Questions About Declaration and Application Processes and Grant Administration

Q: How long does it typically take for an ISP app to be reviewed upon submission?
A: Federal staff are committed to reviewing and awarding grants as soon as possible after submission.

Q: Since the declaration, what is the last date for the ISP to be submitted?
A: The ISP grant provides funding for 60 days and is due no more than 14 days after the date that Individual Assistance (IA) is designated on the major declaration.

Q: Can our ISP be administered by the State Mental Health Authority, in house if you will? And not use outside vendors?
A: Yes, states may elect to administer the program alone; sub-awardees are not required.

Q: What is the maximum grant award amount?
Q: Is there a limit on the ISP funding?
A: There is not a cap on grant awards; however, applicants should be aware that their applications will be reviewed thoroughly to ensure that there is an established need, the state is unable to meet that need, the program has proposed a reasonable program to meet that need, and the budget request includes allowable and reasonable costs.

Q: Could someone mention federal recognized tribes and disaster declaration process?
A: Federally recognized tribes have several options open to them related to the disaster declaration process. See the attached PDF for more information.

Q: Will the ISP application be for 45 days?
A: The period of performance for an ISP is 60 days, which includes 15 days pre-award and 45 days post-award. States can request reimbursement for verifiable crisis counseling services provided in the pre-award phase with their ISP application.

Q: Can someone explain who gets notified when a declaration might include IA?
A: The governor’s office and state leadership are notified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) when a Presidential major disaster declaration including IA is awarded. The designated state disaster behavioral health coordinator is also notified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at that time.

Q: Does the ISP cover the whole state or only those parts that include more vulnerable people?
A: ISP services can be delivered to all areas/counties declared with IA. ISP grant funding is based on need within the declared areas/counties and what can realistically be accomplished within the 60-day ISP.
Q: How will we know if we should apply for an RSP – will RSPs be available?

A: Regular Services Program (RSP) grants will be available to entities that have received a Presidential major disaster declaration with IA. Entities should apply if there is a continued need in the community. Data collected during the ISP grant can be used as support for an RSP grant.

Q: Are any sort of FEMA NIMS/ICS courses required before we begin writing the grant application?

A: No. It is recommended that applicants attend the annual Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) Grants Training course at the Emergency Management Institute, but it is not required.

Questions Related to Needs Assessments and Staffing Plans

Q: Any guidance on how to determine the correct number of crisis counselors to hire? Since our whole state is impacted and we cannot do traditional needs assessment.

Q: How are statewide population to be served with COVID-19 impact and staffing determined in the ISP application formula?

Q: Can you recommend information indicating percentage of population who might benefit from support services in the instance of social isolation/quarantine?

Q: As part of the needs assessment, the application asked about number of deaths, number of injuries etc. What about the number of cases, number of deaths not only in your state but neighboring states due to nationwide scope and spread of the disease? If high there is a high number of deaths in Charlotte-Rock Hill, NC then SC may be just as impacted.

Q: How do we determine the proposed number of individuals to be served by the program?

A: When developing their needs assessments, ISP programs should consider the broad impact of the outbreak as well as special needs populations, such as those at high risk of exposure, the disaster unemployed, those out of school for more than 2 weeks, or those who may be at increased risk of illness or death. Typically, programs utilize a percentage between 0.75 percent (0.0075) and 2 percent (0.02) to determine how many people they may reach.

Based on their needs assessment target, programs should then consider their capacity to deliver an immediate response—including the ability to staff up quickly, obtain needed equipment, and begin delivering services—when determining staffing levels.

Q: What is your definition of “lay crisis counselors”?

Q: What would a paraprofessional staff model look like?

