Persons experiencing homelessness are at a high risk for needing assistance with basic services before, during, and after a disaster. Normal access to basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care can be temporarily disrupted or limited. While local shelters are required to have disaster preparedness plans in place, these plans may vary greatly from one location to another. Optimally, all shelters would have an evacuation plan, a generator, a stable supply of basic needs items, a *continuity of operations plan*, etc. Despite the best planning, the basic operations of any shelter or agency could be disrupted or limited due to a disaster event.

The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide leadership in the development, advocacy, and coordination of community strategies to prevent and end homelessness. In accordance with its mission, the Coalition will conduct coordination activities and communications on behalf of The Way Home local homeless response system in the event of a disaster.

**Pre-Disaster Planning Operations**

In the pre-disaster planning, appointed Coalition staff will coordinate with City of Houston, Harris County, Montgomery County, and Fort Bend County and local homeless service providers by establishing the following focal points:

- The Coalition will conduct annual educational presentations to build community awareness of the Disaster Communications Plan.

- The Coalition will be in contact with City and County Emergency Management Personnel as needed. Pre-disaster communications will be distributed through HMIS dashboard alerts, email notifications, Coalition blog/website, and text message alerts. Email notifications and website updates will be distributed to mass audiences. The Coalition will maintain a text alert system that can push information to designated personnel from The Way Home provider agencies.

- To the extent possible, the Coalition will maintain information about local shelters regarding operating capacity; which shelters are open, which ones have or need to evacuate, which shelters can accommodate evacuees from other shelters, etc. This information will be communicated by the Coalition to the Human Services Officer of the City, the County and other appropriate designees.
**Post Disaster Response**

After a disaster, the Coalition will assist the disaster response efforts of The Way Home by providing communications for coordinating the following:

- The Coalition will maintain information about the local shelters regarding operating capacity; which shelters are open, which ones have or need to evacuate, which shelters can accommodate evacuees from other shelters, etc. This information will be communicated by a point person within the Coalition to the Human Services Officer or the appropriate designee.

- The HMIS Administrator will post pertinent information about disaster relief & opened shelters on the HMIS dashboard.

- The Coalition, as lead agency to The Way Home, will disseminate disaster relief information to homeless response system provider agencies. Needs that cannot be met by local resources will be reported to the Human Services Officer or the appropriate designee. If necessary, the need requests will be forwarded to appropriate personnel within the Area Command.