

**DEFINITION:** Ministering to the needs of out of town volunteers (and also your own volunteers); ministering in “hospitable” ways to the distraught survivors of the disaster

**VOLUNTEER NEEDS:** People who have a servant’s heart, who not only like to minister to people’s basic needs, but enjoy blessing them with special mercies that make them comfortable, let them know they are appreciated, and make their work and stay easier.

**THE PROBLEM:** People who come into the area to help cannot make arrangements for their stay. There is likely no communication, probably no open motels or stores. When they arrive they will probably work all day and may or may not find a place to eat and sleep when they are done. To come alongside and help, they share in our temporary homelessness and live without the benefits of a functioning city. Added to this is the probable disadvantage of not having friends and family in the city. It is also quite common for insurance people along with other professionals to come into the area without knowing where they will stay. Often times they end up in the classrooms of churches! Also, you may find some elderly or otherwise vulnerable people without anywhere to stay at night.

Where are some of the vulnerable people going to stay AFTER a disaster if their home is not decent or perhaps isn’t safe. It is quite frightening for an elderly couple or a single mom to stay at night in a home that has broken windows, holes here and there when there is not a light for miles around! Will your church be a refuge for them?

It’s amazing what a scented candle or something pretty can do for a distraught woman who has seen nothing except mud, dirt, brown, and black! A little stuffed toy for a child who has lost everything can make their day! That’s part of hospitality too!

**THE ANSWER:** As members of the Church and the city, we can make sure these people find a place to stay and receive meals (from your team overseeing meals). We can minister to their needs as if they are our guests and find creative ways to make their stay a memorable blessing for them even as they work for us. We can bring some of the special extras into people’s lives to brighten their day!

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Discuss what the possibilities are for lodging. If your church is standing, can they stay in some of the classrooms? If your church is too damaged, then through the network perhaps they could stay in one of the other churches or in some homes (that are still standing).
- If your church has a ministry team providing meals that is great. If you do not, perhaps the church or individuals can plan ahead to feed extras.
- Perhaps you can provide travel size toiletries, snacks, extra towels...
- Brainstorm with your team. These people have taken on your loss as their own.
- You can pre-make some little gift bags for women or children or anyone else who needs a smile and blessing!

**PERSONAL EXPERIENCES:** “I left for each of the 4 hurricanes having tried to make arrangements for housing, but it was always impossible. In Punta Gorda I drove 45 min. after working as much as 14 hours each day to stay with some people I knew and then back again the next morning. In Fort Pierce a church graciously let me put my bunk in their sanctuary that was damaged, but still standing. I walked through debris to get to the restroom, but there was water and electricity. I was very grateful. Volunteers don’t need the Ritz, but they need a safe place with a roof over their head.

In some cities people almost daily brought food, snacks, and drinks for volunteers. That was SO appreciated by everyone. At other times and in other cities it was MREs and granola bars.

One person sewed ice packs for all the volunteers at our distribution center. That was a real treat when laboring in the Florida sun all day. One person, as soon as her electricity was turned on, made cookies for the volunteers. Others showed up with snacks. How that makes people feel appreciated!”