

FAC or Fiction

**Family Assistance Center Operations for
Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) and or Jurisdictions
The Need for Commonwealth of Virginia Support**

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Emergency Management**

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During this presentation we will:

- Overview the state Family Assistance Center (FAC) plan
- Pose Challenge to each of you
- Offer solution that may provide more coordinated response

Virginia incidents where a Family Assistance Center was or could have been utilized:

- Virginia Tech
- Pentagon 9-11
- Caroline County Bus Crash
- Various tornado / severe weather incidents



VDEM SLIDES YOU MAY HAVE SEEN

If you have attended or participated in any of the VDEM Family Assistance Center Training conducted over the past year or so – you may have seen some of the following slides.

The slides are copied from a presentation that VDEM provided to the college executive staff.

The only change has been to add the source line to the slide.



History of FAC Planning in Virginia

- Verbiage was placed in the 2007 version of the COVEOP during Governor Kaine's administration.
- A planning effort was started by VDEM.
- A DSS commissioner committed to the task to write a plan and a draft was produced.
- From that draft, the COVEOP language was expanded to broadly identify agency role, which encouraged more input into revisions of the draft.

VDEM presentation to TCC Executive Staff March 2014



Development

VDEM continued with collaboration from various stakeholders:

VDEM

VDH

VCICF

VDSS

DCJS

VITA

DBHDS

VSP

DGS DOLI OAG DMV

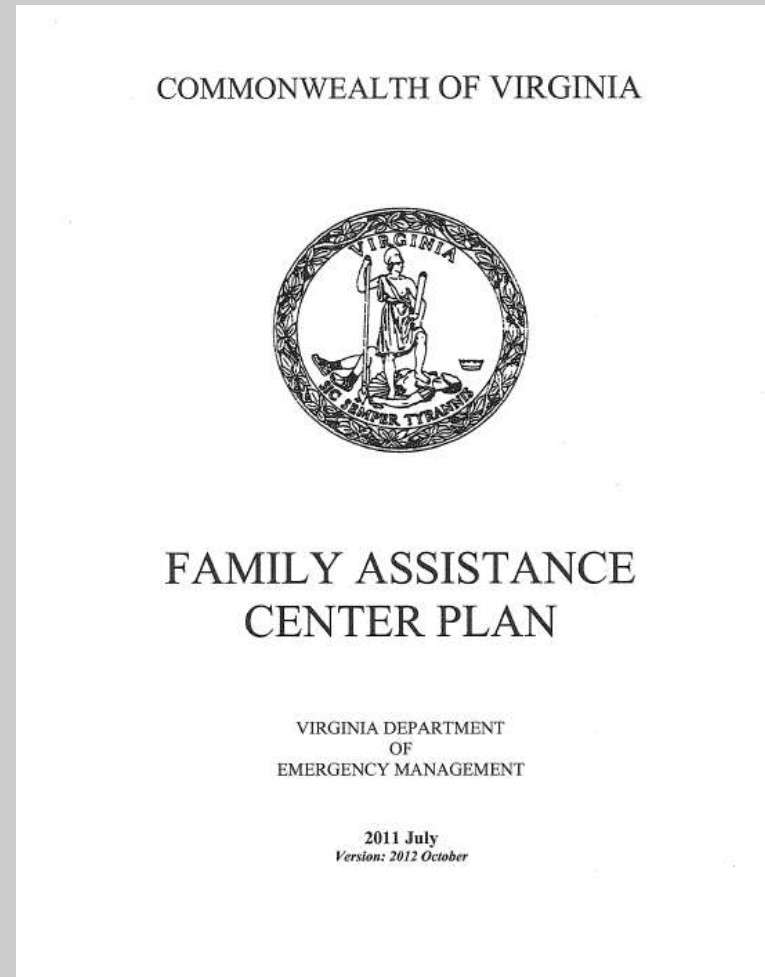
VDEM presentation to TCC Executive Staff March 2014



The Plan

Versions:

- July 2011
- October 2012





Purpose

- The purpose of this plan is to provide state agencies the management framework under which they will cooperate to establish, operate, and close a Family Assistance Center (FAC) in an organized, calm, professional, and coordinated method of assistance delivery to victims and or family members of a mass casualty/fatality incident in a safe and secure environment following an incident or accident. A FAC is staffed by trained personnel.

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012



Scope and Applicability

- This plan pertains to any incident or accident of significance to the Commonwealth that causes or potentially causes mass casualties or missing individuals, unless otherwise determined by appropriate authorities. The greater the number – or potential number – of fatalities in any one incident the more likely a FAC will need to be established and this plan activated.
- The Commonwealth may implement this plan, in whole or part, to support a locality in the conduct of its FAC or in the absence and need of a local FAC.

