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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-10-278T](#), a testimony to the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

As a result of the damage caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the federal government funded several disaster case management programs. These programs help victims access services for disaster-related needs. This testimony addresses the following questions: 1) How did the federal government support disaster case management programs after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and how did federal agencies coordinate their efforts?; 2) What challenges did disaster case management agencies experience in delivering services under federally funded programs?; and 3) How will previous or existing federally funded programs be used to inform the development of a federal case management program for future disasters?

This testimony is based on a July 2009 report (GAO-09-561). To complete this report GAO reviewed federal laws, regulations, and guidance, obtained data from two programs, conducted site visits to Louisiana and Mississippi, and interviewed case management providers and federal and state officials. For this testimony, GAO updated certain information.

What GAO Recommends

In our July 2009 report, GAO recommended that FEMA improve coordination and create a time line for its new disaster case management program, and examine pilot program outcomes to develop the program. FEMA agreed with our recommendations. GAO is making no new recommendations.

View [GAO-10-278T](#) or key components. For more information, contact Kay E. Brown at (202) 512-7215 or brownke@gao.gov.

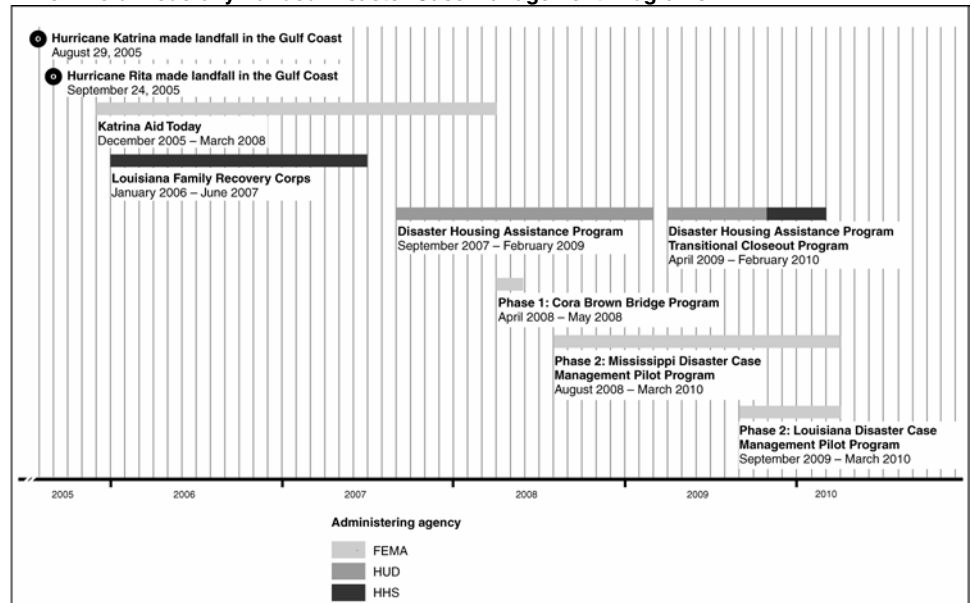
DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Improvements in Providing Federal Disaster Case Management Services Could Help Agencies Better Assist Victims

What GAO Found

The federal government provided more than \$231 million to support disaster case management programs for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; however, breaks in federal funding hindered service delivery, and federal agencies and case management agencies faced coordination challenges. (See fig.) A lack of accurate and timely information sharing and incompatible data systems may have left some victims most in need without access to disaster case management services.

Time Line of Federally Funded Disaster Case Management Programs



Source: GAO.

Case management agencies experienced challenges in delivering federally funded disaster case management services due to staff turnover and large caseloads, limited community resources, federal funding rules, and a lack of coordinated outreach. For example, case management agencies saw the ability to provide direct financial assistance for items such as home repair, clothing, or furniture as key to helping victims, yet case management agencies that provided services under FEMA-funded programs could not provide direct financial assistance. Long-term recovery committees were a resource for case management agencies to obtain direct assistance, but utilizing these committees was sometimes unsuccessful.

Ongoing evaluations of disaster case management pilot programs will inform the development of a federal disaster case management program, but to date, little is known about program outcomes. FEMA plans to analyze third-party evaluations submitted by the agencies administering the pilot programs to determine lessons learned and best practices for the future. According to an agency official, FEMA hopes to formalize the new program in June 2010.