



Program Guidance #1: Assigning Tier Levels

All RISE cases are required to have a tier level assigned at the conclusion of the Intake/Eligibility Determination process. The tier level assigned to each case determines how quickly a RISE disaster case manager makes initial contact with a client after the assessment is completed. Tier level assignment is based on information gathered during the intake and eligibility determination process, and should reflect the **urgency** and **level of risk** involved in the individual client's situation. It is possible to have clients whose situations are the same, but who are assigned a different tier level due to differing risk factors.

The examples given below are designed to provide suggestions and guidance in helping RISE disaster case managers assign tier levels. The examples are not meant to be prescriptive or to serve as a definitive checklist for tier level assignment. As such, a case manager must use a level of professional and ethical analysis and judgment in order to appropriately assign a tier level. RISE disaster case manager supervisors are asked to assist case managers with tier level assignments until both the case manager and supervisor develop a confidence and level of comfort in assigning tier levels.

Tier levels are used solely as a triage tool at the beginning of the disaster case management process. They identify the urgency and level of need of a case and provide direction on how quickly and frequently a case manager should follow-up with a client. Tier levels should not be changed throughout the disaster case management process.

In general, the tier levels are defined in terms of urgency can be categorized as follows:

Tier Level 1: Client is generally stable, but needs help with 1 or 2 items – **need follow-up for Initial Assessment within 14 days.**

Examples: client employed, emotionally stable, not in need of social service connections, minor home repairs, stable living environment, needs one or two pieces of furniture, etc.

Tier Level 2: Routine Needs. Case management is necessary, but client has no urgent needs (i.e. crisis intervention) – **need follow-up for Initial Assessment within 10 days.**

Examples: client employed or steady income, minor home repairs, stable living environment, may need social service connections, etc.

Tier Level 3: Urgent Needs – **need follow-up for Initial Assessment within 7 days.**

Examples: emotionally distraught, living in FEMA trailer while making repairs on home, unemployed or low fixed income, may have dependent children, major home repairs, client needs help navigating social service system, medical issues, etc.

Tier Level 4: Emergency Needs – **need follow-up for Initial Assessment within 4 days.**

Examples: homeless/staying in motel/being evicted, suicidal (this would require immediate contact with the appropriate agencies), or severely emotionally distraught, living in FEMA trailer with a deadline to get out, unemployed with dependent children, major home repairs, little or no ability to navigate social service system, major medical issues, currently involved with CPS, etc.

Things to consider when determining risk and urgency:

Housing Status:

- Is the client homeless or moving from house to house for a place to stay?
- Is the client in the process of being evicted?
- Is the client living in a FEMA trailer and being told they will have to leave soon?
- Does the client need major home repairs?
- Does the client need minor home repairs?
- Is the housing damage causing risk of harm to the client and/or family? (mold, excessive heat, etc.)

Household Information:

- How many people are in the home?
- How many children are in the home?
- How many elderly people are in the home?
- Is the client a single parent caring for dependents?

Health / Mental Health Status:

- Does anyone in the home have urgent health needs?
- Does anyone in the home have a disability that is hindering their recovery?
- Does anyone in the home have an urgent need for medication or medical treatment?
- Is anyone in the home suicidal or in need of urgent mental health services?
- Is the client experiencing depression or anxiety related to the disaster?
- Does the client have any cognitive disabilities or medical conditions that affect their ability to function independently? If so, are they connected to appropriate support services?

Income / Employment Status:

- Does the client have any source of income?
- Is the client currently unemployed?
- Does the client have the ability to get a job?
- Is the client living on a fixed income (Social Security, SSI, SSDI, etc.)?

Other:

- Does the client/household have food in the home?
- Is the client able to navigate social service systems on their own?
- Does the client have a support system in place?