

## COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: THE FACTS

Research on preparedness shows that people who believe themselves “prepared” for disasters often aren’t as prepared as they think. 40 percent of survey respondents did not have household plans, 80 percent had not conducted home evacuation drills, and nearly 60 percent did not know their community’s evacuation routes.

Nearly 20 percent of survey respondents reported having a disability that would affect their capacity to respond to an emergency situation, but shockingly only one out of four of them had made arrangements specific to their disability to help them respond safely in the event of an emergency.

Our nation’s emergency managers, firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMT/paramedics, and other emergency responders do an incredible job of keeping us safe, but they can’t do it alone. We must all embrace our individual responsibility to be prepared – in doing so, we contribute to the safety and security of the nation as well.

*Becoming more prepared in case of an emergency is easier than you might think. Whether it’s your home, your neighborhood, your place of business, or your school, you can take a few simple steps to prepare your community. This toolkit gives you the basics for getting started.*

# GETTING STARTED

While no two projects will be the same, successful projects will share a few common practices. We encourage you to incorporate the following elements into your service project:

- Create a team with your friends and neighbors to share the effort;
- Set outcome-based goals and track your progress to those goals;
- Celebrate your successes together.

**The Challenge:** Many community-based organizations do not have enough capacity to manage a large number of volunteers, so they need you to organize yourself in coordination with them. This tool kit is designed to either help you organize a group and be a positive addition to a community-based organization, or, if such an organization does not exist, to be a well-organized independently-run group that fills a needed gap in the community.

A step-by-step guide to getting started and executing service activities follows. Please let us know how your project goes and what you learn by telling your story at [Serve.gov](https://www.Serve.gov).

## STEP ONE: PREPARE YOURSELF AND IDENTIFY LOCAL RESOURCES

Check out which organizations are already helping in your area. Many have identified community needs and built the expertise to provide solutions, and there may already be an active volunteer group that you could join. Here are several ways to identify local groups and volunteer opportunities:

- Visit [www.CitizenCorps.gov](https://www.CitizenCorps.gov) to find local [Citizen Corps](#) Councils, [USAonWatch](#) (Neighborhood Watch) groups, [Community Emergency Response Teams](#) (CERT), [Fire Corps](#) programs, [Volunteers in Police Service](#) (VIPS) programs, and [Medical Reserve Corps](#) (MRC) units. Ask them what you can do to prepare and train yourself and your community for disasters and how to get involved locally.
- Contact local chapters of Citizen Corps Affiliates, such as the [American Red Cross](#) and [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#) for local disaster preparedness and response service opportunities. Be sure to ask the organization for items they might need.

## STEP TWO: BUILD A TEAM

Teams can help share the work, motivate members, and hold each other accountable. Teams build community. Ask your family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and faith group members to serve with you.

- Host a house meeting or potluck to choose a project, set goals, recruit volunteers and plan next steps.
- [Get a guide for hosting a house meeting.](#)
- Post your service activity on [Serve.gov](https://www.Serve.gov) to recruit new volunteers.

### **STEP THREE: SET A GOAL**

Set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable. Find out what your partner organization needs and then work to fill that need. For example, commit as individuals and as a team to helping at least three people who may need additional assistance in preparing for emergencies (including the frail, elderly, individuals with disabilities, and others with special needs). Set your goals high to stretch yourself. Then keep track of how you are doing and designate someone to be responsible for updating the group on how you are progressing toward your goals. You'll be surprised at how much you can do when you commit, focus, and follow through.

- [Get a goal-setting guide.](#)

### **STEP FOUR: SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY**

The key to effective service is planning. Organize your materials, make confirmation calls and, if you have time, read supplemental materials before you volunteer.

- [Get a tip sheet for your service activity.](#)
- There are over 2,300 Citizen Corps Councils throughout the country, each of which is based in a town, a city, or a county. You can [find a Citizen Corps Council near you](#) or learn more about the work they're doing at [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov).

### **STEP FIVE: REPORT AND CELEBRATE SUCCESSES**

Your team members, the community, and the President want to know about your successes and hear your stories. Share your accomplishments by reporting your results. We will highlight the best stories throughout the summer. Tell us about your successes and what you have learned, or just tell your story of service at [Serve.gov](http://Serve.gov).

