



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HOMELAND SECURITY COMMISSION
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

**EMERGENCY MASS CARE
PROGRAMS ACROSS THE NATION:
BEST PRACTICES FOR THE DISTRICT**



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REPORT NOTE:

A) The goal of the 2020 Homeland Security Commission (HSC) report was to develop leading best practices for mass care services from emergency management agencies outside the District of Columbia (D.C.). Accordingly, the Commission focused its efforts on conducting interviews outside D.C. and did not perform significant policy reviews of the District’s government functions.

B) The report arises from the Commissioners recognition that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic poses a historic challenge and there is an ongoing risk of acts of terrorism or major accidents that could result in mass casualties. It did not originate out of any concern that D.C. has any known mass care deficiencies. The Commissioners hope that the D.C. Government will find some of these best practices to be helpful.

C) The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the Commissioners.

1.0 ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The District of Columbia Government Homeland Security Commission (HSC) was established by the Homeland Security, Risk Reduction and Preparedness Amendment Act of 2006. The HSC makes recommendations for improvements in security and preparedness in the District. Specifically, the Commission gathers and evaluates information on the status of homeland security in the District, measuring progress and gaps in homeland security preparedness, recommending security improvement priorities in consultation with major public and private entities and advising the District government on the homeland security program. Each year, the HSC provides an annual report to the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia. Each member's background and expertise are listed below. For more information about the Commission, please visit the Commission's website at: hsema.dc.gov/page/homeland-security-commission.

Commission Members:

BRAD BELZAK (CHAIRMAN): Brad Belzak is a national security executive with 18-years of Federal, state and local government and international business experience in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Currently, Brad works for a global consulting firm developing risk management solutions for clients. Previously, he was a political appointee within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis. Prior to that, he worked at Deloitte advising senior foreign government leaders in the Middle East and then in Asia on homeland security best practices during the 2011 Thailand Floods. Prior to his time in the private sector, Brad spent eight years working for the U.S. Government in both the Executive and Legislative branches. He was at DHS as a Senior Policy Adviser to leadership, Deputy Chief of Staff and First Responder during Hurricane Katrina recovery operations, an Intelligence Analyst at DHS HQ and then on detail to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Terrorism Screening Center. A Ward 2 resident, Brad has a Masters of Science in Security and Resiliency from Northeastern University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and International Relations from Elon University.

BRIAN BAKER: Brian Baker is an expert in preparedness, response, disaster recovery, and homeland security. With close to two decades of public service and public safety leadership, he has served in a variety of senior level management positions for public, private, and non-governmental organizations. Brian currently serves as the vice president of Hagerty Consulting, where he acts as one of Hagerty's public facing leaders and plays a leading role in Hagerty's business development and growth efforts. Prior to joining Hagerty, Brian served as the interim director of the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). In this role, he led a team of over 100 full time employees, managed over \$500 million in local and federal grant funds, served on prominent policy groups, oversaw the D.C. fusion center, and served as the Consequence Management Chair for more than 25 National Special Security Events (NSSEs), including four presidential inaugurations and two papal visits.

Before becoming Interim Director, Brian served as the deputy director, homeland security advisor, chief of staff, and state coordinating officer (SCO), in which he oversaw the State Administrative Office for grants and federal funding. Overall, he was responsible for emergency planning, preparedness, response, and recovery for the City, including operations for a 24-hour emergency operations center and the Washington Regional Threat Analysis Center. A Ward 6 resident, Brian received his undergraduate degree at Johnson and Wales University and his graduate education at the George Washington University School of Public Health. He is also a graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security's Homeland Security Executive Leaders Program.

EDWARD PEARSON: Edward Pearson retired from the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) in December 2017 after thirty years of dedicated service to the citizens and visitors of our nation's capital. His career began in 1987 as a firefighter and he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 1995. Edward held the rank of Lieutenant and Captain before his promotion to Battalion Fire Chief in November of 2005. He was then promoted to the rank of Deputy Fire Chief on January 3, 2011. He is the only Deputy Fire Chief in the Department's history to serve as Firefighting/Operations Deputy on Platoon #1, #2, #3, and #4. Edward is certified as a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1021- Fire Officer IV. He also served as an adjunct professor for the University of the District of Columbia from 2003 - 2011 teaching the core courses of the fire science degree curriculum and is certified as an instructor for the Department of Homeland Security's National Incident Management System (NIMS) curriculum with expertise in instructing Incident Command System (ICS). A native Washingtonian and Ward 7 resident, Edward received his Master of Arts in Security Studies from Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, a Master of Public Administration in Public Management and B.S. from the University of the District of Columbia.