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012



Policies

- The Governor will declare a state of emergency and make all necessary agency resources available to support the operation of a state-managed FAC coordinated by VDEM where federal partners do not operate their own and/or where the incident requiring the establishment of a FAC occurs on state-owned property, including public colleges and universities.

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012



Planning Assumptions

- If a FAC is required, other plans are also activated, such as the mass casualty plan for a region, city, or state and/or the mass fatality plan for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME).
- Family members of victims:
 - Close By
 - Far Away
 - Traveling In
 - Staying Put



Planning Assumptions (Cont.)

- The ratio of family members seeking assistance from the FAC to victims is estimated to be 10 to 1.
- It is anticipated that for most incidents, a FAC will be established for at least one week up to four weeks, but perhaps longer.

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012



Authorities

- Authority for this plan and VDEM's lead role derives from the COVEOP, authorized by Section 44-146.18B.1, 5, and 6.
- Pursuant to 44-146.18B.13, notification to DCJS and CICF if the event meets the definition of a crime found at Section 19.2-11.01 and they lead.
- Pursuant to 44-146.24, it is the responsibility of any Commonwealth entity (agencies, colleges and universities, and localities) to assist. This includes the establishment/operation of FACs.



Concept of Operations (Activation)

State Warning Point gets a call.

The VEOC will be responsible for making the recommendation regarding activation of the FAC in consultation with representatives of the potentially responding agencies.

The Governor will declare a state of emergency to support the operation of a state-managed FAC.

A Regional Coordinator(s) will be dispatched to scene.

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012



Activation (Cont.)

- A representative from the VDEM [FAC development group] may also be deployed to assist during the initial operation (setup).
- Localities and Colleges/Universities *should* have pre-identified a location for a Reception Center where likely FAC clients can be welcomed and provided with a space for the gathering and the dissemination of preliminary information.
- As the response to the incident grows, the Reception Center will transition to an operational component of the FAC to screen and credential family members, staff, volunteers, and other workers.

Components of the Family Assistance Center:

- Quick to establish – long time in operation, depending on needs
- Level of services different from
 - “Shelter”
 - “Disaster Recovery Center”

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012

The core services provided at the FAC will include:

- Call Center
- Reunification and Identification
- Missing Persons Activities
- Missing Person Phone Line
- Information
- Behavioral Health Care
- Registration
- Referrals
- Mass Fatality Services

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012

The support services include:

- Spiritual Care
- Day Care
- Communications
- Transportation
- Health and Medical
- Mass Care

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012

Can your organization,
jurisdiction, college, or university
really staff and perform the core and support
functions required of a FAC?

Consider the following:

- Functions of the FAC include:
 - Taking Missing persons reports
 - Collect victim antemortem data, DNA samples, etc.
 - Coordinate information from various locations and compare to missing persons list to reunite families
 - Assist L/E and/or crisis counselors in making initial notifications to family members of victims
 - Ensure availability of psychological, spiritual and logistical support and services to victims and their family members in a continuous manner, 24 hours a day
 -

Commonwealth FAC Plan, October 2012

- We suggest operating a “FAC” at a local or institutional level is fiction.
- The level of services is beyond the capability of most jurisdictions and all of the IHEs in the Commonwealth.

There is a solution!

To arrive at a reasonable solution let's examine the development of an incident

- When emergencies occur there is a need to allow incident command to respond the incident.
- People in the immediate area may need to be evacuated or directed from the initial scene area for safety reasons.
- Based on the complexity of the emergency, information about casualties, fatalities, or medical transport may take hours or days to be compiled.

