

SAFE IYCF-E Disaster Response Overview

This document is intended to be a summary guide to the different aspects of the SAFE Team as we operated in western North Carolina after hurricane Helene.

Our response after hurricane Helene was significant and organized. If you are not sure whether or not the situation needs an active response, or of what level, answer the questions in the document, [Determining Need for SAFE Infant Feeding Support](#).

For guidance on any level of response, reach out to the SAFE Team

Core Elements:

Personnel

- **Boots on the Ground - (“teams” or “Infant Feeding Specialists”)**
The volunteers (and later staff) who went into the field as teams to support sites, families, and individuals.
- **Boots on the Ground Coordinator (BotGC/BOTGC)**
Managed deployment of teams and other logistics involved with the SAFE Team HQ and daily operations.
[See BotGC SOP](#)
- **Kit Supervisor, logistics manager, etc** (we had a few names for this)
Managed the sanitation kits themselves - receiving, checking contents, storing/rotating, obtaining donations or making purchases, distributing to teams. Very helpful to have someone separate for this when there are more than 6-8 teams going out every day, but we were able to have the BotGC also handle this role once we were only deploying 2-5 teams most days.
- **Digital Coordinator (DC)**
Remote support involving entering field notes from teams into the database, monitoring team check-ins, responding to Spruce line communications, communicating with volunteers signed up to come help, and other remote support.
[See DC SOP](#).
- **Local experienced Infant Feeding Specialists**
Over time, locals who had been in the field many times had a wealth of experience and information. These experienced locals acted as mentors for new volunteers or participants in the training program.
- **Coordinators**
The most consistently involved people became coordinators. We discussed changes in conditions, new systems to create, status updates, problems, etc.

- **Trainers**
The experts who provided training at both lunch and learns and to individual organizations as well as participants in the IYCF-E CERP training in Jan & Feb. In typical emergency response, the need for trainers will be less formal, though responders will want to train staff, volunteers, and healthcare providers at local emergency response/recovery sites as desired..
- **Lead & Advocate** (Not sure what to call this - Love's position)
This was the person who looked at the big picture of everything, advocated for legislative and regulation changes, located and often applied for funding opportunities, hired staff, and managed the high-level logistics and financial oversight.
- **Tech Support**
This is someone (or multiple people) knowledgeable in things like websites, Google forms, etc. Digital Coordinators can do some of this, but it is nice to have someone with a lot of expertise to call on when needed.

Support Categories Provided

- **Site support -**
Ways that teams helped distribution sites and other organizations
 - Help organize formula and other infant feeding-related donations
 - Educate sites on how to better support families with infants and young children, including teaching a basic rapid needs assessment and when to distribute sanitation kits.
 - Act as a resource to help the families they serve.
- **Family/Caregiver support**
Aid provided directly or indirectly to families with infants or young children.
 - Rapid Needs Assessment to determine individual needs.
 - Educate caregivers on ways to make water potable and
 - Provide sanitation kits to help create safe water and sanitizing infant feeding items.
 - Education about relative safety of different ways of feeding babies and educating regarding how to feed their baby safely in their situation.
 - Educating about the benefits of babywearing and distributing carriers when appropriate and available.
 - Helping families find specialty formula when needed.
 - Supporting peer-to-peer milk sharing by connecting caregivers with donor milk (you may or may not decide to hold donated milk & facilitate distribution).
 - Educate families on ways to keep babies warm when typical indoor heating is not available.
 - Direct lactation support in cases where other support is not available.
 - Connecting families with other resources as needed.

- **Training other professionals**

More formalized education provided to healthcare providers, public health officials, and site staff/volunteers regarding implementation of IYCF-E.

The SAFE team also conducted a 3.5 day training for CERPs, but that is not needed for disaster response or recovery, so is not included here.

- Lunch & learns
- Staff training (in person & videos)
- Healthcare provider education.

Logistical Elements

We kept technology as affordable as possible, often using very low cost resources such as Google Drive.

