



Georgia Department of Public Health

Disaster Mental Health in a Public Health Response

Presentation to: MRC Volunteers

Presented by: Sherwin Levinson
on behalf of Xavier Crockett

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We Protect Lives.

Overview

- Responding to a disaster may cause STRESS
 - Planners incorporate Disaster Mental Health services in plans
 - Responders implement strategies to reduce stress



Opener

What does Disaster Mental Health Mean?



What is disaster mental health?

- Prevention and public health approach
- Education about stressors and their effects
- Practical assistance to support coping
- Advocacy, crisis interventions, and referral services to resources to meet mental health related problems

Who can provide disaster mental health?

- Anyone with proper training can provide practical and emotional support
- Professional mental health license **not** required

Traditional vs. Disaster Mental Health

Traditional Treatment

- Office based
- Diagnoses and treats mental illnesses
- Focuses on personality and functioning
- Examines content
- Explores past experiences and influence on current problems
- Therapy focused
- Keeps records, charts, case files, etc.

Disaster Mental Health

- Home and community based
- Assesses strengths and coping skills
- Counsels on disaster-related issues
- Accepts content at face value
- Validates common reactions and experiences
- Education focused
- Does not collect identifying information

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program

Basic Assumptions

1. No one is untouched
2. People pull together
3. Stress and grief are common
4. Expectations of recovery

Resiliency

- Ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change (Merriam-Webster)
- Foundation of disaster mental health



Stress

- Normal state of physical and psychological arousal, measured by its physical components
 - Eustress- positive stress
 - Distress- negative stress



Reactions to Stress

- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Physical
- Interpersonal



Activity

Reactions to Stress

Disaster Self-Care



Training

Planning

Partnerships

Self- Care Analogy

- “In the event of sudden loss of cabin pressure an oxygen mask will drop in front of you. Please put your mask on first prior to assisting anyone else, including your child.”
- **You won't be good to anybody, if you don't take care of yourself first!**

Self-Check

- Knowledge of self
- Family disaster plan
- Necessities
- Time limit
- Preparation



General Self-Care Strategies

- Know yourself
- Control your exposure
- Connect with others
- Take time
- Know what soothes and revitalizes you

Supporting Co-Workers



Sources of Stress During Disasters

- Long work hours
- Different location
- Unfamiliar work duties
- Anxious public



Peer Support

- *Peer* in this case is to imply that each person has no more expertise as a supporter than the other
- Peer Support relationship is one of EQUALITY
- People provide emotional or practical help to each other
- Colleagues, members of organizations, groups of individuals and others meet as equals to give each other support on a reciprocal basis

Peer Support-Key Skills

- Listening
- Share knowledge and experience
- *Limit giving advice*
- Give information
- Work together
- Take care of yourself and your team

Disaster Mental Health for the Public



Mental Health Support Services

- Observe people's reactions
- Provide support
- Utilize disaster mental health interventions



Practical Support

- Introduce yourself
- Identify any needs
- Provide assistance or find someone who can help



Emotional Support

- Body language
- Validate feelings
- Calming skills
- Referral



Linkage to Resources

- Know the referral process for your deployment location
- Address stigma
- Resources
 - Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL)
1-800-715-4225
 - Critical Incident Stress Foundation
 - App! Psychological First Aid (PFA Mobile)

Wrap-Up

- Reflect on biggest aha moment
 - What is one thing you learned today?
- Questions?