A: Crisis counselors are typically paraprofessional staff hired from the communities that are being served. The sample job description of a crisis counselor from the ISP Supplemental Instructions, Appendix B, notes that a crisis counselor:

- Works with individuals, families, and groups to provide outreach, emotional support, individual and group crisis counseling, public education, and referrals when needed
- Is synonymous with the term “outreach worker”
• Represents the program in the community and networks with other agencies and partners to ensure needs of survivors are met
• Provides presentations to community groups on disaster reactions, coping skills, stress management, and the CCP

CCPs typically use a mix of mental health professionals (often in team leader roles) and trained paraprofessional staff (often in crisis counselor roles). Paraprofessional staff with experience in disaster behavioral health or crisis counseling may also serve as team leaders. Additional staff positions typically included in an ISP staffing plan include program management and oversight roles and administrative support functions. As mentioned in the webinar, COVID-19 ISPs may also want to consider other staff roles such as technical, creative, or communication specialists in order to maximize the reach of secondary services.

Q: Are there suggestions for new positions that are not a traditional part of past CCPs?

A: The following are possible nontraditional CCP roles:

• Hotline worker
• Child specialist
• Senior care specialist
• Media/communication specialist
• Social media specialist
• Creative specialist
• Web/technology specialist

Q: Can we utilize existing staff not currently working 100% rather than hire for 45 days? And if the RSP happens, we hire more staff?

A: The ISP is intended to supplement existing resources, not supplant them, and applicants are required to demonstrate that they are unable to meet the needs of their residents with existing resources. It is not recommended that programs wait until the RSP to begin hiring as that may further delay the implementation of a comprehensive CCP plan of services across both grants.

Q: How can we get a list of potential CCP trainers?

A: The SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center will work with the SAMHSA Project Officer to provide entities with lists of qualified CCP trainers.

Questions About Service Delivery During COVID-19

Q: Do you have any ideas on how to connect with communities that have limited or no phone/wifi/internet access, while maintaining needed social distancing?

A: If traditional communication channels such as print newspapers, mail, radio, and television are available in the affected areas, it is recommended that ISPs utilize them to reach communities with limited phone or internet access through means such as public service announcements (PSAs) or advertisements, mailers, and partnering with local media to develop stories or segments for daily news broadcasts.
**Q:** Do we need to have Primary Services in the ISP? I think that in my State, we will be focusing on Secondary Services, MH Town Halls, and pushing info/edu out to the population.

**A:** It is understood that some states will choose to focus on secondary services during the immediate response, especially in areas where physical distancing measures are in place. However, programs are encouraged to remain flexible and be prepared to shift service delivery to be able to provide primary services if those measures are lifted. In addition, all programs should have processes and plans in place to identify and refer individuals experiencing severe distress.

**Q:** Are there lessons learned you can share with us from WA, CA, others who have some advanced experience with CCP COVID-19?

**A:** At this time (April 2, 2020), no states have been awarded an ISP grant.

**Q:** Are you able to share any stats specific to individual states to help us target our efforts?

**A:** When assessing the needs in their states, applicants are encouraged to connect with their partners in public health and emergency management for the most accurate, up-to-date information. Federal resources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may also have information specific to COVID-19 for each state.

**Q:** What are some creative ideas/guidance around implementing an outreach-based program while still considering safety with social distancing?

**Q:** Do you have suggestions from other states that are doing a good job reaching out to the people in their state?

**A:** The following are suggestions for types of secondary outreach activities possible while social distancing.

- Consider the creation of a website designed to serve as a hub of information on local and national resources.
- Produce print and electronic psycho-educational resources, and consider creative ways to distribute them.
  - Establish a monitored email listserv or e-newsletter.
  - Drop off, mail, or email materials and tip sheets:
    - For healthcare practitioners and first responders at their workplaces
    - For clergy at their places of worship
    - At funeral homes for staff and families
    - At grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential workplaces
    - For inclusion in takeout and delivery bags from retailers
    - For local businesses to email to their remote workers
    - In large print for at-risk older adults
- Consider optimizing the use of social media.
  - Establish a branded program presence on popular channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
  - Host webinars or information sessions for the community.
Broadcast information about coping and stress management via Facebook Live or Instagram Stories.

Q: How do you convert a face-to-face CCP model to virtual/electronic, and it sounds as if this will require an investment in technology?

A: ISP grants responding to COVID-19 will have to shift their focus from primary (face-to-face outreach) to secondary services. Secondary services, such as social media posts and materials distribution, typically focus on reaching as many people as possible. In order to effectively conduct secondary services, programs may need to include in their budget line items for virtual meeting platform subscriptions, eblast service accounts, virtual collaboration tools, and multimedia software.