JOANNA TURNER: Joanna Turner currently serves as director of government relations at The Hershey Company, where she advises the business on federal, state and local policy and legislative matters. Prior to her position at The Hershey Company, Joanna was the Executive Director of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs at the U.S. Department of Transportation, a position she held from 2009 to 2014. Before her federal service, Joanna was the lead advocate and negotiator on federal transportation policies on behalf of the National Governors Association and the nation's 55 state and territorial governors. She also spent eight years at the National League of Cities, where she developed and advanced an advocacy platform to support the national transportation, environmental, and energy-related goals of the nation's 18,000 municipal governments. A Ward 6 Resident, Joanna received her B.A. degree in Geography from George Washington University.

PHILIP MCNAMARA: Phil McNamara is an accomplished government affairs, advocacy and political executive. He has over eight years of experience with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as a part of the senior leadership team for two Cabinet secretaries. He served a major leadership role during the incident responses from the H1N1 pandemic, Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Hurricanes Irene, Sandy and Matthew, Boston Marathon Bombing, and many others. As a team-oriented manager, Phil coordinates with senior level officials to make timely decisions on complex issues. Phil is currently the director of government relations at The Pew Charitable Trusts. In this role, he oversees the work of government relations to assist in designing and executing strategies to fulfill the policy goals of many of Pew's projects. Phil and the staff work closely with program and operations units to build and sustain effective relationships with elected officials and policymakers at all levels of government that advance Pew's advocacy goals. A Ward 4 resident, Phil has served on the Commission since 2017.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This past year, the [District of Columbia Homeland Security Commission \(HSC\)](#) reviewed eight state and local government mass care programs, and interviewed the homeland security experts that developed those plans. In those interviews, Commissioners were able to learn from these leaders the specifics of their mass care plans with the goal of identifying the extent to which those plans anticipated a simultaneous global pandemic, and discover how those plans were able to adapt in the face of this new reality. These plans and interviews informed this report, which culminates in a set of findings and policy recommendations for the Mayor of the District of Columbia Government and the Council of the District of Columbia. The HSC is the District’s group of outside advisors charged with delivering recommendations to the Mayor and Council on improvements in security and preparedness. The Commission accomplishes this through an annual report.

The origin of this report traces back to early 2019 when the Commissioners conducted a series of interviews with D.C. homeland security leaders to gain deeper insights into the major security risks facing the District, and to collaborate on the selection of a research topic. Several daunting risks were raised during the course of this early research, but the topic of mass care stood out, underscored during a conversation with the Deputy City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Kevin Donahue. Kevin Donahue highlighted a catastrophic fire that occurred in September 2018 at the [Arthur Capper Senior Public Housing Complex](#) in southeast D.C. that displaced 190 senior citizens. After further study of that fire, and discussions about the ramifications of potential future catastrophic events, the Commission chose “mass care” for the topic of this report.

Early research into the topic revealed the need for all major cities to have in place robust plans to provide services, such as medical care, temporary housing, nutrition programs, and information access, to its neediest residents in the event of an extreme weather event or manmade disaster. But as 2020 began and the novel coronavirus struck the globe, it was clear that cities need to prepare not just for singular catastrophic events, but for the new reality of such events occurring against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

The Commission uncovered the following key insights:

- COVID-19 forced many state and local governments to rethink their approach to delivering mass care services during a pandemic.
- Simultaneous manmade and natural disaster capabilities can push emergency management organizations to the limits.
- Longstanding nongovernmental relationships were critical to how state and local governments responded to the mass care requirements of the COVID-19 emergency, but resources were severely strained by all both non-governmental and governmental participants involved with the pandemic.
- State and local governments performed manmade and natural disaster exercises virtually, and often included international counterparts, bringing fresh and unique perspectives to their work.
- Emergency response and recovery exercises included political leadership when necessary, but focused mainly on operational level first responders.

