

# Behavioral Health is Essential To Health



Prevention Works



Treatment is Effective



People Recover



# Deployment Supports for Disaster Behavioral Health Responders

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August 2012



# Goals

- To increase awareness of the unique issues disaster behavioral health responders face.
- To provide pre-deployment guidelines to assist disaster behavioral health responders
- To provide suggestions for preparing family members of responders being deployed.
- To provide guidelines for post deployment and reintegration

# Deployment Guidelines

- Learn from the experience of others.
- Review and use the pre- and post-deployment guidelines:
  - Pre-deployment
  - In the field
  - Post-deployment

# Pre-Deployment

- How do you prepare for a disaster behavioral health deployment assignment?
- There are several considerations and planning activities for you and your families.
- Be aware and be prepared.

# Do Not Rush to a Scene

- Most importantly a deployment should be part of an organized response effort and you should be called, not self-deployed.
- Volunteers at a disaster scene unattached to an approved organization can become a burden and even a danger to responders.
- Join a disaster response agency or a team and train with them prior to an event.

# Know the Skills and the Structure

- Disaster work is NOT office-based psychodynamic trauma therapy. Skills applied in outpatient clinical treatment offices are not the same as disaster response skills.
- Train in Psychological First Aid, crisis counseling, and outreach.
- Know the Incident Command System and the National Incident Management System.

# Know Yourself

- If you are part of a response team, be prepared to respond.
- You may feel overwhelmed if the disaster has affected you directly. Consider your own emotional state.
- Make sure you are aware of how to address the situation (type of disaster) and the affected population to which you are assigned.

# Know the Environment

- Have basic supplies ready to travel with you. Consider what you may need additionally based on the specific disaster environment.
- You may be working in hazardous weather.
- You may be sleeping outside and be exposed to other uncomfortable physical conditions.
- You may lack sufficient food, water, rest, and sense of safety in certain circumstances.

# Family Awareness

- Discuss the situation with your family and let them know what to expect.
- Make sure a loved one knows where you are and how to reach you in an emergency.
- Have an agreed-upon plan to communicate with your loved ones at scheduled times on a regular basis.

# In the Field

- Know your assignment.
- Make sure you understand the mission and goals of the team with whom you are assigned to work.
- If changes happen, make sure you understand what they are.
- Check in with your assignment lead daily.
- Maintain boundaries even with the understanding of the need for flexibility.

# In the Field (cont.)

- Identify the chain of command.
- Stay out of danger or “hot” zones.
- Tolerate chaos, change, and ambiguity with good grace.
- Be respectful of the practices of others.
- Practice only within the scope of your competence.

# In the Field (cont.)

- Don't look at what you don't have to see. And don't listen to more intense or gruesome experiences than you have had yourself.
- Seek supervision.
- Participate in operational and stress debriefings even if you feel you don't need them. They will help more than you realize and will support the group cohesion process.
- Take time to say thank you and smile.

# Offsite

- Many volunteers have community organizational and management skills that are in great demand in local emergency situations.
- Consider supervising, coordinating, or managing within your local community or workplace.
- You may find yourself having to respond within your own neighborhood in the immediate aftermath of an event. Make sure to know your skill set as well as your limitations.

# Self-Care

- Supervision, debriefing, and self-care are critical in disaster work. Do not ignore them.
- Partner with your buddy.
- Move stress hormones out by breathing, walking, stretching, or light exercise.
- Stay in touch with loved ones daily and listen to their concerns.

# Post-Deployment

- When your shift has ended, go off duty and rest. Avoid following all the response activities.
- Avoid overexposure or overprocessing of events, especially with those with dissimilar exposure.
- Know when it is time for you to end your assignment. If you feel unable to complete your assignment, talk with your supervisor.
- If you've completed your tour of duty, wait before signing on again.

# Post-Deployment (cont.)

- Expect exhaustion, headaches or stomachaches, anxiety, sadness, or irritability.
- Expect sleep problems (most common effect), and employ ways to induce sleep.
- Expect reduced physical functioning sexually.
- Monitor these effects and have a medical exam if they persist after 2 weeks.

