



Dear Colleague:

The current Ebola outbreak in several West African nations has been characterized as an unprecedented public health and humanitarian crisis. To date, the epidemic has spread to more than 7,100 people, with about half of those cases resulting in death. Without a rapid and robust international response, it is estimated that tens of thousands could die. Responding to this tragedy, President Obama recently pledged increased United States aid and support stating, “The world is looking to us, the United States, and it’s a responsibility that we embrace.”

Effective disaster preparedness and response are an essential part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) public health approach to building resilience and recovery. Given the magnitude of the trauma and suffering responders will be exposed to, it is also critical that they maintain their own well-being before, during, and after their deployment. Disaster responders can experience a variety of issues related to disaster response, including responder stress management, compassion fatigue, and post-deployment reintegration to home and work life. As this epidemic in West Africa continues to unfold, the need for useful, appropriate, and current psycho-educational resources are vitally important.

In order to meet the challenges, responders will need to provide the best possible care to those they come in contact with while attending to their own needs. SAMHSA has compiled a disaster resource list that will aid you in preparing for and performing your duties while you are deployed.

As you prepare to deploy, SAMHSA appreciates your efforts to help the people of West Africa and of the United States in our fight to overcome, prevent the spread of, and recover from this epidemic.

Sincerely,

Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.
Administrator

Self-Care, Stress Management and Post-Deployment: SAMHSA Resources for Ebola Responders

Self-care for Disaster Behavioral Health Responders— In this 60-minute SAMHSA podcast, disaster behavioral health responders can learn about best practices and tools that could enable them and their supervisors to identify and effectively manage stress and secondary traumatic stress.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G957P6w1Xfs&list=PLBXgZMI_zqfRcTt9ndxkbieQpQslkR6

Disaster Responders—SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series

installment— This installment focuses on the behavioral health effects of responding to a disaster. It provides resources on self-care for disaster responders, as well as specific disaster behavioral health interventions that responders can use to help survivors recover from a disaster.

http://archive.samhsa.gov/dtac/dbhis/dbhis_responders_intro.asp

The SAMHSA Behavioral Health Disaster Response App—SAMHSA’s mobile application (app) helps behavioral health responders provide quality support to survivors. With the SAMHSA Disaster App, users can prepare for deployment by preloading useful resources to their mobile devices (e.g., treatment locator information) and share those resources with survivors in the field. The app also provides on-the-ground assistance and postdeployment resources—all from one button on the home screen.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/apps/disaster>

Tips for Disaster Responders: Preventing and Managing Stress—This tip sheet presents organizational and individual stress prevention and management approaches for disaster response workers.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-and-Managing-Stress/SMA14-4873>

A Guide to Managing Stress in Crisis Response Professions—This SAMHSA pocket guide provides first responders with information on signs and symptoms of stress and offers simple, practical techniques for minimizing stress responses prior to and during a disaster response.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA05-4113/SMA05-4113.pdf>

Tips for Disaster Responders: Understanding Compassion Fatigue—This tip sheet explains the causes and signs of compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary trauma a disaster response worker can experience. This tip sheet offers self-care tips for coping with compassion fatigue and discusses compassion satisfaction as a protective tool.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Understanding-Compassion-Fatigue/SMA14-4869>

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline—The Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) is the nation’s first domestic helpline dedicated to providing disaster crisis counseling. This domestic toll-free helpline operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This free, confidential, and multilingual crisis support service is available via telephone (1-800-985-5990) and SMS (Text “TalkWithUs” to 66746) to U.S. residents who are experiencing psychological distress as a result of natural or human-caused disasters. TTY for deaf and hearing impaired: 1-800-846-8517. Callers are connected to trained and caring professionals from crisis counseling centers in the network.

http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/media/745/ddh_brochure.pdf

Tips for Disaster Responders: Returning to Work—This tip sheet is intended to assist deployed employees when they are transitioning back into their regular work situations following deployment.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Returning-to-Work/SMA14-4870>

Tips for Families of Returning Disaster Responders: Adjusting to Life At Home—This tip sheet is intended to assist families in reuniting with a family member who is returning from an emergency or disaster response assignment. It offers advice on adjustment to home life, basic post-deployment needs, possible redeployment concerns, signs of stress, and when to seek help.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Adjusting-to-Life-at-Home/SMA14-4872>

Tips for Supervisors of Disaster Responders: Helping Staff Manage Stress When Returning to Work—This tip sheet is intended to assist supervisors in easing transition, reducing potential difficulties, and enhancing positive consequences for disaster response workers. It provides self-care tips and coping strategies and describes common issues that may arise.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Helping-Staff-Manage-Stress-When-Returning-to-Work/SMA14-4871>

Tips for Disaster Responders: Identifying Substance Misuse in the Responder

Community— This tip sheet describes the warning signs of misuse of alcohol, prescription drugs, and other substances for disaster response workers. The tip sheet provides a review of the physical and emotional; social and behavioral; cognitive and mental indicators of possible substance abuse, and when to seek help.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Identifying-Substance-Misuse-in-the-Responder-Community/SMA14-4874>

If you have any questions or concerns about the web-links, please contact CDR Jamie Seligman at 240-276-1855 or at Jamie.Seligman@samhsa.hhs.gov.