

Purpose

Disaster Mental Health is an integral part of American Red Cross Disaster Services. Disaster Mental Health provides:

- Psychological triage, crisis intervention, emotional support,
- Collaboration with public health authorities and mental health providers to:
 - support special needs clients
 - coordinate service delivery and provide technical assistance
- Advocacy,
- Problem solving,
- Education,
- Referrals,
- Supervision and support to Red Cross workers providing psychological first aid,
- Monitoring and alleviating organizational stress,
- Casualty support,
- Training for other disaster relief workers,
- Instrumental support (i.e., taking action in support of an individual).

Contact your local American Red Cross chapter for additional information



local chapter contact information



Disaster Mental Health



"The Red Cross is the most amazing organization I've ever known. They don't just help people with their physical needs like food and clothing; they help with everything – mentally, emotionally, spiritually."

Bill "Woody" Wood, Tornado Victim

Why Disaster Mental Health?

Disaster Mental Health personnel provide services to individuals, families and relief workers focused on basic care, support and comfort to those experiencing disaster-related stresses. An important role of mental health professionals is to connect individuals and families with community resources in addition to providing direct disaster-related services.

Mental health services focus on helping adults and children cope with the emotional and environmental impact of a disaster while recognizing the individual's developmental stage.

Mental health work in disaster settings is unique, requiring personnel to adapt their strategies and interventions to a fluid and dynamic environment. Contacts with individuals, families and other relief workers is often spontaneous, interventions are brief and contacts take place in a variety of settings within the affected community.

Disaster Mental Health personnel work alongside, support and assist Red Cross employees and volunteers, as well as other emergency responders in disasters ranging from single family fires to large natural or man-made disasters affecting hundreds or thousands.

Opportunities

You can...

Volunteer from home

- Gain experience by being on-call for Disaster Action Teams with your local chapter,
- Participate in Red Cross projects by phone or email,
- Support someone at a Disaster Relief Operation by phone.

Help within your community

- Become a community disaster mental health instructor,
- Advise a Disaster Action Team,
- Be a member of the disaster community.

Deploy to a national disaster

- Receive experience as a supervisor,
- Administer psychological first aid,
- Enjoy national networking opportunities,
- Travel to places where people urgently need your help.

You CAN make a difference!



Assignment Settings

Disaster Mental Health personnel will work primarily in three settings depending upon their expertise and level of experience. These settings include:

- **Red Cross Shelters** – Where clients affected by a disaster take temporary shelter for their daily living needs.
- **Red Cross Service Centers** – Where clients are interviewed with caseworkers for possible individual assistance.
- **Emergency Aid Stations** – Where volunteers provide psychological first aid, health education and referral information to clients.

Other possible assignments may include:

- Community outreach
- Home visits
- Hospital visits
- Disaster Action Team calls
- Staff Mental Health
- Condolence visits
- Call center