3.0 BACKGROUND

In 2019, Commissioners began preparing for their next annual report by interviewing District leaders to gain deeper insights into the many homeland security risks facing the District.

In his interview with the Commission, Deputy City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Kevin Donahue referenced the catastrophic fire in September 2018 at the [Arthur Capper Senior Public Housing Complex](#) in southeast D.C. that displaced 190 senior citizens. The fire forced the District Government and the local American Red Cross to relocate these residents. An emergency shelter was established at King Greenleaf Recreation Center under the direction of the District Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The Director of HSEMA Chris Rodriguez was quoted in the press as saying, “Our plan is to make sure these residents are cared for and also that they enter into temporary housing as quickly as possible.” This tragic event shows the importance of how District agencies, such as DPR, HSEMA, D.C. House Authority (DCHA), and FEMS work together to integrate their response efforts and provide mass care support to the vulnerable seniors who lived there. These response efforts highlighted the importance of having robust mass care services following a disaster or incident. After studying the details of this event and others in the District, the HSC decided to choose “mass care” as the topic of their next report.

In early February 2020, the Commission began its policy review, as mandated by the Council of the District of Columbia’s [authorizing legislation](#), which requires the Commission to “gather and evaluate on the status of homeland security in the District” and “measure progress and gaps in homeland security preparedness.” As done in previous policy studies (i.e. [2018 HSC Cybersecurity Report](#); [2015 HSC Pandemic Report](#)), the Commission interviewed officials with roles in the subject matter from agencies across the District.

As the HSC began to schedule meetings with officials responsible for coordinating and executing emergency mass care services, such as at HSEMA and the District’s Department of Human Services (DHS), the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic struck the Nation’s Capital.

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, [Mayor Muriel Bowser declared both a state of emergency and a public health emergency](#) in response to COVID-19. Non-essential services were shuttered for several months. Additionally, all District Commissions and Boards, including the HSC, were required to suspend operations. Essential agencies, such as HSEMA, D.C. Health, D.C. DHS, Metropolitan Police Department, and FEMS, immediately moved to the front lines to respond to this global pandemic. As of the writing of this report, 21,685 District residents tested positive and over 685 died from the coronavirus.

In late May 2020, the Mayor’s Office of Talents and Appointments approved HSC to continue homeland security work, and the Commission held its first virtual meeting on June 10, 2020. At that meeting, the Commission recognized that while it would continue its examination of mass care services during disasters, the focus and energy of District government officials must remain on combating the pandemic.

The HSC pivoted away from meeting with District officials, and instead examined how state and local jurisdictions from across the country tackled mass care issues. The Commissioners then identified a set of “gold standard” leading practices that could be considered for implementation by D.C. government agencies.

¹ Based on District of Columbia November 30, 2020, COVID-19 surveillance report 21,685 people tested positive and 685 people have died. coronavirus.dc.gov/data

Project Design

Commissioners identified a cross-selection of nationally recognized emergency management and public safety officials from jurisdictions across the country that regularly experience a wide-range of natural and man-made disasters. These leaders are instrumental in the development of homeland security plans in their jurisdictions, and the execution of those plans when disasters strike.

Commissioners interviewed each of the following leaders from August 2020 through September 2020:

- **DR. STEPHEN FLYNN**, Northeastern University, **Boston, Massachusetts**
- **DR. DENIS ONIEAL**, Former U.S. Deputy Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, **Washington, D.C.**
- **JUAN ORTIZ**, Director; **BILL WILSON**, Chief Emergency Plans Officer; **ERIC CARTER** (Chief Emergency Management Coordinator for Travis County, Texas), **City of Austin, Texas**
- **BARB GRAFF**, recent Director, City of Seattle’s Office of Emergency Management, **Seattle, Washington**
- **LISA JONES**, Director of the Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management Agency, **City of Phoenix, Arizona**
- **HOLLY PORTER**, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer / Public Safety, County of **San Diego, CA**
- **JULIE JEAKLE**, Senior Emergency Services Coordinator at County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services, **County of San Diego, CA**
- **JOHN SCOTT**, President of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association and Director of Brevard County Emergency Management, **Brevard County, Florida**
- **BRYAN KOON**, Former Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management and now Vice President at IEM, **Tallahassee, Florida**
- **INAKI REZOLA**, Section Chief at Hillsborough County Fire Rescue Office of Emergency Management, **Tampa, Florida**
- **DR. GAVIN SMITH**, Professor at NC State University and former Mississippi Governor Barbour’s Director of the Office of Recovery and Renewal, **State of North Carolina**

