

Disaster Social Services

Initial Response Volunteer Information Kit

What is Disaster Social Services (DSS)?

DSS are those services required to preserve the well-being of people affected by an emergency or disaster.

The goal is to reduce or avoid human suffering caused by the disaster.

DSS will not tolerate discrimination based on nationality, gender, religion, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation.

What does DSS do?

DSS performs an integral part of Emergency Management by:

- Helping people to remain independent and self-sufficient.
- Helping people to meet their basic needs during a disaster.
- Reuniting families separated by disaster.
- Providing people with accurate and up-to-date information about the situation at hand.
- Helping people to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible after a disaster.



What services are provided?

DSS provides primary services such as:

- Food
- Lodging
- Clothing
- Family Reunification (registration & inquiry)

DSS also provides specialized services such as:

- Emotional support
- First Aid
- Volunteer Management
- Pet Care
- Child Care

Who receives DSS?

- Citizens of the municipality who have been displaced from their residence by a disaster or emergency.
- Response workers on assignment during a disaster or emergency.
- Travellers stranded as a result of a disaster.

When is DSS provided?

DSS may be provided for incidents ranging from a single family house fire to calamities involving mass evacuation.

Examples of events involving DSS include:

- Floods
- Fires
- Tornados
- Blizzards
- Water main breaks
- Chemical spills

How long is DSS provided?

DSS is typically available for 72 hours immediately following the start of an event.

During these first 72 hours, evacuees should immediately plan their next steps by contacting:

- Insurance agents (if relevant)
- Family and friends
- Local non-profit agencies

DSS may be extended, in exceptional circumstances, on a case-by-case basis.

How is DSS provided?

DSS teams assist evacuees at Reception Centres.

DSS teams may also provide:

- Outreach services for shut-ins.
- Group lodging (shelter and food) to evacuees during a major event.
- On-site services to response workers and others.

What are the main function areas of DSS?

- Registration and inquiry
- Food services
- Emergency clothing
- Emergency lodging
- Personal services
- Volunteer management (human resources)

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

These will be explored in more detail in the following sections.

Registration and Inquiry (Family Reunification)

- Reunites families separated by disasters
- Register evacuees at Reception Centres, shelters, hospitals, and other sites as necessary
- Respond to inquiries from family members

Food Services

- Provide meals/snacks for victims and evacuees, emergency workers and volunteers
- Provide food for emergency workers at disaster site
- Provide potable water
- Provide food hampers if necessary

Emergency Clothing Services

- Provide emergency clothing to evacuees
- Protection from the elements Diapers
- In mass shelter, work with lodging to provide blankets, towels, etc.

Emergency Lodging

- Assist evacuees in securing temporary accommodation
 - Private homes
 - Hotels/Motels
 - Group Shelters
- Provide basic grooming items to evacuees

Personal Services

- Provide emotional support and other personal services to disaster victims and workers
- Greet evacuees arriving at the Reception Centre and provide information on services available
- Provide temporary care for unattended children and dependent adults
- Offer immediate and on-going support to people with emotional problems
- Utilize community resources
- Arrange for health services, (i.e. health nurse, minor first aid)

Post disaster services may include:

- Arrange critical incident stress debriefing for victims and responders as necessary
- Assistance with relief funding applications

Volunteer Management (Human Resources)

Pre-Disaster

- Recruit and screen volunteers to assist in function areas

During Disaster

- Register and orient walk-in volunteers and maintain records of hours worked by volunteers
- Assign volunteers to work areas as requests are received
- Act as an advocate for volunteers

Who are DSS Initial Response Volunteers (IRV)?

DSS works with people in time of crisis. When disaster strikes and victims have their lives turn into chaos, there must be a safe haven with confident and efficient workers to help lower their levels of stress.

The quality of care and integrity of volunteers in this position is of utmost importance to the City of Grande Prairie Community Social Development and the Grande Prairie Volunteer Services Bureau (GPVSB). As such, Initial Response Volunteers must be pre-screened in order to expedite the process of working directly with vulnerable populations.

DSS Initial Response Volunteers (IRV) must:

- Complete a DSS Initial Response Volunteer Application form.
- Provide a current Police Information Check (PIC) dated within six months prior to submission to the GPVSB.
- Provide a current Child and Youth Information Management (CYIM) Check dated within six months prior to submission to the GPVSB.
- Complete a DSS Oath of Confidentiality.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Grande Prairie Volunteer Services Bureau to obtain a letter to have their PIC and CYIM checks completed at no charge. The letter must be submitted to the RCMP prior to the check being completed in order to ensure that the volunteer is not charged.

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honourable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

All information provided to the GPVSB by applicants will only be shared with City of Grande Prairie Community Social Development employees specifically assigned to the DSS branch. Within the GPVSB and the DSS, all information will remain confidential.

DSS Initial Response Volunteers will only be contacted in the event of a City declared disaster.

How to Become Involved:

Due to the sensitive nature of this particular volunteer opportunity, the GPVSB will screen all interested volunteers. The following process will be followed:

1. Interested volunteers must complete the following forms:
 - a. Volunteer Registration: Disaster Social Services Initial Response Volunteer Application, and
 - b. Disaster Social Services Oath of Confidentiality

Forms can be downloaded from the "[Disaster Social Services](#)" page (under "Services") of www.gpvsb.com. Upon completing and signing the forms, please submit to Jacqueline Hutton of the Grande Prairie Volunteer Services Bureau by:

Mail: #103, 9823 - 116 Avenue, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4B4

Fax: (780) 539-5986

Email: jhutton@gpvsb.com

2. Once the completed application and oath have been received, applicants will be issued a letter to have the Police Information Check (PIC) and Child and Youth Information Management (CYIM) check completed at no charge.
3. Applicants are to have the appropriate checks completed and results must be submitted to Jacqueline Hutton at the GPVSB.
4. Applicants will receive confirmation of their enrolment as a Disaster Social Services Initial Response Volunteer.

Questions about the DSS Initial Response Volunteer Program can be directed to:

Jacqueline Hutton

Tel: (780) 538-2727

Email: jhutton@gpvsb.com

The Disaster Social Services Initial Response Volunteer Program is a joint initiative between the City of Grande Prairie Community Social Development department and the Grande Prairie Volunteer Services Bureau Association.

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