# **FOLLOW UP**

## **SPREAD THE SERVICE**

- After every event, thank your volunteers and sign them up for the next event. When you help others prepare, ask them to “pay it forward” by talking to their friends and family about the importance of preparing, training, and drills.

## FINDING LOCAL PARTNERS: COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Check out the organizations already doing good work. Many existing service groups have identified community needs and have built the expertise to provide solutions. A few phone calls or scanning a few websites can produce all the information you need to know about your options.

- Visit [www.CitizenCorps.gov](http://www.CitizenCorps.gov) to find local [Citizen Corps](#) Councils, [USAonWatch](#) (Neighborhood Watch) teams, [Community Emergency Response Teams](#) (CERT), [Fire Corps](#) units, [Volunteers in Police Service](#) (VIPS) units, and [Medical Reserve Corps](#) (MRC) units and ask them what you can do to prepare and train yourself and your community for disasters.
- You can also get in touch with your local fire department, police department, paramedics, or emergency management agency to discuss ways to prepare your community and improve its capacity to respond to and recover from disaster.
- Contact local chapters of Citizen Corps Affiliates, such as the [American Red Cross](#) and [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#) for local disaster preparedness and response service opportunities. Be sure to ask the organization for items they might need. Find more information at: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/programs/affiliate.shtm>.
- Once you've identified the appropriate community-based organizations, search their website or give them a call to see how you can help, or how you can better prepare yourself and your community.

## SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT:

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm interested in supporting the great work your organization is doing. Some friends and I would like to volunteer to support community safety / disaster preparedness. May I speak with your volunteer coordinator?

- What kind of volunteer opportunities do you have for local residents?
- If I organize a group of my friends to volunteer with me, how many volunteers can you take?
- Can you help us sponsor an event that promotes preparedness, a forum that encourages people to discuss disaster preparedness and response and to exchange information, or help us organize a drill or exercise?
- Would you be able to send a representative to our event?
- How can I volunteer to help make sure others in the community are prepared too? We are particularly interested in helping those who have special needs, such as the frail elderly, individuals with disabilities, those who do not speak English, children, and pets.

Remember to keep track of who you have contacted so you can follow up as necessary. You can use the chart below or create one that fits your project.

Group name	Contact name	Contact number	Volunteer Activities	# of vols needed

## **FOLLOW UP**

### **SPREAD THE SERVICE**

- After every event, thank your volunteers and sign them up for the next event.

## HOUSE MEETINGS

House meetings are a valuable tactic for recruiting volunteers and building a team. House meetings allow community members to share their concerns and join together to work for progress. Within the room, you already have all the tools you need to enact change on a local level. Every attendee can contribute time or resources or leadership abilities.

Your house meeting will help you identify your leadership team. The people that are committed enough to come to your house meeting should be considered potential leaders of the initiatives being implemented in their communities.

As a house meeting host, invite people from your social network to participate in a discussion about your community, pressing needs, and potential solutions. House meetings often engage people new to service and unclear about next steps. Serving with the support of a team will increase the ease and comfort of many new volunteers.

Building community through house meetings is a critical step toward the President's ultimate goal, which is to support everyday Americans in a grassroots effort to improve lives and strengthen communities.



# GOALS AND DUTIES

## GOALS

- Choose and plan a service project for the summer.
- Set measurable group and personal goals for your United We Serve project.
- Identify 5 attendees to be team leaders.
- Plan the next meeting of the leadership team and identify next steps for each leader.
- Obtain commitments from all attendees to volunteer on a regular basis from June 22–September 11.

## HOST DUTIES

### BEFORE

- To have **20** people attend, you will need to invite **50**. Brainstorm a list of **50** people to invite. Include your friends, family, members of your faith group, colleagues, book club attendees, etc.
- Make calls to the **50** people on your list to invite them to your house meeting. Remember that phone calls are much more effective than a mass email.
- Post your house meeting on [Serve.gov](http://Serve.gov) and invite local residents interested in volunteering to attend.
- Browse [Serve.gov](http://Serve.gov) to see what needs in your community aren't being met and which organizations you might be able to partner with. Take some preliminary steps to identify local partners already working in the community.
- Prepare necessary materials.

### DURING

- Be prepared to give a short explanation of why you became involved/what inspired you to serve.
- Consider how you most want to serve your community. President Obama has identified four target areas for summer service: health, education, community renewal, and energy and environment. What does your community most need?