Finally, throughout the interview process, the Commission referred to emergency management policy doctrines at the Federal and State and Local levels to aid this report. At the Federal level, [FEMA’s National Response Framework](#) (NRF) played an integral role. This document serves as a guide for how all levels of government should respond to all-hazards events. Specifically, the Commission referred to [“Emergency Support Function 6 \(ESF-6\): Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Temporary Housing and Human Services”](#) for how state and local governments should administer mass care services. In order to receive Federal Homeland Security grants, state and local and tribal governments must mirror much of the ESF-6 their mass care policy development and implementation. At the State and Local level, the Commissioners reviewed mass care policies, plans and procedures from each of the interviewee’s jurisdictions.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOLSTERING DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT'S MASS CARE

The Commission's below findings came from examining eight state and local government emergency mass care programs and with the goal of producing a set of "gold standard" recommendations that the Commissioners feel will strengthen the District's capabilities for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from manmade and natural disasters.

Of particular note, each of the organizations interviewed for this study were experiencing overlapping public safety events in 2020 that tested their emergency response capabilities. Combined with the ongoing pandemic (COVID-19), officials still had to manage the extreme weather, social unrest, crime and other more complicated threats to the city. Furthermore, while there were commonalities, each mass care program was different based on the needs of the local populations and range of threats to the region. Also, each jurisdiction incorporated resiliency into their policies, plans and procedures. Finally, many of the mass care plans analyzed by this Commission contained new pandemic protocols, which presented numerous emergency response challenges while relocating survivors.

The Commissioners performed an exhaustive analysis of the data collected from this study, anonymized the findings, and showcased the following four believed to provide the greatest impact to a mass care program:

4.1 INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

KEY FINDING: COVID-19 forced state and local governments to rethink their approach to delivering mass care services. Public health experts worked side-by-side with emergency managers to redesign sheltering to accommodate both healthy and infected disaster survivors. In normal circumstances, most emergency sheltering and mass care occurs in a congregate environment generally large open spaces, such as recreation centers, schools, churches, community centers, or even in convention and sporting centers. In most sheltering models it is difficult to maintain social distancing and reduce the spread of COVID-19, facilitating the increasing need to utilize non-congregate models that would include the use hotels, motels, or dormitories that provide for sufficient social distancing. Many of currently identified emergency shelters were unable to open due to a lack of space for proper social distancing and/or the inability to the feeding and sleeping areas. First responder shortages were also rampant due to infections. Additionally, there was reluctance for disaster survivors to utilize shelters due to risk of transmission.

Barb Graff, "Our old vision of mass care was to open a gym and throw in cots and have American Red Cross take care of people we never met. Then, we started thinking about it as if we were the people in those shelters, which helped us reform our service model."

KEY FINDING: Simultaneous man-made and natural disaster capabilities tested the limits of emergency management organizations. From unprecedented wildfires in the Western United States to severe storms striking the Midwestern and the Gulf Coast parts of the U.S. in 2020, a new norm of high impact and high consequence events are here to stay. In conjunction with COVID-19 infections, organizations are overwhelmed with first responder shortages while budgetary deficits hampered the efforts of many organizations to efficiently provide life-sustaining resources to survivors.

