

# ASPR TRACIE Technical Assistance Request

**Request Receipt Date (by ASPR TRACIE):** 9 September 2020

**Response Date:** 16 September 2020

**Type of TA Request:** Complex

## Request:

The requestor asked for response plans and planning documents for establishing a family assistance center (FAC) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Response:

ASPR TRACIE reviewed existing resources on our [Novel Coronavirus Resources](#) page. We also reached out to several members of the ASPR TRACIE Subject Matter Expert (SME) Cadre for information on their policies and procedures and conducted an open source search for additional information. Section I includes feedback from the SME Cadre. Section II provides additional resources.

Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Coronavirus Disease 2019 webpage](#) for the most up-to-date clinical guidance on COVID-19 outbreak management.

### I. SME Cadre Feedback

- We have been discussing what a virtual family assistance operation would look like but have not developed any plans yet on this. Nor have we developed anything for an in-person FAC during COVID.
- Specific to a mass casualty incident (MCI) that occurs during COVID-19, I am not aware of any plans that have been developed to date.
- Many healthcare facilities have adopted remote technologies to enable continued communication between patients and their providers and loved ones in the absence of in-person visitation. Some of these technologies may also be adapted to provide family assistance.

### II. Additional Resources

American Red Cross. (2020). [Safe and Well](#).

Authorities in jurisdictions affected by the current wildfires are encouraging the use of Safe and Well as a central location for those who have fled their homes to register their status and location and aid in the post-disaster family reunification process. In addition to registration, the webpage includes tips for contacting loved ones during an emergency.

American Red Cross. (2020). [Virtual Family Assistance Center](#).

This webpage provides a virtual integrated condolence care program for those who have lost loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes links to national, state, and local resources, psychological first aid, and other Red Cross resources. This [article](#) describes how the Virtual Family Assistance Center was used during the peak of the pandemic in New York State.

ASPR TRACIE. (n.d.). [Family Reunification and Support Topic Collection](#). (Accessed 9/15/2020). Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This Topic Collection includes guidance documents, case studies, templates, and other resources to help health and medical providers better understand their role in family reunification and support. **NOTE:** These documents pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic and some elements may need to be modified to address current circumstances.

ASPR TRACIE. (2020). [Healthcare System Preparedness for Secondary Disasters during COVID-19](#). Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This technical assistance response provides an overview of health and medical considerations when planning for other disasters occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Family assistance is only briefly mentioned, but some of the information in the sheltering section may also be applicable when establishing a physical family assistance center.

ASPR TRACIE. (2018). [Tips for Healthcare Facilities: Assisting Families and Loved Ones after a Mass Casualty Incident](#).

This ASPR TRACIE tip sheet highlights best practices and issues related to planning for, activating, and operating hospital or healthcare facility Family Information Centers (FIC)/ Family Support Centers (FSC), in collaboration with Family Reception Centers (FRC) and Family Assistance Centers (FAC). A [two-page summary](#) is also available.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2020). [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic Mass Casualty Management](#). U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

This document offers best practices related to mass casualty management. It includes key considerations, lessons learned from mass casualty operations, death determination, identification of temporary storage sites, and management of contagious contaminated remains.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2020). [Mass Care/Emergency Assistance Pandemic Planning Considerations](#). U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

These planning considerations for state, local, tribal, territorial, and non-government organizational planners, providers, and support agencies provide information on

providing mass care and emergency assistance during a pandemic. The sheltering section may be helpful; in particular, the non-congregate sheltering section offers considerations for registration and crisis counseling that may be applicable to providing virtual family assistance.

Florida Division of Emergency Management. (2020). [Pre-Landfall Tropical Weather/COVID-19 Co-Response Guidance: Considerations for Florida Counties in Planning for Concurrent Responses](#).

This guidance document is intended for Florida counties preparing to respond to tropical weather concurrently with COVID-19. While FACs are not the focus of the document, many of the reception and shelter considerations may be applicable.

World Health Organization. (2020). [Preparedness for Cyclones, Tropical Storms, Tornadoes, Floods and Earthquakes during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

This health advisory includes some general considerations for mass casualty management.