

Staff Training

Training

A disaster behavioral health program needs to include staff training in the management plan. There are a number of applicable topics that may assist staff members in conducting their jobs more comprehensively and more competently. The addition of training events should be determined by the specific disaster, the knowledge and skills of the staff, and the different populations most affected and at risk for suffering negative mental health outcomes as a result of the circumstances of the affected community as well as the disaster itself. Inviting community providers to training events is a productive way to reach out to other agencies in the community involved in the disaster response or supporting the response in some way.

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

(From the second edition of the *Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide*.)

“PFA intervention strategies are intended for use with children, adolescents, parents/caretakers, families, and adults exposed to disaster or terrorism. PFA can also be provided to first responders and other disaster relief workers.”

- PFA core actions include the following:
 - Contact and engagement
 - Safety and control
 - Stabilization
 - Gathering of information, including current needs and concerns
 - Practical assistance
 - Connection with social supports
 - Information on coping
 - Linkage with collaborative services

“PFA is designed for delivery by mental health and other disaster response workers who provide early assistance to affected children, families, and adults as part of an organized disaster response effort.”

The following PFA training and educational resources are available. All resources are free, can be provided for both paraprofessionals and professionals, and include both in-person and online training.

- [PFA Online](#)—National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
This NCTSN 6-hour interactive course provides training on all PFA core actions as well as video demonstrations and tips from trauma experts and survivors. The course is designed for novices and for those experienced in disaster response.
<https://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=11>
- [Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide, Second Edition](#)—National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
This comprehensive guide provides an overview of the use of PFA, as well as detailed information on the eight core actions; sample PFA responses with children, youth, and adults; and handouts for PFA providers and disaster/terrorism survivors. This guide has been translated into Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Simplified Chinese, and Japanese.
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-field-operations-guide-2nd-edition>

Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) implements the CCP as a supplemental assistance program available to the United States and its territories. Section 416 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 1974 authorizes FEMA to fund mental health assistance and training activities in Presidentially declared major disaster areas. When this is approved the state mental health authority is the lead.

Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR)

(From the *Skills for Psychological Recovery Field Operations Guide*, 2007.)

“SPR is an evidence-informed modular approach to help children, adolescents, adults, and families in the weeks and months after disasters and terrorism, after the period where PFA is utilized. SPR is designed to reduce ongoing distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping.

Principles and techniques of SPR meet four basis standards:

- Consistent with research evidence on risk and resilience following trauma;
- Applicable and practical in field settings;
- Appropriate for developmental levels across the lifespan; and
- Culturally informed and delivered in a flexible manner.”

The goals of SPR are as follows:

- Protect the mental health of disaster survivors.
- Promote and/or accelerate recovery.
- Prevent maladaptive behaviors.

These goals will be accomplished by helping the survivor to:

- Manage distress
- Address adjustment
- Identify and reframe obstacles and challenges
- Promote positive plans and activities

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

(From the MHFA website, <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>.)

“Mental Health First Aid is a groundbreaking public education program that helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

Mental Health First Aid is offered in the form of an interactive 12-hour course that presents an overview of mental illness and substance use disorders in the U.S. and introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common treatments. Those who take the 12-hour course to certify as Mental Health First Aiders learn a 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources, and knowledge to help an individual in crisis connect with appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care.”

Suicide Prevention

(From the Question, Persuade, and Refer [QPR] Institute website, <https://qprinstitute.com>.)

Suicide prevention training is beneficial to offer to crisis counselors and team leaders working in a CCP. Experiencing a disaster can cause severe depression in many disaster survivors, especially those who experience serious financial distress as result of the disaster. Suicide prevention training will help crisis counselors identify those at risk of suicidal behaviors and get them the help they need.

The following suicide prevention training resources are available:

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center—<https://training.sprc.org>
- QPR Institute—<https://qprinstitute.com>

- Helpline Center—<https://www.helplinecenter.org/suicide-and-crisis-support>

QPR is an internationally recognized suicide prevention program that stands for question, persuade, and refer. QPR Gatekeeper Training provides the knowledge needed to reach out to a friend, peer, student, family member, or colleague who may be experiencing suicidal ideation and connect him or her to resources that will help.