Q: Will telehealth and/or telephonic mental health crisis counseling be permitted?

A: Secondary services conducted virtually will be permitted such as crisis counseling engaged in over the phone or other virtual means.

Questions About the ISP Application Budget

Q: Can we justify smartphones for all crisis counselors if they are doing skype like interactions and they are not working in teams?

A: Yes, programs are encouraged to request the technology and equipment that they need in order to successfully deliver ISP services. The need for these supplies should be linked to the plan of services and justified in the budget request.

Q: We also have benefits so would that be covered in the budget?

A: As a supplemental program, the CCP does not fund a line-item category for indirect costs. All charges must be direct. Fringe benefits are allowed with justification. The following instructions are included in the budget worksheet:

- Provide the rate of fringe for each provider.
- Indicate whether the fringe benefits are based on usual and customary rates in the local area.
- If the fringe rates are not comparable to the usual and customary rates for the local area, describe why the fringe rates differ.
- List individual items that constitute the fringe benefits package.

Q: If there is a funded extension of the ISP, do those funds get subtracted from what you would fund in the RSP?

A: No, funded extensions for ISP grants are awarded to allow for a continuation in ISP services while RSP applications are under review. RSP funding is awarded based on the plan of services and budget proposed and is for a separate period of performance (up to 9 months). Funds for the two grants are separately awarded and accounted for.

Q: Can education to senior homes/shelters etc. be counted as pre-award?

A: Psycho-educational services that fit the crisis counseling model can be included as pre-award services.

Questions About Data Collection and Evaluation
Q: How would you count social media especially with PSAs?

A: Mass media and social media messages are collected on the Weekly Tally form included in the Office of Management and Budget-approved package of data collection tools used by grantees. Grantees are instructed to report the number of PSAs, mass media, or social media messages released, published, broadcast, or posted.

Q: How will data be collected during the Immediate Services Program, and do we need to develop our own data collection procedures?

A: The current CCP data collection forms allow for secondary services outreach to be captured. For example, brief virtual/phone encounters (under 15 minutes), social media posts, PSAs, emails, hotline calls, etc., can all be captured on the Weekly Tally Sheet. Phone conversations lasting more than 15 minutes can be captured on the Individual/Family Crisis Counseling Services Encounter Log. More information regarding data collection can be found on the CCP Toolkit mobile app and data collection information page.

Q: How will programs complete the participant and provider feedback surveys and will they be required with a social distancing CCP model?

A: The Service Provider Feedback Survey can be completed via a link emailed to all staff. The Participant Feedback Survey can be converted into a shorter link and sent via text or email to participants who engaged in virtual crisis counseling outreach activities.

Questions About Other Topics

Q: Do you have a sense of what the call volume for the SAMHSA DDH line has been specifically related to COVID-19?

Q: Can we please get call volume by state and in general for the DDH line?

A: The SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) is a sub-network of the SAMHSA National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The DDH network currently consists of five crisis centers. All centers in the DDH sub-network are operated locally and are private not-for-profits. In March 2020, the DDH has answered close to 7,000 calls and 15,000 texts (including multiple texts sent by individual users). Those totals are increases from the previous month, when 1,700 calls and over 1,500 texts were received. Combined calls and texts in March were higher than any other month in the last 2 years. (The closest was September 2017, when many states were dealing with Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, and Irma.) This information is based on data obtained by SAMHSA and the DDH grantee Vibrant Emotional Health.

Q: Are you aware of a structure or application that will allow volunteers (who may be in remote locations with limited or no cell service) to field crisis counseling calls? I’m specifically thinking about whether anyone knows about a system that will allow remote users to log in and take calls when “on shift” and log out when they’re not. And would this be allowed under the CCP guidelines?

A: SAMHSA and FEMA are aware that there are options available to programs that would allow crisis counselors to field calls remotely. Applicants are encouraged to consult with their procurement and information technology department staff to determine which vendors or systems may be allowable and
best meet the needs of a CCP. Should a program need to purchase this type of system, applicants should provide justification in their ISP budget request.