### AFTER

- Thank attendees and get their pledge to serve this summer.
- Organize a follow-up volunteer leadership meeting with your new team to take next steps.

# HOUSE MEETING PLANNER

Use this brainstorm sheet to think of those you want to invite, including those who have never volunteered before or may be new to Untied We Serve.

Name	Phone #	Invited (Y/N)	Committed (Y/N)	Confirmed (Y/N)	Notes
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**Name:** Please print the invitee's full name.

**Invite:** Please mark **yes, no, maybe** or **left message (LM)**. This will help you track who you need to contact and who you should be calling for confirmation. The only real invitations are when you speak with someone directly.

**Commit:** Please mark **yes, no** or **maybe**.

**Confirm:** Please mark **yes, no** or **left message (LM)**. You'll need to call every invitee who said yes or maybe, and every invitee who only got a left message. Please do not assume that **anybody** will come without a confirmation the day before your meeting. It can't hurt to give people a quick reminder, and you need to know how many people will be at your meeting to make that meeting as effective and enjoyable as possible.

# HOUSE MEETING AGENDA

**\*\*\*Before starting the meeting, have everyone sign in and appoint a timekeeper who will keep each section running on time.\*\*\***

## **0:00–0:10                   HOST WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

- Host of the meeting introduces themselves and welcomes attendees.
- Host shares why (s)he was inspired to organize the house meeting and the purpose of the meeting.

## **0:10–0:25                   ATTENDEE INTRODUCTIONS**

- Go around the room and ask each person to introduce themselves and share their reason for wanting to serve this summer.

## **0:25–0:45                   CHOOSE A PROJECT**

- Host introduces three or four project ideas and opens up the room for discussion.
- Discuss what projects will work best in your community.
- Group votes on project choice.

## **0:45–0:55                   SET GOALS AND IDENTIFY LEADERSHIP**

- Ask which attendees are interested in being volunteer leaders – they should stay after the meeting for 15 minutes and commit to a weekly planning meeting from June 22 – September 11.
- Ask each attendee to consider personal summer goals and make a realistic but ambitious summer commitment.

## **0:55–1:00                   CONCLUSION**

- At the end of the meeting, the group should have:
  - At least one project to commit to for the summer.
  - A leadership team.
  - Pledges from each attendee to participate.

## **1:00–1:15                   LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING**

- Meet with volunteer leaders to set weekly meeting and divide responsibilities.
- Fill out attached worksheets.

## **SETTING GOALS: COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS**

Individuals must take seriously the responsibility of being prepared to survive for three days on their own, to create evacuation and shelter plans for themselves and their families, and to get out of harm's way when necessary. Citizens must be engaged and educated about what they should expect from their government during emergencies as well as what the government expects from them in the form of advance preparation and responsible action. Community safety and personal preparedness is vital to the overall preparedness of the United States, and its ability to withstand and recover from natural disasters, man-made emergencies, economic downturns, and terrorist attacks.

## SET CONCRETE GOALS

Setting goals helps you be accountable to yourself and also increases accountability within a group.

Clear goals at the beginning of a project will also help you determine how your project will work and what role group members can play. Once goals are set, you can track your progress, compare your results with other group members, and figure out what works best so everyone can meet (or exceed) their goals.

Set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable. After you have prepared yourself and your family, commit as an individual and as a team to help others:

- Help at least three people who may need additional assistance in preparing for emergencies (including the frail elderly, individuals with disabilities, and others with special needs).
- Conduct a safety drill at home, at work, at school, or at your house of worship.
- Take a training class in lifesaving skills (CPR, first aid) or emergency response (CERT).
- Volunteer to help your local emergency responders.

Any of these activities get us one step closer to a safer and more resilient nation. Set your goals high to stretch yourself. Then keep track of how you are doing and have someone responsible for updating the group on how you are progressing toward your goals. You'll be surprised at how much you can do when you commit, focus, and follow through. Get involved in National Preparedness Month activities in your community. Then keep your commitment. Let's see what we can do together!

