



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 Newsletter

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Dear Disaster Response Crisis Counselor,

Upon reflecting back on the second anniversary of Super Storm Sandy, we are reminded how quickly our lives can change. Disasters of this scope and magnitude, remind us of what matters in our lives and the importance of helping those in need. For those of you who responded, your time and compassion meant so much to those you helped. Your actions are the foundation of the Disaster Response Crisis Counselor program. The NJ Department of Human Services and its Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) wants to again recognize and thank you for selfless volunteerism during that time. Your contribution made a difference and embodied the spirit of the program.

We know that disaster and crisis can strike at any time. Your willingness to be part of the DRCC program is appreciated for it helps ensure that emotional support and comfort will be available to individuals impacted by an event. In response to your valuable feedback, this year the Disaster and Terrorism Branch of the DMHAS has increased the number of monthly trainings and will be holding them in various locations. There are also three dates scheduled for DRCC Identification Card processing throughout the state. In addition to this, a new level in the certification program was developed to incorporate Chaplains as part of a faith-based response.

The DTB team looks forward to working with you in the future. We wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season. Thank you again for your involvement with the DRCC program.

Regards,

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

New Jersey Hope and Healing Leaves a Legacy



Super Storm Sandy formed late in the 2012 hurricane season and made landfall close to Atlantic City on October 29th. Thousands of New Jersey residents were displaced, the Jersey Shore was devastated, homes and businesses destroyed.

Ahead of the storm, DRCCs were deployed to shelters where they provided Psychological First Aid and crisis counseling to survivors. Within a few weeks, New Jersey Hope and Healing, a short-term federally funded Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP), was up and running. Teams of trained crisis counselors canvassed the hardest hit communities, meeting with survivors to offer psycho-educational services. For the next 16 months, crisis counselors helped survivors rebuild and recover.

What follows is a snapshot of the legacy left by New Jersey Hope and Healing:

310,213 - The number of people seen by crisis counselors for face-to-face educational or supportive visits.

45,920 - Referrals were made for a variety of services including other New Jersey Hope and Healing services, community based mental health and substance abuse services, disability resources, and community services such as housing, employment, social services, FEMA, and loans, etc.)

26,523 - Survivors who attended a public educational presentation about typical disaster reactions and strategies for coping with them. Many of these community forums were held in faith-based centers, libraries, community centers, etc.

38,253 - Participants of individual or family crisis counseling visits (Unduplicated count). These visits were made in the community, primarily at disaster recovery centers, individual homes, community centers and other community locations.

15,799 - The number of children who received psycho-educational services. Many of these children attend Sandy Wave Riders, a support group for children and youth between the ages of five and thirteen.

12,634 - The number of survivors participating in support groups. There were 1,524 different support groups offered throughout the 16 months.

11,906 - The number of older adults (aged 65 and older) who received psycho-educational services in the form of individual crisis counseling, support groups, or public educational presentations.

162 - Trained crisis counselors and team leaders who assisted adults, children, and communities in recovering from the effects of Sandy.

98% - Survivors reported on the Participant Feedback Survey that found the services offered through New Jersey Hope and Healing useful. One-to-one interactions were rated as 99% useful.

New Initiative - Disaster Response Crisis Counselor Chaplain Pilot Project

The New Jersey Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services, in partnership with the County Offices of Mental Health, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP) and the Interfaith Advisory Council (IAC) is offering a Disaster Chaplaincy Pilot Project to all faith communities, for the purpose of including a spiritual component to the disaster response and certification program. The goal of this collaborative project is to widen the scope of response during times of crises and in recognition that many people affected by a disaster will seek comfort from faith and spiritual healers.

The Disaster Chaplaincy program will be a distinct certification level within the Disaster Response Crisis Counselor (DRCC) program that will serve to strengthen the county and state's disaster response program in meeting the needs of our citizens and communities.

Interested candidates should indicate their intention to apply for DRCC Chaplain status when completing the DRCC application. Also required is one reference from their faith-based community who will verify their chaplain status is in good standing. The training requirements for inclusion in the DRCC Chaplain project include completing the core 28- hour DRCC curriculum and one additional course titled: Providing Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster which is facilitated by DRCC Chaplain Leads.

A representative from the Interfaith Advisory Council will verify chaplain status. Once the candidate receives his or her DRCC Chaplain status, the County Mental Health Administrators will begin deploying DRCC Chaplains as needed.

We began training chaplains early in 2013 in Ocean, Middlesex and Union counties.

We are very excited to welcome our first group of DRCC Chaplains into the disaster behavioral health response community.

The current targeted regions include Cumberland and Essex counties. Please continue to watch the training calendar for course listings and please contact Megan Sullivan megan.sullivan@dhs.state.nj.us with any questions.

Disaster Response Crisis Counselor Chaplain Ceremony

On November 5th the Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB) of the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services in partnership with the **New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM)**, the **Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP)** and the **Interfaith Advisory**

Council held a Disaster Response Crisis Counselor [Chaplain Ceremony](#) to honor our first class of certified Chaplains at the Regional Operations and Intelligence Center at the NJ State Police Headquarters.

