

Liability Issues

1. Informed Consent & Self-identification – Disaster Response Pastors must identify themselves as pastors, volunteering on behalf of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska and indicate to the individual that their conversation is confidential unless the individual poses a threat to themselves or others, or has engaged in abusive behavior. The person also needs to have the option to not engage in conversation.
2. Risk Information – Pastors should convey information about potentially dangerous behaviors of any disaster survivor to trained mental health providers for further evaluation and possible treatment.
3. Adequate Supervision – The work of pastors will be monitored on site by incident command system and through resource personnel working with the Nebraska Emergency Disaster Mental Health and **IMN Disaster Response Pastor's Leadership Team**. Clergy will be deployed in pairs, in which case one member of the pair is a behavioral health provider if that is possible. Clergy will not be deployed independently unless there is no other alternative.
5. Effective Planning – By participation in training prior to a disaster, pastors are provided with an understanding of professional practice which helps them respond in appropriate ways.
6. Formal Structures – Pastors should only respond when they are formally mobilized by Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska. This will happen in coordination with the Nebraska Emergency Management (NEMA) and Nebraska Volunteers Active in Disaster (NVOAD).

Disaster Response Pastors, when responding to disasters as they are activated on behalf of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska will be not generally be held liable for actions they take (except in the case of gross malpractice) by virtue of the activation under the authority of Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Based on research done – Liability of Professional and Volunteer Mental Health practitioners in the Wake of Disasters: A Framework for Further Considerations by Tarik Abdel-Monem and Denise Bulling, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, September, 2004.