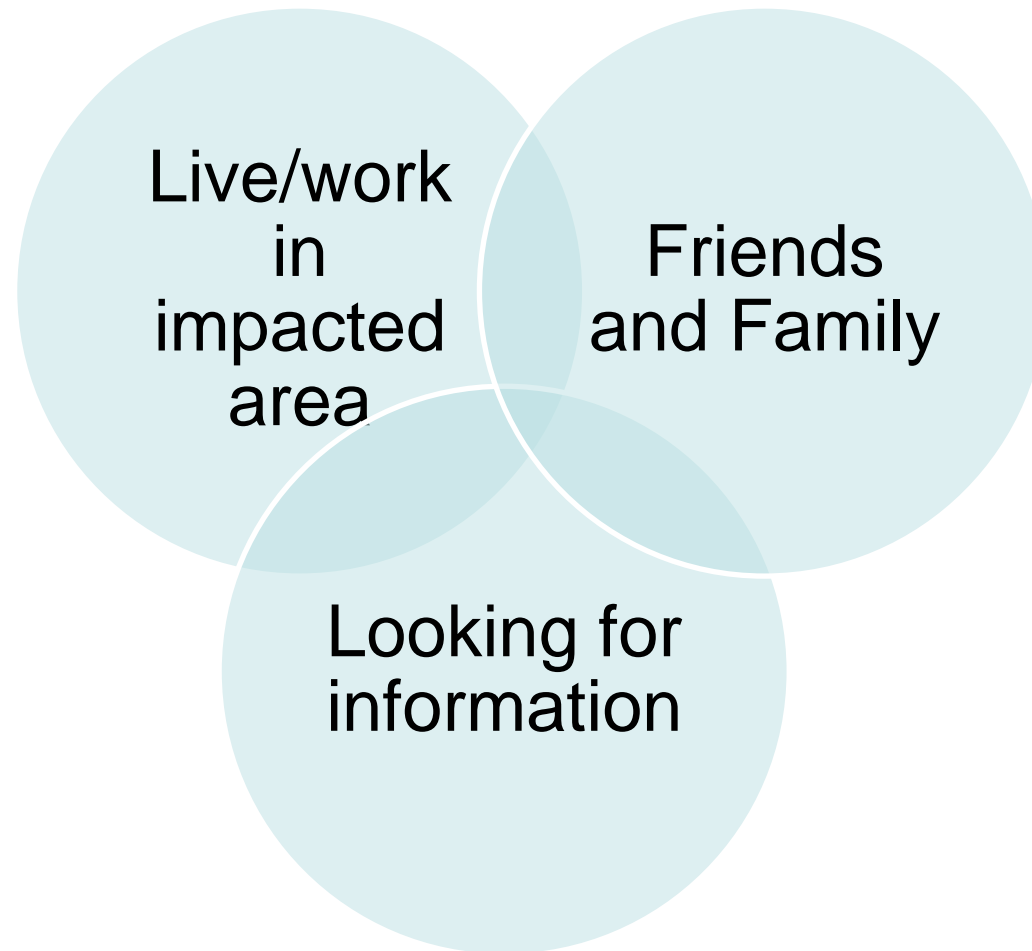
A FAC would provide the longer term needs such as:

- temporary lodging,
- mental health counseling,
- financial assistance,
- family identification and/or family member location assistance,
- as well as other services associated with a long term recovery operations depending on the incident and local needs.

- The establishment of a **reception center** area can provide a safe location where initial care and comfort is available while awaiting information from the scene.
- It is critical to have a **reception center** established quickly to be used as an area where family members, co-workers and friends can provide and receive information.
- Depending on the size and scope of an incident the **reception center** facility would also be used to provide time for the IHE, in conjunction with the jurisdiction, the state or responsible parties to establish a more robust family assistance center (FAC).

There are likely 3 basic groups of people identified that the **reception center** would include;

- 1) those that live/work in the impacted area and may not be able to immediately return home,
- 2) friends and family of people in the impacted area looking for them or information about their whereabouts, and
- 3) people living and working in close proximity to the incident looking for information.



- The reception center staff would have to sort through these groups to determine their reason for being at the reception center.
- Based on the group designation, there would be additional information gathered to determine short or long term needs.
- Within this concept the reception center would be the precursor to establishing a shelter or family assistance center, depending on the size and scope of the incident.

- A **reception center** is not a shelter; nor is it intended to have the same level of services needed in a shelter.
- Simply put, the **reception center** should be part of a tiered approach to the decision to establish a FAC