KEY FINDING: State and local officials lack the latest emergency response technologies to improve their organization’s overall situational awareness during mass care situations. Some organizations relied upon outdated technology that occasionally hampered efficient disaster response (e.g. lack of visibility into shelter occupancy). While early watch and warning tools for emergency responders are increasing across the country, many organizations do not possess these systems due to funding shortages.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government should consider performing a mass care and sheltering capabilities assessment. Given the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the evolving emergency service’s needs of the city, performing regular capabilities assessments will allow emergency management and public safety agencies to determine strengths and weaknesses in mass care services, with specific emphasis on the need for advanced technologies to bolster execution.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia should evaluate and revise sheltering and mass care plans for operating in a COVID-19 environment. The plans should focus on reducing the spread of COVID-19 while providing sheltering and mass care to disaster survivors. Concentrating on non-congregate sheltering which is the best option to maximize social distancing. Ensure that plans meet current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and where non-congregate is not a viable option there should be considerations to reducing shelter population and staffing ratios. Take into consideration COVID-19 testing in screening protocol for shelters and what PPE and disinfecting and cleaning protocol should be integrated into plans and operations.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government should enhance existing programs that call upon trained regional disaster service workers who can act as shelter workers and shelter managers when the American Red Cross is overwhelmed. COVID-19 has temporarily diminished the number of American Red Cross volunteers available to augment state and local government emergency response operations. The District will benefit from a program with established written procedures, communication protocols, and the ability to recruit and train an adequate number of personnel to respond to and recover from an all-hazards event.



RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government should continue leveraging existing technologies and incorporate them into agency business processes to improve the city’s response and recovery of disaster survivors during the current COVID-19 pandemic and future events – some examples of solutions to explore:

- Advanced analytics to predict extreme weather patterns and help with prepositioning of resources and congregate sheltering out of harm’s way.
- Mobile device applications to improve shelter management, such as contactless registration to limit human contact, and real-time heat mapping of housing locations, occupancy rates, and survivor demographics.
- Shelter behavior analysis tools to reduce the intake of “no shows” of disaster survivors.
- Data mapping tools in the emergency operations center for the evacuation planning of COVID-19 positive survivors.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government should develop comprehensive public messaging campaigns to improve societal resilience, with specific emphasis on under-served communities. The goal is to educate residents before a disaster strikes – and therefore reduce the burden on the City’s mass care services. Below are some examples:

- **Amplify Resiliency Through Communications Training** – Train community leaders (e.g. pastors, ANC Commissioners, Council Staff, etc.) on how to network with community partners who can amplify alert/warning and disaster information. This is particularly important for immigrant/refugee and non-English speaking communities who may not have daily media available in their native language.
- **Social Media, TV, Radio and Print Campaigns** - use media to reach residents who do not interact regularly with other peers in the community. Targeted advertisements in major and local newspapers and mass transit (i.e. buses and subways) geared toward all ages.
- **Press Event with Celebrities** – Strategically placed media events with celebrities who resonate with specific populations and age groups, including popular religious leaders, music artists, athletes and comedians.

4.2 PARTNERSHIPS

KEY FINDING: The pandemic and extreme weather have pushed emergency management organizations across the country to rely on private sector for-profit businesses to assist with delivering food, medical and other life sustaining mass care services.

John Scott: “Sheltering is a life boat not a cruise ship.”

Feeding thousands of survivors is a major issue everywhere, especially combined with medical needs and persons with disabilities. Governments partnered with local restaurants, rideshare transportation companies and private medical clinics to donate or provide food and services at reduced costs.

KEY FINDING: Longstanding nonprofit relationships between state and local governments during mass care events were severely strained in 2020 due to the pandemic. While American Red Cross and other non-profit entities played a major role in supporting disaster relief, they were forced to scale back their emergency housing services to follow social distancing requirements and prevent staff from being infected by the virus. As a result, non-congregate sheltering increased. Contracts were signed between private housing rental companies and local governments to accept survivors once shelters hit capacity.

KEY FINDING: State and local governments created a variety of emergency task forces/committees comprised of both public and private sectors to augment internal mass care capabilities to serve disaster survivors. They would first perform needs assessments, stockpile and pre-position resources ahead of the disasters, and then directly help survivors during the recovery phase. A collaborative “whole-of-region” response is necessary to solve today’s complex challenges.