# Prepare Your Loved Ones

- Family members may need to lower their expectations of your desire and/or ability to be social at these times.
- You may need to lower your expectations of yourself as well.
- Attend to your need to have quiet time, but don't over-isolate yourself.
- Engage in activities that provide soothing comfort.

# Check Yourself

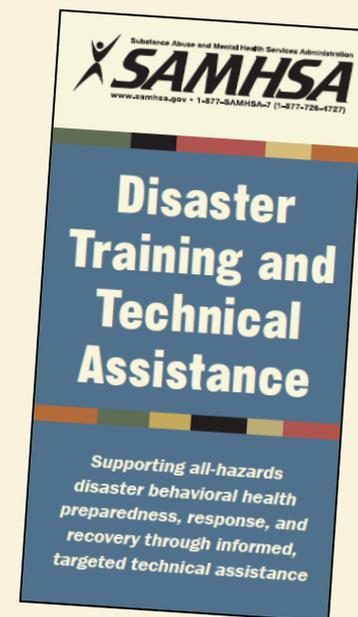
- If you have difficulty making meaning of your experience, seek a religious or spiritual guide.
- Alcohol may intensify feelings of being down, depressed, or in despair. Avoid alcohol (and mood-enhancing drugs) during and after deployment.
- Find a trusted confidant and talk.
- Use the ProQOL-V Self Assessment tool to check yourself. It's at <http://www.proqol.org>.

# Reenter the Non-Crisis World

- Know that returning to routine work will feel different from your disaster assignment.
- The immediacy and sense of mission changes.
- Remember why you chose the work you do.
- Recognize that everyone contributes in some way and we could not do without each other.
- Value all people and their work.
- Value your own work, whatever that may be.

# About SAMHSA DTAC

Established by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) supports SAMHSA's efforts to prepare States, Territories, and Tribes to deliver an effective behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse) response to disasters.



# SAMHSA DTAC Services Include . . .

- ***Consultation and trainings*** on disaster behavioral health topics including disaster preparedness and response, acute interventions, promising practices, and special populations.
- ***Dedicated training and technical assistance*** for disaster behavioral health response grants such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program.
- ***Identifying and promoting best practices*** in disaster preparedness and planning, as well as integrating disaster behavioral health within the emergency management and public health fields.

# SAMHSA DTAC Resources Include . . .

The Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS), which contains themed resources and toolkits on the following:

- Disaster behavioral health preparedness and/or response
- Specific disasters
- Specific populations

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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## SAMHSA DTAC Resources

In addition to the SAMHSA DTAC Resource Collection library, SAMHSA DTAC maintains four additional resources useful to the field of disaster behavioral health.

- [SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series](#)
- [The Dialogue](#)
- [DTAC Bulletin](#)
- [SAMHSA DTAC Discussion Board](#)
- [SAMHSA Disaster Kit](#)

### DTAC Quick Links

- » [DTAC Home](#)
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- » [Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program](#)
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### SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS)

The SAMHSA DBHIS contains themed resource collections and toolkits that are pertinent to the disaster behavioral health field. All resources for which links are provided are in the public domain or have been authorized for noncommercial use. Hardcopies of some materials may be ordered by using the publication numbers cited in bibliographies. If utilized in program materials, stakeholders should acknowledge the source of the materials.

SAMHSA DBHIS Resource Collections

- [Children and Youth](#)
- [Deployed Military Personnel and Their Families](#)
- [Disaster Specific Resources \(New!\)](#)
- [Federal Resource Collection on Disaster Behavioral Health](#)
- [Immediate Disaster Response: Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill](#)
  - + [Archives: Haiti](#)
- [Languages Other Than English \(New!\)](#)
- [Older Adults](#)
- [Pandemic Influenza](#)
- [Persons with Functional and Access Needs \(New!\)](#)
- [Public Safety Workers](#)

### Featured Resource

**Tips for Dealing With the Gulf Oil Spill:** tips for professionals, the general public and emergency response workers in dealing with the Gulf Oil Spill available in English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Arabic.

# SAMHSA DTAC e-Communications

- ***SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin***, a monthly newsletter of resources and events
- **The Dialogue**, a quarterly journal of articles written by disaster behavioral health professionals in the field
- ***SAMHSA DTAC Discussion Board***, where users can post resources and ask questions of the field

# Contact Us

For Training and Technical Assistance Inquiries:

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