



Disaster Resources for Social Workers and Clients

Knowing what to do before, during, and after an emergency or disaster strikes is a critical part of being prepared. This document is provided as a public service to social work professionals and the general public.

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14 Beacon Street
Suite 409
Boston, MA 02108
617-227-9635
chapter@naswma.org

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If you have any changes to this Disaster Resource List, please let NASW-MA Chapter staff know at chapter@nasmwa.org or 617-227-9635.

Steps to Prepare in Case of Emergency or Disaster

Through its “Ready Campaign,” the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) educates and empowers people to take some simple steps to prepare for and respond to potential emergencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks. **Ready** asks individuals to do three key things:

- Get an emergency supply kit.
- Make a family emergency plan.
- Be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and appropriate responses.

You should have some basic supplies on hand in order to survive for at least three days if an emergency occurs. Following is a listing of some basic items that every emergency supply kit should include:

- Water: one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days for drinking and sanitation
- Food: at least a three day supply of non-perishable food
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter, or solar charger

It is important that individuals review this list and consider where they live and the unique needs of their family in order to create an emergency supply kit that will meet these needs. Individuals should also consider having at least two emergency supply kits, one full kit at home and smaller portable kits in their workplace, vehicle or other places they spend time.

To access a full list of recommended items visit

http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/checklist_1.pdf

Seeking Disaster Assistance

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross (ARC) responds to disasters, ranging from home fires that affect a single family to hurricanes that affect tens of thousands, to earthquakes that impact millions. In these events, the Red Cross provides shelter, food, health and mental health services to help families and entire communities get back on their feet.

Department of Mental Health

Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) publishes several resources guides that help consumers, families and the general public find information about DMH services and other statewide services and programs in the mental health community.

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dmh/>

One of the published resource guides by DMH, The Emergency Services Programs (ESP) Resource Guide, lists all Emergency Service Programs statewide, their location, corresponding cities and town and toll-free crisis number.

[Statewide Emergency Service Program Resource Guide \(Word\)](#)  file size 1MB

Call 2-1-1 or www.mass211.org for yourself or clients for non-emergency assistance.

Access tips for documenting [damages to your property](#) after a natural disaster.

Check eligibility for financial support from The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) at <http://www.fema.gov/do-i-qualify-assistance>

Apply for loans if you have suffered damage to business property or economic injury at <http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/loans-grants/small-business-loans/disaster-loans>

Disaster Distress Helpline Disaster Distress Helpline

The Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) is the nation's first hotline dedicated to providing disaster crisis counseling. The toll-free Helpline operates 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week. This free, confidential and multilingual, crisis support service is available via telephone (1-800-985-5990) and SMS (Text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746) to U.S. residents who are experiencing psychological distress as a result of a natural or man-made disaster, incidents of mass violence or any other disasters. Callers are connected to trained professionals from the closest crisis counseling center in the network. The helpline staff provides confidential counseling, referrals and other needed support services.

Helping Others

I. American Red Cross

The ARC has been the country's premier emergency response organization. It assists in emergencies and disasters on a state, national and international level. The ARC uses social workers along with other mental health professionals as volunteers in its Disaster Mental Health Services. ARC offers training in many Red Cross Disaster Services, including community disaster education, mass care and sheltering. To find out about training and volunteer opportunities contact your local ARC.

Massachusetts American Red Cross Chapters:

- **American Red Cross of Central and Western Massachusetts** (Berkshire County, Central MA, Pioneer Valley and Greater Westfield)

2000 Century Drive
Worcester, MA 01606
978-537-3339

- **American Red Cross of Eastern Massachusetts**

139 Main Street
Cambridge, MA 02142
(617) 274-5200

- **American Red Cross of Northeast Massachusetts**

85 Lowell St.
Peabody, MA 01960
(978) 922-2224

- **Cape Cod and Islands Chapter**

286 South Street
Hyannis, MA 02601
(508) 775-1540

If you completed American Red Cross Disaster Preparedness training and are listed as an Emergency Responder, the American Red Cross will contact you for your volunteer services. For information about taking a Disaster Preparedness course, please contact your local American Red Cross chapter.

II. Behavioral Health Disaster Responders

Behavioral Health Disaster Responders, or "crisis counselors," provide a short-term intervention with individuals and/or groups experiencing psychological reactions to a major emergency and/or disaster and its aftermath. This type of intervention is not therapy in the traditional mental health sense. Behavioral Health Disaster Responders link victims to disaster relief associations within the shortest amount of time while assessing victims for their need for counseling services. A typical intervention may include a referral to services, support, or food and shelter.

The Departments of Public Health and Mental Health, along with Boston Medical Center's Center for Multicultural Mental Health, have developed a behavioral health disaster responder (BHDR) training course and BHDR educational session.

For more information about BHDR training courses, please visit Boston Medical Center's resiliency training website: <http://66.84.18.170/~cmmhcmt/imptraining.php>.