- **Regular Meetings -**

In the beginning, a live (virtual) meeting DAILY was essential as conditions on the ground and logistics were changing quickly. About 2 months into the recovery, we were able to start skipping the meeting on some days. Once we hit a rhythm and the situation stabilized more, only the DC and BotGC needed to talk daily, and coordinators met 1-2 times per week. Use Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, or similar webconference platform.

- **Communication platform -**

Needed as a way to send messages to a number of people at once in the field and support discussions. **We used GroupMe**, though there may be other platforms which are more suitable. Note that any platform other than direct 1-1 texting is unlikely to work without significant cell signal or wifi. This meant that we often used multiple platforms to communicate.

- **Shared information space - Google Drive**

For maintaining shared documents, etc. Access can be controlled at different levels, and most people are familiar with using Google Drive. Another similar service would be fine.

- **Public Contact Number & Email -**

ASAP, try to have a way for people to contact your group answered by multiple people.

- **Locations Spreadsheet**

This is how we tracked where volunteers needed to go. We tracked sites, families, urgent needs, and training events for specific organizations, as well as daily dispatch (locations visited each day - this was not always entered). There are also tabs to help segment the list of sites into geographical sublists. [Find a template here](#), with comments to explain functionality.

If desired, request Digital Coordinator SOP for more details.

- **Volunteers spreadsheet**

We utilized this spreadsheet to track volunteer signups, allow the DCs and BotGC to have contact info for the volunteers, and track shows/no shows. We also used it to track participants in the training sessions.

If desired, request Digital Coordinator SOP for more details

- **Inventory spreadsheet**

Eventually used to track flow of kits and kit supplies in and out. In the beginning, we did not have the capacity to track the flow of kits - only to ensure that new kits and supplies were audited before going out to sites and families. Once we had the capacity and donations had slowed, tracking inventory was essential to ensuring we had adequate supplies and kits for field needs. [Find a template here](#), with comments to explain functionality.

If desired, request Boots on the Ground Coordinator SOP for more details

Start-up Decisions

In addition to selecting the personnel, scope, and technology tools mentioned above, these decisions need to be made when launching this kind of response:

- **Core Team meeting time -**

How frequently will you have meetings? We found daily meetings to be very helpful in the first 60-90 days post-disaster.

What time? Give 60-90 minutes for meetings.

- **“Headquarters” Volunteer Meeting Location**

Where will everyone gather each morning before going into the field? Try to select a location with cell signal, plenty of room for people to gather, and the ability to store donations at least overnight.

- **Volunteer sign-up & tracking -**

How will volunteers sign up? How will you track who came, and where they are? We used SignUp Genius for volunteers selecting days and roles, and our Google form to help keep track of where they were in the field.

- **Storage -**

Where will you keep donations until they are packed into kits and sent into the field? Its ideal if this is also your headquarters, but it is often impractical to keep everything at your meeting location.

- **“Intake” -**

Set aside a separate holding area for donated supplies until they can be reviewed.

- **Kit Labeling & Branding -**
Be sure to include your group's contact info. Reach out to us to see if we can help you get kits through a support organization, but will need contact info for your group.
- **Fiscal Sponsor Organization**
Ensure there is a way to accept financial donations right away. It is easiest for a non-profit organization already in the state and involved with lactation to become the fiduciary, and the response project to act under their organization.
- **Donations - Financial and Wish List**
Try to focus on financial donations, but understand that some people will donate "stuff" regardless of what you say.
Decide if you want to set up a Wish List on Amazon or another platform to request specific items and have them shipped to a convenient location.
- **Printing -**
How will you handle printing handouts? As soon as reliable electricity is available and a location to store a printer, we highly recommend self-printing for cost effectiveness.
- **Milk Banking -**
Will your group run one or more freezers to act as an informed milk bank and facilitate peer-to-peer milk sharing? Talk to the SAFE Team for more on getting started.
- **Formula Disposal -**
If you will help sites dispose of unsafe commercial formula, how and where? What will be the cost?