

**Remarks of Vice Chairperson Michael Anderson  
National Commission on Children and Disasters  
Long-Term Disaster Recovery Workshop  
February 1, 2010 - Washington, D.C.**

Thank you Roberta.

Good Morning.

On behalf of all the Commissioners, welcome to our Long-Term Disaster Recovery Workshop.

I would like to recognize Commissioners in attendance today:

Ernie Allen

Merry Carlson

Bruce Lockwood

Larry Tan

Sheila Leslie

David Schonfeld

Gregg Lord

We have over 150 representatives gathered from federal, state, and local government and non-governmental organizations to address unique challenges within a vital, yet often overlooked component of disaster planning:

The long-term recovery needs of children and families.

Why is the Commission dedicating a considerable amount of energy and attention to long-term recovery?

The challenges a community faces following a large-scale disaster are numerous and monumental.

But the challenges are made even greater because disaster plans have been written largely for the immediate response following a disaster.

And although children make up nearly 25 percent of our population, disaster plans are written largely with able-bodied adults in mind.

As FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate says, “We tend to plan for the easy, not the entire community.”

Communities are further burdened by disaster assistance programs that are designed to address short-term needs; which means the money runs out, well before the needs subside.

Time and time again, experience has shown us that disaster planning must go far beyond the first days, weeks or months of an event.

Recovery takes years.

And long-term recovery isn't just about rebuilding roads and bridges, it's about restoring lives.

All of us know that while disasters have a profound effect on everyone affected by the event, they are particularly traumatic and disruptive for children, especially when you consider their health, mental health, education and socialization needs.

In our Interim Report, released this past October, the Commission called for the Federal government and its partners to aggressively pursue a long-term disaster recovery strategy.

President Obama responded and formed a Long-term Disaster Recovery Working Group to tackle the challenges of restoring families to self-sufficiency.

We believe that long-term recovery plans must include an explicit emphasis on addressing the immediate and long-term physical and mental health, educational, housing and human services needs of children.

And we believe the workshop ultimately will inform the President, as well as the work of the Commission.

Today, we're going to discuss challenges in three important areas of long-term disaster recovery for children that we believe will help inform this work: access to health care, the provision of mental health services, and barriers to information and data sharing.

Identifying challenges is the easy part, coming up with solutions is a bit more daunting.

But then again, that's why you decided to spend the day with us...you care about children, you want to make a difference and you want to tackle the tough issues.

We owe it to our families and our neighbors, and certainly to the nation's 73 million children to help develop a long-term disaster recovery system that is rapid and responsive to their needs.

We have every confidence that by the end of the day we will have moved closer to making a difference.

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At this point, I'd like to introduce our key note speaker.

Ron Sims was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on May 6, 2009, and sworn in as the Deputy Secretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on May 8, 2009. As the second most senior official at HUD, he is responsible for managing the Department's day-to-day operations, a nearly \$40 billion annual operating budget, and the agency's 8,500 employees.

Deputy Secretary Sims previously served as the Executive for King County, Washington, the 13th largest county in the nation in a metropolitan area of 1.8 million residents and 39 cities including the cities of Seattle, Bellevue and Redmond.

While serving three terms, he was nationally recognized for his work on transportation, homelessness, climate change, health care reform, urban development and affordable housing. His leadership in affordable housing and multiple community and housing partnerships have funded 5,632 units of housing during his 12 years.

Deputy Secretary Sims' boss is HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, co-chair of the President's Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group, which I mentioned earlier. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano also serves as co-chair.

So today, on behalf of Secretary Donovan, Deputy Secretary Sims is going to tell us about the ongoing efforts of the Long term Disaster Recovery Working Group.

On behalf of the National Commission on Children and Disasters, I'm very pleased to welcome Deputy Secretary Ron Sims.

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Thank you, Deputy Secretary Sims.

We are fortunate to have Abt Associates facilitating our workshop today.

I'd now like to ask Kim Fletcher, Vice President of Global Emergency Management, to provide us with an overview of the break-out sessions and the intended outcomes for the day.

Kim...