



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

NJ Department of Human Services

Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

New Jersey Crisis Counselor

www.state.nj.us/humanservices/divisions/dmhas

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Greetings:

Welcome to the latest issue of *New Jersey Crisis Counselor*. The newsletter is written in partnership with the Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ) to keep you informed of the issues related to behavioral health emergency response. Many of you are receiving this in your role as a New Jersey Disaster Response Crisis Counselor (DRCC).

I'd like to acknowledge Gladys Padro, my immediate predecessor, who retired in December of 2010 after 33 years of dedicated service to the state. She was the first Director of the Department of Human Services' **Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB)**, which is supported by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Her indefatigable leadership shaped and expanded the program into the organized and responsive office it is today. She also was recognized and respected as a leader in the national disaster mental health arena, a founding member and inaugural co-chairperson of the Multi-State Disaster Behavioral Health Consortium which hosts 38 members and states, to date. Through her pioneering advocacy, she has left a lasting legacy on the field of disaster mental health in NJ. I was privileged to work for Gladys for a decade, and now I hope to bring an equal level of enthusiasm and energy to this role.

I am also very fortunate to work with a small, yet mighty DTB team, including Steven Crimando, Director of Training; Debbie Loffredo, Megan Boylan Sullivan and Meg Kallman, our Emergency Response Coordinators.

Each of us appreciates and values the commitment you have made to the DRCC certification program. The upcoming anniversary of September 11th reminds us of the caring and dedication individuals like you bring to this work. Recently many of you participated in a survey requesting your suggestions about how to improve the DRCC process. We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions so we are in the process of reviewing your recommendations with the goal to accommodate the practicable.



Adrienne Fessler
Belli

Thank you for your continued commitment to emergency response. If you have any suggestions for future newsletters, please send your ideas to MHSTAG@DHS.state.NJ.us.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Fessler-Belli, MSW, LCSW, Director
Disaster and Terrorism Branch
New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Counselors: Start Your 9/11 Preparations Today

**By: Megan Sullivan,
LPC, LCADC, DRCC**

As the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks approaches, survivors and individuals who worked with the behavioral response program may experience reminders of the event and their reactions.

The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB) has offered several training opportunities designed to prepare counselors - who again will be serving the community - to cope with the stress of responding to the aftermath of the 9/11 disaster.

We encourage those who are offering services or attending support programs for people impacted by the events of 9/11 to be mindful of the special populations who may be most affected at this time. During the training, special considerations were discussed to meet the needs of the First Responders who continue to suffer emotional and physical distress from their service.

Other groups considered to be at high risk are those who had direct losses, such as those whose loved ones perished and the over 10,000 survivors of the World Trade Center evacuation, some of whom have never recovered emotionally or financially. And lastly, we encourage our counselors to be mindful of the effect increased media coverage and discussions of terrorism have on Arab Americans living in the tri-state area.

There will be several local responses throughout New Jersey as well as services for family members of persons impacted by the disaster in New York. "9/11 Healing and Remembrance" is a program of the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA of NYC). The Association has been there for the 9/11 community since September 11th, 2001, serving as a "voice" for the mental health needs of those affected by the attacks.

The MHA of NYC will be offering services for family members attending memorials scheduled throughout the impacted states. Their website for this database can be found here: [9/11 Healing and Remembrance](#). NJ Disaster Response Crisis Counselors have been invited to respond as volunteers to assist with the family support centers with the 9/11 Healing and Remembrance Program, but will be acting on their own as volunteers of the MHA of NYC.

The MHANJ will be offering support through their Disaster Mental Health Helpline at 877-294-HELP (4357). Individual county Mental Health Administrators will be responsible for contacting the DRCC's in their county for specific memorial activities in New Jersey.

Personal Preparedness: Walk the Talk

**By: Steven Crimando, MA
BCETS, CHS-V, DRCC**

Learn more about personal and family preparedness from the New Jersey State Police Office of Emergency Management:

[NJ Office of
Emergency
Management](#)

Have you ever told your friends and family about your involvement with the state's disaster mental health system or your membership on a local team? Chances are that the important people in your life know about your interest and commitment to assisting your neighbors and the citizens of New Jersey in times of crisis. There is also a good chance that given your knowledge and skills in the area of disaster response that those same important others will look to you as a source of information and as a role model in disaster preparedness. You've heard this question before: *Are you ready?*

When the call comes activating a disaster response and mobilizing crisis counselors, your ability to respond will be greatly influenced by your state of personal, home and family readiness. Information about how to prepare a kit, make a plan and stay informed is widely available, but it is important for all potential disaster responders to put these action steps in motion.

