Preparing for the Storm

October 5, 2016

Once again, residents of South Carolina are facing another difficult weather event. Just one year ago, many of us were watching flood waters rise in our communities. Now, residents in the coastal region prepare for Hurricane Matthew. With all of you, we are hoping that the storm will remain well off-shore.

As the storm moves through the Atlantic, we anticipate that thousands of South Carolinians will be either sheltering-in-place or facing a stressful evacuation. Our thanks go out to the elected officials, first responders, emergency response services, and transportation departments in our communities that have been preparing us for the storm to come. Likewise, we’d like to provide you all with resources that we hope will help you, your colleagues, and your students in the upcoming days and weeks.

We hope that all of you will remain safe and dry during this time. We know that as a community and as school psychologists, we will find ways to support one another in the days ahead.
**South Carolina Community Resources**

**Red Cross South Carolina**
The Red Cross is out and about throughout the state, setting up shelter and disaster relief. The Red Cross website expresses need for volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks.

**Contact Your Local Chapter**
- **Lowcountry SC** | North Charleston, SC | (843) 764-2323
- **Central SC** | Columbia, SC | 803-540-1200
- **Northern SC** | Rock Hill, SC | 803-329-6575
- **Eastern SC** | Myrtle Beach, SC | 843-477-0020
- **Upstate SC** | Greenville, SC | 864-271-8222

Follow the Red Cross on Twitter for updates

**Disaster Distress Hotline**
The Disaster Distress Helpline is a national hotline dedicated to providing year-round immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster. Call 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish) or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

**Recovery Resources**
The following disaster related guides and resources may benefit school psychologists, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the community as Hurricane Matthew approaches.

*For Hurricane Preparation and Recovery*

- [Sesame Street Workshop: Preparing for a Hurricane](#) - a printable booklet to help young children prepare for a hurricane
- [Sesame Street Workshop: After a Hurricane](#) - a printable booklet to help young children cope with events after a hurricane
- [The Great Storm and Flood Recovery Story and Activity Book (SPANISH)](#) - a resource, in English or Spanish, that helps explain storms and floods, in an interactive format
- [Helping Children After a Natural Disaster: Information for Parents and Teachers](#) - A NASP handout providing information for parents and schools following a natural disaster - information is also included regarding response to relocation
2-1-1 Community Resources

Click here for a listing of organizations providing assistance or DIAL 2-1-1 or 866-892-9211 to speak with a referral specialist. Free, confidential, 24/7, any language.

**NASP shares three tasks for crisis response team after natural disasters:**

**Identify children and youth who are high risk and plan interventions.** Risk factors are outlined in the above section on children’s reactions. Interventions may include individual counseling, small group counseling, or family therapy. From group crisis interventions and by maintaining close contact with teachers and parents, the school crisis response team can determine which students need supportive crisis intervention and counseling services. A mechanism also needs to be in place for self-referral and parental-referral of students.

**Support teachers and other school staff.** Provide staff members with information on the symptoms of children’s stress reactions and guidance on how to handle class discussions and answer children’s question. As indicated, offer to help conduct a group discussion. Reinforce that teachers should pay attention to their own needs and not feel compelled to do anything they are not comfortable doing. Suggest that administrators provide time for staff to share their feelings and reactions on a voluntary basis as well as help staff develop support groups. In addition, teachers who had property damage or personal injury to themselves or family members will need leave time to attend to their needs.

**Engage in post-disaster activities that facilitate healing.** La Greca and colleagues have developed a manual for professionals working with elementary school children following a natural disaster. Activities in this manual

---

**For Activities while Sheltering-in-Place or Evacuating**

- **Simple Activities for Children and Adolescents: Limited Supplies Needed (Daytime)** - activities that families sheltering-in-place or evacuating may use to help occupy children's minds (and hands)

- **Simple Evacuation Activities: No Supplies Needed** - activities that require no supplies to help during evacuations (or sheltering-in-place)

**For Caretakers**

- **Coping with Shelter-in-Place Emergencies** - a resource to help adults understand shelter-in-place, typical reactions to the situation, and recommendations to cope

---

We will be providing continued communication and resources in the days and weeks to come. Like you, we are proud to call South Carolina home, and we will be working to support our members, colleagues, students, and school professionals in whatever capacity is possible.
emphasize three key components supported by the empirical literature: (a) exposure to discussion of disaster-related events, (b) promotion of positive coping and problem-solving skills, and (c) strengthening of children’s friendship and peer support.