

Introduction to Disaster Mental Health

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Disasters can be natural or man-made, quick to occur, or develop over a period of time. However they happen, disasters have a great impact psychologically and emotionally on the survivors and those who provide aid to them. In a disaster, mental health professionals of all levels from community mental health centers, private practices, and even community helplines, may be asked to assist in relief and recovery operations. As professionals who may provide disaster mental health counseling to those affected, it is important to realize that disaster mental health services is a specialized field of training and has some unique concepts and concerns.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide an overview and awareness of disaster mental health issues and situations. The course will discuss the phases and impact of a disaster and also planning and preparedness issues for disasters. Other will include potential reactions of individuals with concerns related to age, cultural/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and serious and persistent mental illness. Attention will also be paid to human service and disaster relief workers. A review of the stress prevention concepts for those providing services will also be presented.

A portion of the session will be set aside for questions and responses