social worker were put in your job.

Characteristics of an Advocate

In order to be effective, the advocate must be willing to address each client's needs comprehensively. There are at least five key dimensions of the role of an advocate in management of a case. These dimensions are:

1. *A willingness to serve as a client advocate.* You should not take on the job unless you feel that it is important and a job that you really want to do.
2. *A commitment to help clients receive maximum disaster help.* No one wants you, or the client, to cheat or lie to increase the assistance that a client gets. However, it is your job to help the client get the maximum assistance to which he or she is entitled.
3. *An ability to identify the needs of a client and match available services to the needs.* You often will be required to do considerable digging to understand the full dimensions of a client's needs. This is terribly important. Yet, your work is of no value unless you can help the client express these needs to the appropriate agencies.
4. *An ability to act as a third party who can deal with any agency and whose primary concern is the client.* Each agency responding to disaster needs has its own responsibilities, and its own assistance to provide. In addition, each agency has its own limitations which must guide its staff in assisting victims. The primary job of the advocate **is not** to represent the agency he or she works for. Instead, the advocate is hired to help the victims. The work of the advocate helps carry out the job of the local, state and federal agencies on aging, but the advocate is there to help the victims in the aging population make maximum use of the available resources.
5. *A person who is capable of relating to clients with warmth and concern.* The relationship between the advocate and each victim must be a positive one if the advocate is to get the job done. The advocate must have real concern for the needs of the client. (If a problem arises, talk with your supervisor. As we have suggested before, some cases may best be handled by changing advocates.)

Exploring the Full-Range

It should be clear that the success of the disaster advocacy program rests on two people - the client and the individual advocate assigned to that person's case.

The victim has the right to refuse participation in disaster assistance programs and that right must be respected by the advocate. However, if the victim elects to participate, then he or she has a responsibility - after the disaster assistance programs have been fully explained - to cooperate with the advocate. The victim has the responsibility to make appearances as needed to fill out forms, sign papers, and otherwise cooperate in the helping programs.

But the major responsibility is focused on the advocate. It is the job of the advocate to make certain that all necessary services are coordinated and are provided to the victim.

This means that **the advocate must not merely respond to client needs on demand, for the client cannot be expected to recognize all possible needs.** Instead, the advocate must take the lead and help the client explore the full range of possible needs. Once the needs are identified, then the advocate must serve as a coordinator to insure that help is forthcoming and is not fragmented and piecemeal. It is the job of the advocate to see that aid is comprehensive in nature, and that all available resources are packaged together.

In the case of damage to a home, the job of coordination might well mean immediate aid to protect the portion of the house and its contents that escaped damage in the disaster. After this emergency aid is arranged and scheduled, then the advocate may need to arrange for an independent appraisal service to visit the home, make a detailed assessment of damage and provide an estimate of repair and replacement costs. The advocate may then need to help the victim contact insurance adjusters and arrange for the maximum possible payments. Since insurance policies often do not cover the total cost of restoring a home after a disaster, the advocate then may need to seek out agencies which provide loans and grants to finish the repairs. Even then the job of the advocate is not done. The advocate must make periodic visits back to the victim to insure that all the agencies which have committed themselves to help are actually providing the aid they promised. Once all the arranged services are completed, the advocate must conduct a reassessment to insure that all identifiable needs have been met. The assessment of whether all needs have been adequately met is not a determination the advocate should make alone, but is one which must be shared with the victim. If the victim still sees needs which have not been met, or new needs have arisen, or needs have not been met adequately then the job may not be complete.

The advocate is expected to be more calm and clear-headed than the victim during this process. The advocate must think ahead and insure that help extends across the full-range of needs, not just the immediate ones. For example, the advocate, dealing with victims of a late spring flood, may be expected to check on possible damage to the victim's air conditioner. But the advocate must check on the future possible needs. In this example, this means the advocate would want to also insure that the victim's furnace - which will not be needed for six months - also is in working order, that the victim's clothing replacement includes winter garments, etc.

The Pigeon-Hole Problem

These broad concerns the advocate is expected to deal with are likely to produce problems in obtaining assistance. But that is why the job of advocate has been created. It has been said that the only thing that fits neatly into pigeon-holes is pigeons. Similarly, the advocate can expect to find problems that do not fit neatly into any single program. Such problems often can be resolved by finding two or three programs which each fill a portion of the needs.

