Hurricane Recovery: Disaster Behavioral Health

Meghan Griffin, MPH
Emergency Mental Health & Traumatic Stress Services Branch
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Overview

• Defining disaster behavioral health
• Common disaster reactions
• Coping with grief
• When to seek help
• Resources
“DBH addresses the psychological, emotional, cognitive, developmental, and social impacts that disasters have on survivors and responders as they respond and recover.”

— Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/DBH-federal.aspx
The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program

- Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and administered by FEMA and SAMHSA.
- Provides grants to states, territories, and federally recognized tribes to help address disaster behavioral health needs.
- Supports the following services:
  - Individual and group crisis counseling
  - Basic supportive or educational contact
  - Community networking and support
  - Assessment, referrals, and linkage to resources
  - Materials development and communications
Common Reactions to Disasters

• Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected by it in some way.

• People who have survived disasters often experience some common physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral reactions.

Related resource: Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: Managing Stress, https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Survivors-of-a-Disaster-or-Other-Traumatic-Event-Managing-Stress/SMA13-4776
Common Reactions to Disasters (cont.)

**Physical**
- Digestive problems
- Aches and pains without a clear physical cause
- Increase in appetite, or loss of appetite
- Sweating or chills (in someone who is not sick)
- Jumpiness, startling easily
- Trouble sleeping

**Cognitive**
- Trouble remembering things
- Trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Confusion
- Increased worry
- Difficulty with making decisions

**Emotional**
- Anxiety or fear
- Overwhelming sadness
- Anger
- Disconnection, lack of caring
- Numbness, inability to feel joy or sadness

**Behavioral**
- Trouble sleeping, or trouble relaxing
- An increase or decrease in energy and activity levels
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or prescription medication to try to cope
- Outbursts of anger
- Trouble accepting help or helping others
- Self-isolation
Common Reactions in Children

- Children and teens have many of the same reactions as adults.
- Reactions vary by age.

Common Reactions in Children (cont.)

- Increased fear and worry
- Acting out parts of the disaster in play, sometimes again and again
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Complaints of aches and pains without a clear physical cause
- Aggressive behavior and disobedience
- Hyperactivity
- Withdrawal, stopping spending time with friends
- Poor performance at school
- Risk-taking behavior
Disaster-related Stress and Resilience

- MANY
- SOME
- FEW
Phases of Disaster

Coping with Grief

• Grief is the normal response of sorrow, heartache, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you.

Related resource: Tips for Survivors: Coping with grief after a disaster or traumatic event, https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Survivors-/SMA17-5035
National Hotlines

• The SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline is a national hotline (1-800-985-5990) and SMS (text “TalkWithUs” to 66746) service available to anyone in U.S. states and territories before, during, and after natural and human-caused disasters.

• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  — Toll-free phone: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
  — Website: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Disaster Behavioral Health Resources

https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac
or
https://store.samhsa.gov

Visit bit.ly/disasterapp to learn more.
Tip Sheets, Guides, and Pamphlets
Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS)

- Acute Interventions
- American Indian & Alaska Native Tribal-specific Resources
- Animals & Disasters
- Chemical & Biological Events
- Children & Youth
- Disaster Apps
- Disaster-related Funding Opportunities
- Disaster Responders
- Disaster-specific Resources
- Faith-based Communities & Spiritual Leaders
- Immediate Response to Drought
- Immediate Response to Tornadoes
- Languages Other Than English
- Mass Violence/Community Violence
- Military Personnel & Their Families
- Older Adults
- Online DBH Trainings
- People With Disabilities & Other Functional & Access Needs
- Public Health Resources
- Resilience & Stress Management
- Rural Populations
- Substance Use Disorders & Disasters
- Suicide & Disasters
- Women & Disasters
• **SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin**: Monthly e-newsletter with DBH resources

• **The Dialogue**: Quarterly journal of articles by DBH professionals

• **Supplemental Research Bulletin**: A biannual research summary

To subscribe, email DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov or enter your email address and select newsletter subscriptions at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USSAMHSA/subscriber/new.
Disaster Response Template Toolkit

- Printed materials
  - Brochures
  - Newsletters
  - Tip sheets
  - Postcards
- Messaging through other media
  - Blogs
  - Public service announcements
  - Websites
  - Social media

To access the Disaster Response Template Toolkit, contact SAMHSA DTAC at 1-800-308-3515 or dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov.
SAMHSA DTAC Webinars and Podcasts

- Promising Practices in DBH Planning webinar series
- Resilience podcast series
- Cultural awareness webinars

Available at https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/webinars-podcasts.
Thank you.

SAMHSA’s mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.

Disaster Technical Assistance Center

dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov
1-800-308-3515

www.samhsa.gov

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)