

**Remarks by Douglas W. Nelson, President & CEO
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
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I want to personally thank the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative for bringing this important and timely convening to Maryland.

I'd like to especially thank the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers for their months of on-the-ground planning that truly made this summit possible.

I've been asked to spend a few moments this morning to share some thoughts and convictions about what roles philanthropies and non-profits should play and need to play in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Truth be told, it's not a simple question. Indeed, not very long ago I would have probably said we – our sector – has a fairly limited contribution to make. I, like too many of my non-profit colleagues, presumed that the business of anticipating crises, emergencies, and disasters was the business of emergency officialdom – police, fire fighters, emergency management offices, along with the emergency medical technicians, public health, hospital folks, and the American Red Cross.

But, as I'm sure we will be reminded throughout today, that's a shortsighted and incomplete notion of the philanthropic and non-profit sector's emergency readiness responsibilities.

We actually have a lot to bring to the table, including some capacities, skills, perspectives, roles, and resources that no other sector may be as well positioned to contribute.

Among the most basic of those roles is to make sure our own organizational and agency houses are in order in the event of a health, natural, or security crisis. I'm embarrassed to admit that if you asked the Casey Foundation five years ago about our emergency readiness and recovery plan, we would have responded: "what plan?" And that was true even though we had nearly 500 employees, thousands of grantees, and hundreds of foster families and foster kids who rely on Casey's resources, support, and information network.

I'm relieved to say that our involvement with helping Louisiana human service organizations recover from Katrina compelled us to confront our own emergency preparedness obligations to our staff, clients, grantees and to maintain business continuity. In the process of planning to meet those obligations, we have benefitted tremendously from guidance and examples lent by corporate sector. In addition, we recognized our need to better understand our interdependence and forge tighter links with the public sector's larger emergency planning and response roles.

But beyond getting our own act in better order, the philanthropic and non-profit sector also has a critical perspective to bring to broader community and state disaster preparedness and response. That contribution arises from our sector's special focus on and responsibility for vulnerable populations. Non-profits and foundations are typically focused on the interests of the disadvantaged, excluded, and vulnerable, whether they be the poor, at-risk children, troubled youth, the disabled, the homeless, frail older folks, non-English speaking newcomers, or the clients of juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, long-term care, and correctional systems.

These groups, as we all know, have a tough enough go in the best of times. But in times of crisis, confusion, and calamity they are exceptionally vulnerable and at-risk. I think it's the particular responsibility of the foundations and non-profits who serve these groups to see that their special needs and special interests are fully and thoughtfully anticipated in the preparedness plans our communities make and in the response and recovery actions that we implement.

Finally, foundations and non-profits possess certain kinds of assets and resources that can significantly strengthen state and local emergency readiness. For one thing, foundations have money they can invest in stronger planning and coordination. That's precisely what the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has done through the sponsorship of these Meta-Leadership Summits. Foundations can also deploy dollars flexibly and, if necessary, quickly. That's exactly how the CDC Foundation recently used some of its money to help the CDC act even faster and more nimbly at the outset of H1N1 outbreak this past spring.

Perhaps most important, non-profit agencies and operating foundations have an exceptional stock of human capital – social workers, counselors, child care specialists, planners, trainers, home care workers, benefit specialists, therapists, and others whose special skills and training can add invaluable depth to a city or state's response and recovery. Casey learned the power of this asset when we volunteered our most experienced Casey Family Services clinical social workers to help with crisis and grief counseling in New York City after 9/11.

All of this is to say that foundations and non-profits have an important role in the business of emergency planning and disaster response. We not only have a lot to contribute, but the populations and groups we exist to serve also have a critical stake in the quality of our states' and communities' emergency readiness.

For those reasons, I'm gratified by the extent of the non-profit sector's participation in this Summit, and appreciate the CDC Foundation and the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative's bringing us together with our public sector and private sector counterparts.

Thanks.