This job of working with a variety of agencies to answer diverse needs is made easier by the establishment of the disaster assistance center. Yet, merely bringing the agencies together may not achieve integration of service delivery. But the advocate can provide the coordination that will allow the services of these agencies to be effective and efficient.

This involves considerable planning on the part of the advocate. Such planning may need to allow for different degrees of intensity at different times, while maintaining the continuous pattern of services that is necessary. By providing a high level of human concern, and skill in mixing and matching programs, the advocate can produce a response of very high quality, which will appropriately meet the needs of the client.

The Service Job

It should be clear by now that the advocate is a provider of services.

The advocate has no ready supply of money, nor any secret formula for solving all problems, but the advocate does have the training and resources (through the area agency on aging) to bridge the gaps between the various agencies.

Part of the training for advocates should include a short visit with each of the agencies represented in the disaster assistance center. These visits should include a briefing by someone at each agency who is familiar with the help offered by that agency. (If such a visit with all agencies is not offered to you, be sure to ask for it, because it is important.)

While visiting each of the agencies, you should ask for copies of the forms that they will expect victims of the disaster to fill out. Try to familiarize yourself with each of these forms. This will be important to you when you are attempting to help a client apply for aid.

The tour of other agencies also should let you see special services you may want to provide for an elderly person seeking help. Is there a special desk set up for older victims of the disaster? Are any of the agencies willing to let you set up appointments for your clients so that they do not have to wait in line? Can the form filled out for one agency also be used for another agency?

If you can gain this kind of understanding, you are in a better position to find ways to help your clients. For example, if they are expected to stand in line and wait their turn, you may want to provide chairs for those who have been injured, or who have trouble walking. It is the little things like this that can make life after the disaster a bit easier for your clients.

Transportation may be a major problem for your clients. One of your jobs may be to drive them to and from the assistance center. Providing this transportation not only fills an urgent need, but it is very helpful in demonstrating to your clients - and to other agencies - that you are concerned with all the needs of your client.

Alphabet Soup

You will notice rather quickly that the people who work for disaster relief agencies and other agencies, often use shorthand names for their agencies. To help you better understand the conversations around you, we offer the following list as a starting place.

First, we give you the name of the agency or program, and then indicate the shorthand reference:

Area Agency on Aging--*Triple A (or AAA)*
Housing and Urban Development--*HUD (pronounced like one word)*
American National Red Cross--*Called simply "the Red Cross," or sometimes "The Red-X"*
Mennonite Disaster Service--*The Mennonites*
Internal Revenue Service--*I.R.S. (say each letter separately)*
Federal Emergency Management Administration--*FEMA (pronounced FEE-mah)*
Emergency Food Stamp Program--*Food Stamps*
Small Business Administration--*S.B.A. (say each letter separately)*

Special Services

Other special services may be available to help victims of a disaster. For example, the area agency on aging may establish legal services or damage appraisal services.

Other government agencies may be involved. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture may be involved if there is extensive flooding to farm land, or the National Guard may be called in to help prevent looting.

Therefore no single list of services will cover all disasters. Your agency should have on hand a book which deals with disaster planning and implementation which will give you basic information on what services each agency offers in the disaster center from which you are operating. This information, combined with your visit to each agency, should prepare you to start work.

Going into the Field

Starting any new job tends to make people a little bit nervous, and your new job will probably be no different. You are trying something you may have never thought about before; you are working with an agency which may be new to you; and you are expected to go out and locate strangers to work with.

But don't be afraid!

Disasters, by their very nature, cause a great deal of confusion. But they can be dealt with almost like any other job.

Start out slowly. Find one client, fill out the necessary forms, and try to understand that case very well. Put forth your best effort to help that client.

When you think you have done your best for that client on your first contact, locate another client and start all over again.

Very soon, perhaps by the time you have worked with only three or four clients, you will begin to find you understand the system better, and you will begin to feel that you really are helping people. By the time you have worked with about a dozen clients, you should begin to feel that you are pretty calm about the whole process.

As you gain more experience, and more information about the help that is available to victims, you may come to think that you overlooked some avenues of possible help with your earlier clients. If that is so, go back to the ones you think may be able to qualify for additional assistance, and help them apply for the new kinds of aid you have discovered.