- As an individual, I will commit to preparing myself and my family this summer, including creating a family disaster plan and making sure there are emergency supply kits at my home, my place of work, and in my car.
- As a team, we will assemble \_\_\_ emergency supply kits for others this summer.
- As an individual, I will talk to \_\_\_ friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers about our personal responsibility to be prepared.
- As a team, we will commit to \_\_\_ number of hours volunteering in disaster preparedness and response over the summer.
- As a team, we will organize \_\_\_ disaster drills for evacuating and sheltering-in-place this summer.
- As an individual, I will complete \_\_\_ training in life saving skills this summer.
- As a team, we will learn about the threats most likely to affect our community this summer.



# TRACK PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL

## Track Progress Toward Your Goals

- Set a weekly or biweekly deadline to report progress. For example, "Our team will report progress every Friday. The person responsible for reporting results for your team is \_\_\_\_\_."
- Make sure every group member is in the loop. Designate a group member to track and share the results. For example, "Our team will share our progress with all members by email/phone calls every week. The person responsible for sharing progress is \_\_\_\_\_."
- Keep track of your progress. Score sheets like the one below can be helpful.

Week	# of Community Members Prepared for Disaster	# Hours Volunteered as individual	# Hours Volunteered as Team	# Volunteers Active
June 22				
June 29				
July 6				
July 13				
July 20				
July 27				
August 3				
August 10				
August 17				
August 24				

<b>August 31</b>				
<b>September 7</b>				
<b>Total</b>				



# SETTING GOALS AND TRACKING PROGRESS

## BREAKING DOWN YOUR GOAL

What is your group's project?

Who are your local partners?

What is your group's goal? (ie, how many lbs of donated food will you secure, how many hours will you spend reading to kids, how many homes will you audit?)

How many weeks do you have until the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11th?

What will you have to average per week between now and September 11th to reach your goal?

How many volunteers will you have to recruit on average per week to reach that goal? How many hours would you guess they have to work? If it's not clear at first, you should be ambitious and then adjust your recruitment goal as you go.

## TRACKING PROGRESS TO GOALS

Our team will report progress to goals every \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ will share our progress to goals with all team members by **email/phone calls** every \_\_\_\_\_.

We will also share our story and accomplishments at [serve.gov](http://serve.gov).

# TIPS: COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

## LEARN ABOUT IT

- Learn about the hazards most likely to affect your community and their appropriate responses.
- Learn about local emergency response plans, drills, and exercises.
- Find out what your community is doing to prepare.
- Subscribe online to the free Citizen Corps news email service at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/subscribe.shtm>.
- *Resource Websites*
  - [Citizen Corps](#)
  - [Ready.gov](#)
  - [Are You Ready?](#)
  - [National Safety Council](#)
  - [Home Safety Council](#)
  - [Community Emergency Response Teams](#)
  - [Fire Corps](#)
  - [Medical Reserve Corps](#)
  - [USAonWatch/Neighborhood Watch](#)
  - [Volunteers in Police Service](#)
  - [Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools](#)
  - [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools](#)

## TALK ABOUT IT

- Host a house meeting with your family, neighbors, co-workers, and faith-based colleagues.
- Get in touch with your local emergency management agency, fire department, police or sheriff's department, EMTs/paramedics, or other emergency responders to send an expert to come speak at your event.
- Create an event that promotes safety and preparedness and raises awareness.
- Sponsor a forum, like a town hall meeting that encourages people from throughout the community to discuss disaster preparedness and response and to exchange information and ideas.

## ACT ON IT

- Help prepare friends and family. Visit the websites of organizations and government programs like [Ready.gov](#), [Are You Ready?](#), and the [National Safety Council](#) to learn more about how you can prepare for and respond to disaster. Visit the website of the [Home Safety Council](#) to learn how you can make your home safer for you and your family.
- Get started by finding Citizen Corps Councils and programs near you by entering your zip code at [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov).
- Volunteer with one of the National Citizen Corps partners or affiliates <http://www.citizencorps.gov/programs/affiliate.shtm>
- Participate in crime prevention and reporting.
- Take classes in lifesaving skills, such as CPR/AED and first aid, or in emergency response, such as CERT.
- Volunteer to support first responders, disaster relief groups, and community safety organizations.
- Work with parent–teacher organizations to discuss how you can support their emergency plans and drills. The [Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools](#) and [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools](#) will have information on school emergency preparedness and response.

## **CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Your work this summer matters and should be celebrated. Remember to go to [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) and tell us your summer story of service.

Also, be sure to keep track of what worked for you this summer and what could be improved. You can learn from this service project when you organize your next service project!