RECOMMENDATION: HSEMA should consider creating a “Mass Care Working Group” to plan for and serve District residents during future catastrophic disasters. This body would be comprised of both D.C. Government agencies, nonprofits, and private sector corporations and would augment current D.C. Government mass care services at both congregate and non-congregate shelters. Members of this body would include individuals representing schools, catering companies, hotel and hospitality associations food banks, non-profit charities (i.e. Meals on Wheels), commercial delivery companies with refrigerator trucks, large restaurant franchises, and large home supply stores (i.e. Home Depot, Walmart, Lowes etc.). These industry experts would advise on current and future disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities as it relates to ESF-6/mass care services.

RECOMMENDATION: HSEMA should consider developing a “Mass Care Technology Advisory Council” made up of both D.C. Government and private sector technology companies that could advise on the development and execution of innovative solutions during disasters. Exchanging business cards and understanding each other’s capabilities before a disaster strikes has proven instrumental in saving lives. Some examples of innovative technologies that were developed through pre-existing relationships are the following:

- **Pulsara** is tool that facilitates rapid telemedicine and care for 911 response and allows limited human contact. Many jurisdictions implemented this tool during the pandemic to allow the quick transmission of patient data and exchange of files (i.e. x-rays and pictures of injuries) between EMT’s, hospitals, doctors, patients, and 911 callers.
- **DEAFLINK** is a company servicing the deaf, blind or sensory impaired community by providing video remote interpreting services, pre-recorded interpreting and an accessible hazard alert system during disasters. This bridges the gap of state and local government being able to reach the blind and deaf during emergencies.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government should consider creating a “Disaster Rapid Assessment Team”, led by HSEMA, to focus on improving District mass care services ahead of an emergency event. This group of experts would be divided up into two separate sub-groups to focus on pre and post incident. This team would utilize the latest situational analytics tool(s) via mobile applications to assist in their pre-planning and response activities. Additionally, some members of this team would be comprised of mental health and public health professionals. They will look at the unique needs of the current and future population of the shelter, to include the congregate infrastructure, especially as it pertains to complying with COVID-19 protocols.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government, led by HSEMA, should consider entering in disaster preposition contracts by identifying needs in advance. Considering both congregate and non-congregate sheltering of disaster survivors. Preposition contacts can quickly augment district staff, capabilities, and resources. These contracts could include setup and operation of traditional and non-traditional sheltering options that include wraparound services such as security, feeding, site modification for accessibility that meets ADA requirements. Contracts considerations should include non-congregate sheltering options hotels/motels, and colleges and universities.

4.3 TRAINING

KEY FINDING: State and local governments performed manmade and natural disaster exercises inconsistently depending on the number of annual incidents they managed. 2020 proved challenging for most emergency management agencies with each facing simultaneous disasters. This resulted in abbreviated or no ESF-6/mass care exercises, which officials stated could impact first responder readiness over time.

KEY FINDING: Emergency response and recovery exercises seldom contained political leadership throughout the entire sessions and instead involved mainly operational level first responders. Officials had mixed feelings of whether political appointees or elected officials should attend the entire exercise or even at all. Those who advocated for elected leaders to be more present believed in the need to coordinate between the operators and the political actors in the planning stages. As one official put it, “if they are absent, a ‘let’s get it done and ask for permission later’ mentality forms” and that could lead to chaos during an actual crisis. Other officials stated that if political leaders were present, the operators might be more self-censored and drill differently than how they would perform in a real-life disaster.

KEY FINDING: In addition to local emergency management operators, officials involved international

counterparts in their exercises who faced recent catastrophic disasters to learn fresh perspectives. State and local governments sent staff to both other U.S. cities and foreign locations (i.e. Queensland, New Zealand) to embed with counterparts who experience different types of disasters. Unique ideas were brought back to be evaluated and implemented in U.S. mass care programs.

KEY FINDING: State and local government's spend considerable resources to train their emergency managers and public safety officials for mass care crises. New approaches to ESF-6/mass care training were seen across the country, such as in behavior analysis to evaluate mental health issues amongst disaster survivors in shelters. There was also emphasis in "values and advocacy training" for mass care staff to help them better understand what survivors went through.

RECOMMENDATION: HSEMA should consider developing innovative ESF-6/mass care training courses for first responders. Below are some examples:

- Contract with the American Planning Association to create a training academy for District officials on how to develop and execute mass care plans.
- Partner with leading mental health organizations to train officials behavior analysis techniques.