When you begin to find ways to improve your own work, you really are learning to be a good advocate.

Keep this manual around for future reference. In addition, you may want to read it again from time-to-time just to be sure you are making maximum use of it.

Conclusion

This training program has covered a broad range of materials intended to help you become a good disaster advocate as quickly as possible.

The training has been broken into segments so that you may learn a piece at a time, at your own pace.

After each section, you have taken an examination and demonstrated that you have learned at least some of the information that you need.

But the training is not over. Your instructor or your job supervisor will continue to work with you all through the disaster as special problems come up.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

You will get along far better if you ask questions than if you try to bluff your way through by pretending you know everything. Remember, **no one knows everything.**

You can't wait until you have all of your questions answered before you start work.

Just keep in mind that you already know a great deal more than most of your clients will, so you really are qualified to begin helping people right now.

On Being Human

We only have one final point to make to you: *Be human at all times.*

We have talked about clients, cases and victims. We have referred to you as an advocate.

But keep in mind that you are an individual human being. And each of the victims you work with is an individual human being. Don't let your file folders become more important than the people for whom they were created--people who need to laugh and cry, people who need help in a time of tremendous strain.

Do not let yourself become cold and uncaring. Look at each government rule and each program requirement in terms of what it means to real people.

Don't approach your job as an advocate dealing with a victim, instead, work as one person helping another person solve a problem. Then you will be a really good advocate.

Congratulations. You have completed the last module in this training package. You are now ready to turn to the self-assessment quiz. If you are not able to answer all the questions on this module in the quiz, you may review the module to find the answers you don't know.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST FOR MODULE IV

1. The major responsibility of the disaster advocate is to:
 - a. The agency which hires the advocate
 - b. The disaster service center
 - c. The victims the advocate works with
 - d. None of the above

2. The major responsibility for the success of disaster advocacy work rests primarily with:
 - a. The advocate
 - b. The client
 - c. The area agency on aging
 - d. None of the above

3. The disaster victim should be responsible for:
 - a. Knowing what help is needed
 - b. Knowing what damage has been done
 - c. Knowing which programs can help
 - d. Helping the advocate understand the full range of need

4. A disaster advocate is expected to deal with:
 - a. Immediate needs
 - b. Possible future needs
 - c. A combination of present and future needs
 - d. None of the above

5. The disaster advocate can expect his or her work to:
 - a. Vary in degrees of intensity
 - b. Always be very intense and stressful
 - c. Usually be quite easy
 - d. None of the above

6. The major tool of the advocate is:
 - a. A ready supply of money
 - b. A secret formula for solving all problems
 - c. (Training) and some resources that can help
 - d. one of the above

7. The name "Area Agency on Aging" is usually shortened to "Triple A," or _ _ _.
8. The major responsibility for arranging disaster assistance falls on the Federal Emergency Management Administration, abbreviated as _ _ _ _.
9. The disaster advocate should try to:
 - a. Take on as many cases as possible the first day of work
 - b. Avoid any work and take things easy the first day of work
 - c. Start out slowly and work carefully
 - d. None of the above
10. The disaster advocate should try to be:
 - a. Very official acting
 - b. Very casual acting
 - c. Very human in working with clients
 - d. None of the above

ANSWERS TO THE SELF ASSESSMENT TEST FOR MODULE IV

1. The major responsibility of the disaster advocate is to (c.) the victims the advocate works with.
2. The major responsibility for the success of disaster advocacy work lies primarily with (a.) the advocate.
3. The disaster victim should be responsible for (d.) helping the advocate understand the full range of needs.
4. A disaster advocate is expected to deal with (c.) a combination of present and future needs.
5. The disaster advocate can expect his or her work to (a.) vary in degrees of intensity.
6. The major tool of the advocate is (c.) training and some resources that can help.
7. The name "Area Agency on Aging is usually shortened to "Triple A" or AAA.
8. The major responsibility for arranging disaster assistance falls on the Federal Emergency Management Administration, abbreviated as FEMA.
9. The disaster advocate should try to (c.) start out slowly and work carefully.
10. The disaster advocate should try to be (c.) very human in working with clients.