III. MA Responds

MA Responds is an initiative to pre-register, manage, and mobilize health professional volunteers and non-health professional volunteers to help in responding to all types of emergencies and public health events. The volunteer management system is part of a nation-wide effort to make sure that public health volunteers can be quickly identified and their credentials checked so that they can be properly utilized in response to a public health event. This volunteer management system is a partnership of local Medical Reserve Corps units (MRCs), the Massachusetts System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (MSAR) and other Massachusetts volunteer organizations, coordinated administratively by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

MA Responds is looking for health care volunteers and non-health care volunteers willing to assist during a health emergency or event. These persons include **behavioral health** and **social service professionals** including psychologists, **social workers**, and counselors. Volunteers may be practicing, retired, or college students. Volunteers are provided free, introductory training online, and learn how to prepare themselves and their families during an emergency. Register online to become an MA Responds volunteer at <https://maresponds.org/>. Access the free, introductory online training at <http://www.massmed.org/cme/maresponds>.

IV. Psychological First Aid

PFA online includes a 6-hour interactive course that puts the participant in the role of a provider in a post-disaster scene. This professionally-narrated course is for individuals new to disaster response who want to learn the core goals of PFA, as well as for seasoned practitioners who want a review. It features innovative activities, video demonstrations, and mentor tips from the nation's trauma experts and survivors. PFA online also offers a Learning Community where participants can share about experiences using PFA in the field, receive guidance during times of disaster, and obtain additional resources and training. This project was funded by SAMHSA, NCPTSD, NACCHO, and HHS Office of the Surgeon General, Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps. Access this online course at <http://learn.nctsn.org/course/category.php?id=11>

V. FEMA offers this list of suggestions for people who want to help survivors and areas affected by disaster:

- **Cash** is the most efficient method of donating. Cash offers voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into

the local economy to help businesses recover. Remember, unsolicited donated goods such as used clothing, miscellaneous household items, and mixed or perishable foodstuffs require helping agencies to redirect valuable resources away from providing services to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors.

- At the national level, many voluntary-, faith- and community-based organizations are active in disasters, and are trusted ways to donate to disaster survivors. In addition to the national members, each [state has its own list of voluntary organizations active in disasters](#).
- **Give blood.** To schedule a blood donation or for more information about giving blood or platelets, visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).
- **Affiliate with existing non-profit organizations** before coming to the disaster area. Immediately following a disaster, a community can become easily overwhelmed by the amount of generous people who want to help. Contacting and affiliating with an established organization will help to ensure that you are appropriately trained to respond in the most effective way.
- **Do not self-deploy** until a need has been identified and the local community impacted has requested support. Wait until it is safe to travel to volunteer sites and opportunities have been identified. Once assigned a position, make sure you have been given an assignment and are wearing proper safety gear for the task.
- Recovery lasts a lot longer than the media attention. There will be volunteer needs for many months, often years, after the disaster - especially when the community enters the long-term recovery period.

Note: Emergency or first responders and crisis workers are at risk of experiencing **compassion fatigue**. To learn more information about compassion fatigue, and how to prevent and treat compassion fatigue visit the following websites:

- **Gift From Within-PTSD Resources for Survivors and Caregivers**
<http://www.giftfromwithin.org/html/What-is-Compassion-Fatigue-Dr-Charles-Figley.html>
- **Green Cross Academy of Traumatology**
www.greencross.org
- **Sidran Institute: Traumatic Stress Education & Advocacy**
www.sidran.org

VI. Coping with Disaster

Understand the individual effects of a disaster.

Learn more at <http://www.ready.gov/coping-with-disaster>

VII. Managing Traumatic Stress: Tips for recovering from disaster and other traumatic events <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>

VIII. Taking Care of Your Emotional Health After a Disaster

<http://www.redcross.org/find-help/disaster-recovery/recovering-emotionally>

References

American Psychological Association

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>

The American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/>

Behavioral Health Disaster Responders

<http://66.84.18.170/~cmmhcmtip/impartraining.php>

Department of Mental Health

[http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dmh/StatewideEmergencyServiceProgramResourceGuide\(Word\)](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dmh/StatewideEmergencyServiceProgramResourceGuide(Word))

Department of Public Health

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/emergency-prep/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.ready.gov/>

<http://www.fema.gov/>

Gift From Within-PTSD Resources for Survivors and Caregivers

<http://www.giftfromwithin.org/html/What-is-Compassion-Fatigue-Dr-Charles-Figley.html>

Green Cross Academy of Traumatology

www.greencross.org

MASS 2-1-1

<http://www.mass211.org/>

MA Responds

<https://maresponds.org/>

National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

<http://crisisresponse.promoteprevent.org/mentalhealth-healthproviders>

NASW-New Jersey Chapter's Disaster Response Manual

<http://www.naswnj.org/associations/5560/files/Revised%20Disaster%20Response%20Manual%20Aug%202010.pdf>

Psychological First Aid Online

<http://learn.nctsn.org/course/category.php?id=11>

Sidran Institute: Traumatic Stress Education & Advocacy
www.sidran.org

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Administration
<http://www.samhsa.gov/trauma/>

U.S. Small Business Administration
<http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/loans-grants/small-business-loans/disaster-loans>