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government, led by HSEMA, should consider creating bi-annual ESF-6/mass care centric tabletop exercises comprised of other District agencies, non-profits, and the private sector. The exercise should serve as an opportunity to not only test and refine the District's ESF-6 and mass care plans, but also to ensure familiarity with plans and operations given agency turnover. Building in considerations for operational challenges that the District might face (e.g. COVID-19, damage to existing infrastructure, large gathering/ special events, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION: The District of Columbia Government, led by HSEMA, should design and execute ESF-6/mass care exercises involving elected officials, political appointees, administrative staff (e.g. human resources, information technology, etc.) and operators/first responders to ensure the entire community is educated and aware of their role in large-scale emergencies.

- Important for the District elected leadership to inject their policy level guidance into the exercise, so their views and concerns are fully integrated into HSEMA's disaster planning.

RECOMMENDATION: HSEMA should develop an interstate mutual aid and foreign training program for first responders responsible for executing the District of Columbia Government's ESF-6/mass care program.

- First responders would embed in state's (e.g. Florida, California, etc.) and international (e.g. New Zealand, Japan, etc.) mass care programs to experience other types of disasters and bring back those lessons learned to the District.

5.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The HSC would like to first thank Professor and Founding Director of the Global Resilience Institute at Northeastern University, Dr. Stephen Flynn for his time in guiding the beginning phase of this study and helping us navigate this complex field.

The Commission would then like to express a warm debt of gratitude to former Deputy U.S. Fire Administrator at the U.S. Fire Administration, Dr. Denis Onieal for sharing his wealth of experience in mass care at the outset of this study. His insights and introductions to leading emergency response officials proved invaluable to this report's findings.

The majority of this report was produced with the outstanding assistance and partnership from the below world-class emergency management and public safety officials from across the United States. These eight leaders took a break from responding to the coronavirus (and other daily crises) to be interviewed virtually by the HSC during the summer months of July and August of 2020 on what makes their mass care and emergency assistance programs successful.

Their insights produced what this Commission refers to as “gold standard” mass care (or also known as Federal Emergency Management Agency’s ESF-6) practices. These cities were chosen for the scale, frequency and variety of manmade and natural disasters that these officials respond to annually:

- City of Austin, Texas – HSEMA Director **JUAN ORTIZ**
- Seattle, Washington State – Former Director of Seattle’s Office of Emergency Management, **BARB GRAFF**
- City of Phoenix, Arizona – Director of the Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management Agency, **LISA JONES**
- County of San Diego, CA - Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Public Safety, **HOLLY PORTER**
- City of Brevard County, Florida - President of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association and Director of Brevard County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management Agency, **JOHN SCOTT**
- Tallahassee, Florida - Former Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management and now Vice President at IEM, **BRYAN KOON**
- Tampa, Florida - Section Chief at Hillsborough County Fire Rescue Office of Emergency Management, **INAKI REZOLA**
- North Carolina - Professor at NC State University and former Mississippi Governor Barbour’s Director of the Office of Recovery and Renewal, **DR. GAVIN SMITH**

In addition, the Commission expresses our sincere thanks and gratitude to Deputy City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Kevin Donahue, District of Columbia’s Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), in particular, Director Chris Rodriguez, former Deputy Director Christopher White, General Counsel Dion Black, and Chief of External Affairs Nicole Peckumn for providing critically important support to this body. We also want to applaud your tireless efforts in responding to the coronavirus this year and all of the sacrifices your agency has made to make this District safer.

Of particular note, the Commissioners want to direct a special thanks to HSEMA Policy Analyst Jason Rubinstein for his years of outstanding support to this Commission. Over the years, Jason has provided important counsel, research, and significant management duties that have contributed to the success of this Commission.

In addition, the Commission would like to thank HSEMA’s talented summer 2020 interns for providing extensive meeting research, which allowed our policy interviews to be executed effortlessly.

Finally, the Commission would like to thank Councilman Charles Allen, Chair of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety for his leadership, and his senior team of Committee Director Kate Mitchell and Legislative Counsel Jamie Gorosh for their invaluable support and partnership.