This training will provide gatekeepers with the knowledge needed to assist someone in crisis by doing these things:

- Recognizing the warning signs of suicide
- Knowing how to offer hope
- Knowing how to get help and save a life

Grief Training

Often during outreach, crisis counselors will encounter survivors who have lost a loved one in or as a result of the disaster. Grief training will provide crisis counselors with the guidance needed to help those suffering from the loss of a loved one and build the skills for coping with this loss.

Possible topics to discuss during this training include the following:

- Guidelines for helping the bereaved
- The grieving process, including the five stages of loss and grief
- Effects of loss in family systems
- Cultural diversity in bereavement

The following grief training resource is available:

- Childhood Traumatic Grief Web Training (Medical University of South Carolina)—
<https://tfcbt2.musc.edu>

Division of Child Services—Identification of Child Abuse and Reporting Procedures

Research has shown that there is an increase in reports of child abuse following natural disasters. As such, it is imperative that crisis counseling staff be able to recognize indicators of child neglect and/or abuse and be familiar with the reporting process.

Training on the identification of child abuse and neglect and the subsequent reporting procedures would include the following elements:

(From the Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition and Intervention Training Curriculum Guideline by the Virginia Board of Education and the Virginia Department of Social Services available at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/guidance/health/child_abuse_intervention_training.pdf.)

- Recognizing child abuse and neglect
 - Goal 1: To become familiar with three types of child abuse and neglect
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Neglect
 - Goal 2: To be able to recognize physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect
 - Legal definitions
 - Operational definitions
 - Child indicators
 - Physical
 - Behavioral
 - Caretaker indicators
 - Abuse and neglect of children with disabilities
 - Risk factors related to the disability
 - Truancy/compulsory attendance
 - Corporal punishment
- Reporting requirements
 - Goal 3: To be able to identify when it is necessary to report to child protective services
 - Mandated report requirements
 - Penalty for failure to report
 - Liability for reporting
 - Reporting protocols for school employees
 - Complaints against school personnel
 - Goal 4: To understand procedures for reporting to social services
 - Reporting procedures
 - Confidentiality requirements
 - Goal 5: To understand social services' response to a report

The following is an example of a Child Abuse and Neglect training resource available online:

- [Child abuse and neglect: Recognizing, reporting, and responding for educators](#)—
It is recommended that a representative from the state department of social services or department of children and families provide this training.
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/child_abuse_training.shtml

Healing After Trauma Skills (HATS)

(From the HATS manual at

https://cpeip.fsu.edu/storm/StormresourcesFiles/resourceFile_59.pdf.)

“HATS was designed to be facilitated by teachers, psychologists, and other counselors working with children. Although developed for use in the classroom or with small groups of children, it can be amended for use with individual children. It can be useful for children who have experienced either natural or human-caused trauma/disaster. The manual was designed to provide information about children impacted by trauma/disaster, to enhance sharing of experiences, ideas, and thoughts about the trauma/disaster, and to build a repertoire of coping skills.”

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is the natural consequence of stress resulting from caring for and helping those who are traumatized or suffering. This condition has been clinically defined as the formal caregiver’s reduced capacity and is the consequent behavior and emotional state resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced or suffered by another person.

Possible compassion fatigue training topics include the following:

- Overview of compassion fatigue
- Factors that may lead to compassion fatigue
- Symptoms of compassion fatigue
- Prevention of compassion fatigue
- Recovery from compassion fatigue

The following compassion fatigue training is available:

- Compassion Fatigue and Self Care (a module within Sexual Assault Advocate/Counselor Training, adaptable for outreach workers)—
<https://www.ovcttac.gov/saact/module7.cfm>

Self-care

Disaster response and recovery work can be rewarding; however, it can negatively affect your health. Compassion fatigue is the stress outreach workers may feel after repeatedly helping traumatized people. Symptoms can include feeling like you are failing at your job, overwhelming exhaustion or depression, cynical thoughts, and hopelessness.

Practicing self-care, such as simple stress reduction activities, can help outreach workers feel better while working with disaster survivors.

The following are additional resources:

- Assistance Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE) Disaster Behavioral Health: Self Care for Healthcare Workers Modules—
<https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-dbh-self-care-for-healthcare-workers-modules-description-final-8-19-19.pdf>
- [Addressing disaster and emergency stress beyond first responders: Implications for individuals, families, and the workplace](#)—Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
This training from the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine covers sources of stress for disaster workers other than first responders, including staff of federal agencies, state and local public health agencies, utilities, social services, repair and cleanup contractors, and voluntary organizations. The training categorizes and describes stressors; discusses signs of stress and their effects on individuals and families; and presents strategies for individuals, families, and workplaces for managing stress and fostering flexibility after a disaster or traumatic event.
<http://lms.southcentralpartnership.org/course/viewguest.php?id=252>

Stress Management

(From the *Federal Emergency Management Agency Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program Guidance* from the CCP Application Toolkit, Version 5.0, July 2016, at <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/images/fema-ccp-guidance.pdf>.)