Every September is recognized as National Preparedness Month ("NPM"), a 30 day awareness and activism campaign to improve the preparedness of our nation. In recognition of the 10th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, this year's NPM 2011 slogan is "A Time to Remember. A Time to Prepare". The terrorist attacks of September 11th highlighted the need to increase preparedness activities across the country and improve citizens' ability to respond to and recover from disasters. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have made personal and home readiness a cornerstone of this campaign.

For NJ DRCCs, there are several approaches to enhancing readiness. For example, the beginning of Daylight Savings Time serves as a reminder to change the batteries in your home smoke detectors. In the "Introduction to Disaster Mental Health" training program that serves to indoctrinate crisis counselors into the state's disaster mental health system, instructors suggest that the changing of the clocks (and batteries!) is also a good reminder to rotate warm or cold weather gear into your "go kit." Disaster mental health responders are advised to have two kits: a small bag or kit containing personal necessities to bring along when deployed as a crisis counselor and a more substantial kit if evacuation of your home is necessary.

The smaller crisis counselor disaster response kit should have basic clothing, equipment and supplies to ensure comfort and self-sufficiency for at least one day while out on a disaster counseling assignment.

The 9/11 anniversary and National Preparedness Month are a great opportunity to take the steps necessary to put your home, office and family in a better state of readiness. DRCCs are encouraged to visit the FEMA Ready America website (<http://www.ready.gov/america>) for more information about personal and family readiness.

In the Spotlight: Morris County



Morris County held a forum on April 26th to gather all their disaster mental health response participants for "Disaster Mental Health Response: An Overview". County Government partners were invited to make brief presentations about their roles in disaster response planning and operations. This included: Scott DiGiralomo, Department Director, Office of Emergency Management and Mary Jo Buchanan, Department Director of the Morris County Department of Human Services. The event was hosted and led by Laurie Becker, Morris County Mental Health Administrator. The audience consisted of representatives from the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), UMDNJ's Vet to Vet Hotline and Traumatic Loss Coalition (TLC), Therapy Dogs International (TDI), Mental Health Association in NJ (MHANJ), the DMHAS Disaster and Terrorism Branch, as well as many Disaster Response Crisis Counselors.

The day began with an overview of the Morris County Disaster Mental Health Plan, the past responses in which the county participated and a description of the deployment and role of DRCCs. There was also an explanation of when and how the Traumatic Loss Coalitions and Medical Reserve Corps would be activated in a time of disaster.

A four hour training, "Working with Veterans in Crisis", was offered for the rest of the day by Megan Sullivan of the Disaster and Terrorism Branch. Participants received 4 continuing education hours in their field of professional development and DRCC recertification credits. The response from the day was overwhelmingly positive and the program format will be used as a template for other counties to gather their disaster mental health partners to meet, network, and plan how to best work together in a time of disaster.

September 11th....10 Years Later

9/11 Healing and Remembrance Program

The summer months are usually packed full with vacation plans, barbecues and family get-togethers. Yet, for many, these summer months are also a time to prepare for healing and remembrance.

It is mind-boggling to think that the worst terrorist attack to occur on American soil happened 10 years ago this September. For some, that may seem like a long, long time ago. For others, it may feel like yesterday.

The 10-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks will likely stir up even greater emotions because of the recent death of Osama bin Laden. Whether bin Laden's death provides a sense of closure or a reminder that the fight against terrorism is ongoing, it provides a profound example of how "Anniversary Reactions" can be triggered by current events and media coverage, especially for individuals tied closely to the traumatic events of 9/11.

Many New Jersey residents have close emotional ties to this date, given our proximity to New York City and the likelihood that we, personally, or someone we knew well, were impacted directly in some way.

Many resources have been developed to assist people struggling with the emotional impact of the upcoming anniversary. One example, [9-](#)

11healingandremembrance.org, is a website dedicated to providing information on the 9-11 remembrance events in Arlington, VA, New York City and Shanksville, PA. It also provides a list of supportive resources. Counselors and those they seek to assist, may find this and other online resources helpful during what will be emotionally challenging times.

2011 Summer/Fall Training Calendar



Psychological and Behavioral Management in Disasters, Mass Violence and Public Health Emergencies

offered on the following dates at various locations:

23rd August 2011
19th September 2011
28th September 2011
3rd October 2011
5th October 2011
17th October 2011
27th October 2011
4th November 2011
7th November 2011

Trainers: Steve Crimando and Mike Zagury

25th August 2011

Introduction to Disaster and Trauma Counseling: Basic Training for Disaster Response Crisis Counselors Morris County

Trainer: Steve Crimando

25th August 2011

Resilience: Discovering the Healing Power of Families

Cumberland County

Trainer: Nicci Spinazzola

16th September 2011

Cross Cultural Issues in Disaster Response and Recovery

(Former Title: Cultural Diversity in the Provision of Disaster Mental Health)

Middlesex County

Trainer: Monica Indart

Visit the [NJ DRCC training calendar](#) to register for these trainings