A Community's Response to a Major Flood and What Worked

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In late August 2007, Findlay, Ohio, a small mid-western community of approximately 45,000 people, experienced a flood that surpassed the 100 year flood of 1913. The flood, preceded by recent minor floods and followed by several others after August, has dramatically impacted the economic and psychological health of a community often rated as one of the best small cities in which to live.

Community resources to respond to the flood were augmented by regional and national helpers who added assistance but also created more challenges for the local helpers. People who were at risk because they needed immediate help to cope with the flood were brought to the Cube, a community center that was set up for food, shelter, and mental health counseling. Data was collected about those who were there, and a summary of those most at need will be presented. There were several challenges in dealing with the specific needs of those at the Cube, particularly what to do with several sexual offenders who came there. Many lessons were learned about the specific needs of those at the Cube and will be shared with the workshop participants.

The community has begun to create a follow-up plan for dealing with the aftermath of the flood that will address issues months and even years down the road. Research has shown that psychological reactions often change over time and communities need to be sensitive to those specific mental health needs. Details of that community plan, called Hancock Cares, will be shared and can be seen as a model for post-flood assistance.