Twenty-two Chaplains were honored. The ceremony was opened by Lt. Colonel Chris Schulz, Deputy Superintendent-Commanding Officer Homeland Security Branch NJSP. Presentations and congratulations were provided by Howard Butt, NJ Citizen Corps State Coordinator, NJOEM, Major Jeff Motley, Commanding Officer of the Emergency Management Section NJSP, and David Leonardis from OHSP. From DTB, Adrienne Fessler-Belli presented along with Megan Sullivan. Emphasis in the speeches conveyed the importance of the DRCC Chaplains to make crucial connections throughout the community in times of crisis and the unique role they will play as DRCC Chaplains.

New Disaster Behavioral Health Training Offers

In order to keep New Jersey's crisis counselors ready and able to respond to their next challenge, the Disaster & Terrorism Branch is introducing several new training programs. Over the next few months, new advanced training and DRCC recertification will be announced via the training calendar on the NJDRCC.org website. These programs include:

Assisting Older Adults in Disasters

Recognizing that there are unique challenges for older adults in day-to-day life, this full-day program addresses the specific concerns this population may face during disasters and time of crisis. Health issues, limited mobility, severed social networks, and other obstacles can make recovery from a disaster all the more difficult. This awareness and skill-building program is designed to help the crisis counselor better anticipate and respond to the needs of older adults in disasters and to introduce effective strategies and techniques to engage the growing population of older adults.

Meeting the Needs of People with Access and Functional Needs Impacted by Disaster

This half-day workshop addresses the impact challenges to recovery from a disaster for individuals with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. Whether in the home or a disaster shelter, it is important to understand, anticipate and be prepared to assist an individual in their unique recovery needs. This awareness level training program introduces important information for disaster counselors in order to better understand and address post-disaster challenges for individuals with disabilities.

The ABCs of DRCC Team Leadership

This full-day program is open to those DRCCs already designated as Team Leaders. The program includes key concepts in team operations, on-scene team and team wellness and safety. The roles and responsibilities of Team Leaders are discussed with attention to problem-solving and effective integration of DRCCs into the overall disaster response environment.

Disaster Response Fundamentals

To effectively interoperate with a variety of disaster relief organizations it is important for the DRCC to have an understanding of the role and scope of all responding agencies. This full-day program addresses the roles and responsibilities of the Red Cross in general, and Red Cross Mental Health responders in specific, and how DRCCs can most effectively coordinate and cooperate in assisting those in shelters, PODs, and other disaster support environments. This program also discusses the key concept of "response-ability" and how DRCCs can best prepare their home, family and self to facilitate rapid response to disasters and crisis events. The program is co-facilitated by leaders from the Red Cross Disaster Mental Health and DRCC communities.

Substance Abuse Disorders in Disasters

Research and field observation indicate that rates of substance abuse increase in the post-disaster environment. Those with pre-existing substance abuse disorders are at greater risk and individuals in recovery can struggle with potential relapse as stress increases and resources and support dwindle. This half-day program introduces important information for the DRCC in understanding and responding to the unique challenges related to substance abuse disorders during disasters. Whether in the shelter or working in the community, DRCCs must be able to recognize and effectively respond to the needs and concerns of individuals with substance abuse disorders. Also discussed are resources to address continuity of treatment for individuals using methadone and other opioid treatment programs.

Working with First Responders Exposed to Trauma

Law enforcement, emergency medical professionals and fire fighters, as well as non-traditional first responders to a disaster or crisis event are often exposed to graphic and gruesome material. The impact of sudden shocking events, as well as the cumulative effects of repeated traumatic expose over the course of a first responder's career can result in serious and significant physical and emotional problems, interpersonal difficulties at home and work, and raise the risks of PTSD, depression, substance abuse and suicide. First responders represent a significant segment of any community impacted by a disaster, therefore it is important that the DRCC be aware and knowledgeable about the unique challenges, as well as specialized approaches and resources helpful in assisting first responders and their agencies. This full-day program is co-facilitated by experience disaster mental health and first responder stress experts to provide a well-rounded and informative training experience.

The Mental Health Response to Public Health Emergencies

News headlines and dinner table discussions have been dominated by talk to Ebola and Enterovirus D-68, with new case emerging every day. State health emergency plans include the possible use of DRCCs in vaccination centers, on hotlines and other points of contact with a public concerned about and reacting to fears about their health. This full-day program

discusses the unique behavioral reactions associated with public health emergencies and discusses how and where DRCCs may be most helpful in assisting those struggling with health emergency related fears and anxiety. A variety of different health emergency scenarios are discussed, including pandemic influenza, Ebola, Enterovirus and others. DRCC's are introduced to the various mechanisms, such as the health command centers, Points of Dispensing (PODs) and others, as well as to the various agencies responding to a health crisis.

The time, effort and ongoing enthusiasm of the DRCC community is always appreciated. The Disaster & Terrorism Branch is committed to the ongoing professional development of New Jersey's crisis counselors and will continue to develop and offer interesting and relevant new training opportunities to help build skills and maintain a posture of readiness to respond when we are needed.

To access the current training calendar please visit www.njdrcc.org

