Quick Reminders for WS 2
PREPaRE Trained School Professionals

Schools play a critical role in helping to reestablish a sense of normalcy and stability for children after natural disasters. Follow these key reminders, use your PREPaRE handouts, and visit www.nasponline.org/safety-and-crisis additional resources.

Reaffirm Safety
Reaffirm both physical health and the perceptions of security, and monitor the reactions of adults around children.

Evaluate Psychological Trauma
Recognize how individuals are impacted differently, conduct psychological triage, and provide the appropriate level of support. When it comes to crisis intervention one size does NOT fit all.

Provide Interventions & Address Psychological Needs

Social Supports
Support and empower social support systems both in and outside of school.

Psychological Education
Deliver direct instruction and disseminate coping resources for students and caregivers.

Psychological Interventions
Help students understand and cope with post-crisis realities. Be careful not to engage in problem solving too soon.

Attend to Your Needs
Rotate shifts and be aware of the signs of burnout, vicarious traumatization, and caregiver fatigue. Talk to other adults, take care of your physical/mental health, avoid using drugs or alcohol to feel better.

The PREPaRE curriculum includes school safety, crisis management, and emergency response training, with a special emphasis on the role of school-based mental health professionals. Learn more at www.nasponline.org/prepare.
Quick Reminders for PREPaRE Workshop 2 Trained School Professionals

Especially for children, large-scale natural disasters can present significant coping challenges. Frightening experiences and extended disruptions to systems and functioning can cause a host of emotional reactions. Schools can play a critical role in helping reestablish a sense of normalcy and stability. Due to damage to infrastructure, “returning to school” may initially involve some form of virtual contact with the school and attempts to approximate school routines or even relocation of students to other schools. NASP’s PREPaRE curriculum provides important guidance that can promote adjustment to post disaster realities. Following are some brief reminders for people who have completed PREPaRE Workshop 2: Crisis Intervention and Recovery. You are encouraged to refer to your PREPaRE materials for further guidance and resources.

1. **Reaffirm safety.** Before beginning to address mental health, it is essential to ensure physical safety. And following large scale disasters this may mean delays in returning to school buildings. During this delay try to make contact with students and reassure them that adults are doing everything they can to make school safe. In addition, psychological safety is important (and given the frequency of hurricanes this year is particularly challenging). When attending to this aspect of the PREPaRE model remember to not make promises you can’t keep (e.g., there will be no more hurricanes). Instead direct student attention to the specific disaster warning and management systems in place that make school environments as safe as possible. Providing a historical perspective (e.g., how frequently a disaster has directly struck a particular location) might also prove helpful (but be prepared for questions about the effects of global warming). In addition, when emotions overwhelm a student make sure adult caregivers are prepared to help them manage these reactions (e.g., prompt use of relaxation techniques). Finally, strive to ensure that students are surrounded by caregivers who are in control of their emotions. Remember that especially for younger students, adult reactions are an important way in which children determine the danger presented by a given situation.

2. **Evaluate psychological trauma.** Before providing mental health interventions, you must first evaluate the degree of psychological injury. Remember recovery is the norm, reactions to crises are unique, and when it comes to crisis intervention “one size does NOT fit all.” The more directly a student was effected by a hurricane the greater the risk for psychological injury. In addition, close relationships with disaster victims, isolation, lower developmental level, preexisting mental health challenges, and the presence of caregivers who are not coping well also play a role in threat perceptions. As time progresses, and you have the opportunity to interact with students, observed crisis reactions are important to determining the level of support required. For students whose reactions do not lessen after a week or two (following the reestablishment of objective safety) you will need to consider more intensive direct mental health crisis interventions.

3. **Provide interventions and respond to psychological needs.** From the evaluation of psychological trauma consider the need to provide interventions from one or more of the three general classes of PREPaRE crisis recovery strategies: (a) reestablishing naturally occurring social supports; (b) providing psychological education; and (c) for the more traumatized students, more directive psychological interventions.
   a. **Reestablish social supports.** Support and empower naturally occurring social support systems. For early elementary students connecting with adult caregivers is critical. For older students, their peers are also important social support providers. Try to find ways for classmates to see each other and to reconnect with school staff members. Try to identify activities that the school community can participate in to reconnect.
   b. **Provide psychological education.** Provide direct instruction to students and caregivers designed to facilitate understanding of the crisis, recognition of the range of common crisis reactions, and specific strategies for coping with crisis challenges.
   c. **Provide psychological interventions.** This level of intervention involves helping a student to understand their unique crisis experience, to identify their specific coping challenges, and to identify how they can adjust to their post crisis reality. To the extent this basic problem solving assistance is insufficient, the student may need to be referred for multi-session trauma focused therapy. When considering psychological interventions, it is critical to remember that not all students are immediately ready to engage in such problem solving efforts. Simply put, some need to put more physical and psychological distance between themselves and the disaster experience. Thus, NEVER press a student to process their personal experience before they are ready.

4. **Attend to your needs!** Just like the parent has to put on their oxygen mask first during an airplane emergency, responders have to take care of themselves to support others. Get rest, eat as healthy as possible, debrief with colleagues, and talk with friends. Rotate shifts and be aware of the signs of burnout, vicarious traumatization, and caregiver fatigue.

Key PREPaRE Handouts (Available at [www.nasponline.org/prepare-safety-handouts](http://www.nasponline.org/prepare-safety-handouts))
- WS2 Handout 3: Normal Coping
- WS2 Handout 8: Warning Signs of Traumatic Stress
- WS2 Handout 9: Psychological Trauma Risk Checklist
- WS2 Handout 15: Psychological Triage Summary Sheet
- WS2 Handout 22: Stress Management Resources and Adaptive Coping Strategies

**NEW:** Student Psychoeducational Groups in School Crisis Intervention: The PREPaRE Model