For services provided to be high in quality, the outreach staff providing them must be able to engage in self-care while they assist others. Many staff members of a CCP are also survivors of the disaster. Interacting with disaster survivors is extremely rewarding but also may produce strong levels of anxiety, frustration, anger, or depression in some workers. Sustained service provision can become debilitating when coupled with a staff member's personal experience of loss. It is, therefore, critical that ongoing staff stress management is integrated into the CCP at all levels of the program. All standard CCP trainings provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration include content on individual staff stress management.

The program management plan developed by the state, territory, or tribe must include provisions for organizational stress management.

Elements of an organizational stress management plan are as follows:

- A clearly defined management and supervision structure
- Defined purpose and goals
- Functionally defined roles reinforced through effective supervision
- Sound clinical consultation, support, and supervision
- Supportive peer relationships
- Active stress management program
- Comprehensive training plan

The following stress management resources are available online:

- [Dealing with stress in disasters: Building psychological resilience](#)—Local Public Health Institute of Massachusetts
This 2-hour training describes the stressors that response work may involve and possible consequences of stress. It equips responders with an arsenal of techniques for addressing and managing stress and heightening resilience. The training provides an in-depth look at the stress response within an individual, defines and describes compassion fatigue, explores individual and group resilience, and introduces PFA and other methods and approaches to coping with stress and fostering flexibility after a disaster or traumatic event.
<http://sites.bu.edu/masslocalinstitute/2011/10/19/dealing-with-stress-in-disasters>
- Resilience and Stress Management installment of the Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series, a web-based resource collection—<https://www.samhsa.gov/dbhis-collections/resilience-stress-management?term=Resilience-Stress-Management-DBHIS>
- Stress Management web page—<https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/stress-management.htm>

Cultural Competency

[Cultural competency curriculum for disaster preparedness and crisis response](#)—U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health (HHS, OMH)
This program is designed for first responders, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), emergency managers, physical and behavioral healthcare practitioners, and others who

work on disaster preparedness and response and would like to ensure that they provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services. OMH developed this curriculum to help people involved in disaster response and support of disaster-affected communities to provide services that reach and are effective for people of all cultures. EMTs, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and dentists can earn continuing education credits for completion of the curriculum.

<https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/education/disaster-personnel>

General Disaster Behavioral Health

- [Disaster behavioral health](#)—University of Washington, School of Public Health, Northwest Center for Public Health Practice
Designed for public health workers including behavioral health providers and practitioners, healthcare providers and practitioners, first responders, and emergency planners, this 1-hour training provides an overview of the psychological challenges communities may face after a disaster occurs. Topics include the psychological phases of a community-wide disaster, mental health risks that rescue workers and victims face, and signs a survivor needs additional mental health assistance.
<http://www.nwcphp.org/training/disaster-behavioral-health>
- [Education, training, and planning resources](#)—U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (HHS, CDC)
The CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response offers training in emergency preparedness and response for public health workers, healthcare workers, and public leaders. The trainings focus on public health preparedness and community planning and engagement. <https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/training.htm>

Resume Writing and Interview Skills

CCPs are temporary programs. As such, the end of programming can create increased anxiety among CCP staff. As the program phases down, crisis counselors and team leaders will face unemployment. It is recommended that CCP leadership provide resume writing and interview skills training to ease the anxiety and provide the necessary skills for crisis counselors and team leaders to have greater chances of finding new employment once the CCP ends. Participants in this training will learn how to write a professional resume and cover letter. In addition, this training will cover interviewing skills and techniques and methods for networking. Another possible topic is developing a career portfolio.

This training should take place toward the end of a CCP, after the Regular Services Program Phasedown Training.

The following resume writing and skill building resources are available:

- Goodwill Community Foundation—Resume Writing—
<https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/resumewriting>
- Monster, a popular online job-search site—<https://www.monster.com>
- CareerBuilder, another online job-search site—<https://www.careerbuilder.com>

It is recommended the state human resources department or provider's human resources department facilitates this training.