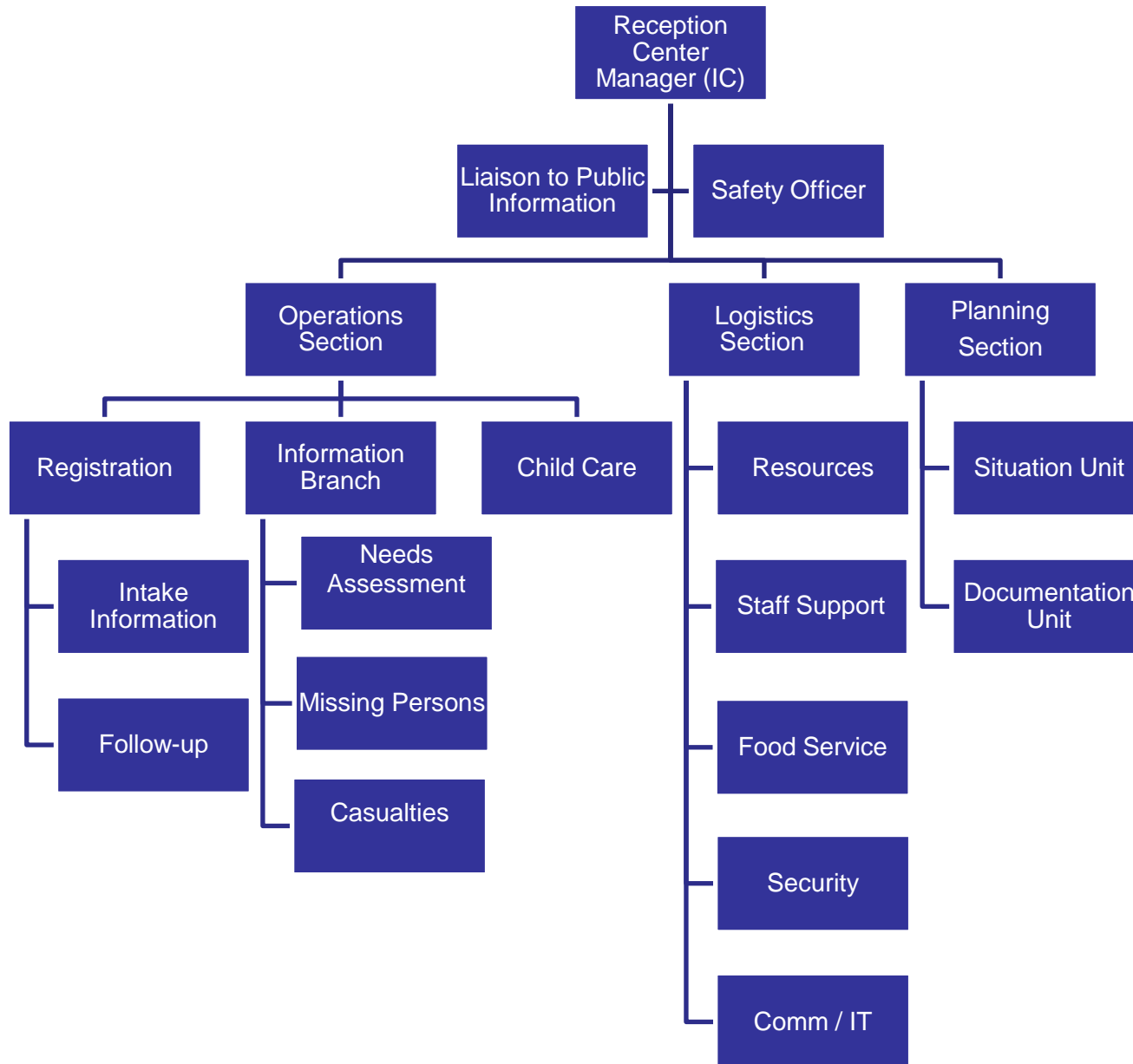
Incident occurs requires reception center

Incident Commander / EOC determines shelter needs to be opened

EOC determines a Family Assistance Center needs to be opened

- A **reception center** may initially draw similar numbers of people looking for information, but may not necessarily remain when a FAC is established.
- A **reception center** should plan to operate from within 1 hour of notification and should anticipate continuing operations for the first 72 hours of an incident occurrence as a FAC is established or the incident concludes.
- **Reception center** operations may be expanded for small incidents to provide some services normally available through a FAC. Such services would likely be referrals to local resources rather than onsite services.

Reception Center ICS example



- **What Difference Does it Make What we call it?**
 - Correctly identifying a **reception center** will help lower the expectations
 - Helps to reduce the confusion when a shelter is opened
 - Helps to reduce the confusion when the state discusses opening/operating a FAC
 - Allows for better local planning to identify locations that may be suitable for a reception center, but not a shelter or a FAC

- Opening a **reception center** quickly will allow for time and coordination necessary to identify, equip, staff and operate a FAC.
- A **reception center plan** should include how to transition people at the reception center to the FAC.
 - Not everyone needs to go to the FAC

- Using this approach the local EOC and State EOC will have time to discuss and identify the actual needs for a FAC.
 - Best Location
 - Types of services needed,
 - Do they need to be onsite or can they operate remotely?
 - Staffing – State, Local, combined
 - Timeframe to establish before opening the doors
 - PIO messaging

- Many incidents require a short term **reception center** to move people out of the operational area so responders can deal with the emergency.
- People may not be able to move very far, but a safe location is needed
- A fully functional Family Assistance Center will take time and resources to establish
- A short term **reception center** can meet the short term needs and allow decision makers time to make better logistical decisions that can support the operations over the long term.

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