



HOMELESS &
HOUSING
RESOURCE
CENTER

The Basics of Disaster Response Planning for Homeless Service Providers


Thursday, May 26, 2022

Disclaimer

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Today's Moderators

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Learning Objectives

- Be familiar with basic disaster planning and response resources for providers who serve homeless households and/or people with mental and/or substance use disorders
- Understand the steps programs should take now to plan for disasters
- Understand how one community and its programs have prepared for and responded to natural disasters



Disaster Planning and Response

Existing Resources

Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC)



- SAMHSA's Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) is an excellent source for disaster planning and response resources
- Many of the resources we'll discuss today can be found in the SAMHSA DTAC Bulletin from January 13, 2022

Link: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>



Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: COPING WITH RETRAUMATIZATION

Introduction

According to National Comorbidity Survey data, more than half of men and women had experienced one or more traumas over the course of their lives, with experience of a natural disaster the second most common trauma type (Kessler et al., 1999). For some, traumatic stress reactions to a new event can feel as intense as they were when the original event occurred. This is known as retraumatization. Retraumatization is reliving stress reactions experienced as a result of a traumatic event when faced with a new, similar incident. However, as the result of the passing of time many people do not realize the stress they are experiencing is related to an earlier trauma in their lives. A current experience is subconsciously associated with the original trauma, reawakening memories and reactions, which can be distressing. This type of reaction is common and survivors should realize there are steps that can be taken to manage or relieve symptoms.

This tip sheet covers signs and symptoms of retraumatization, as well as how to know if you may benefit from more help and guidance on how to manage it. The tip sheet also lists resources for support and identifies ways you can build resilience, which is your ability to tap into your skills and access the resources around you when you are going through stressful experiences.

Most survivors of a disaster or other traumatic event are able to work through their traumatic experiences, return to their regular activities, and enjoy their lives. Some people, however, experience retraumatization and could benefit from recognizing trauma symptoms, learning how to manage them, and seeking additional help as needed. If you are experiencing retraumatization and need additional help, try using some of the recommendations noted in this tip sheet, or see the Helpful Resources section of this tip sheet for information about locating a trauma-informed professional.

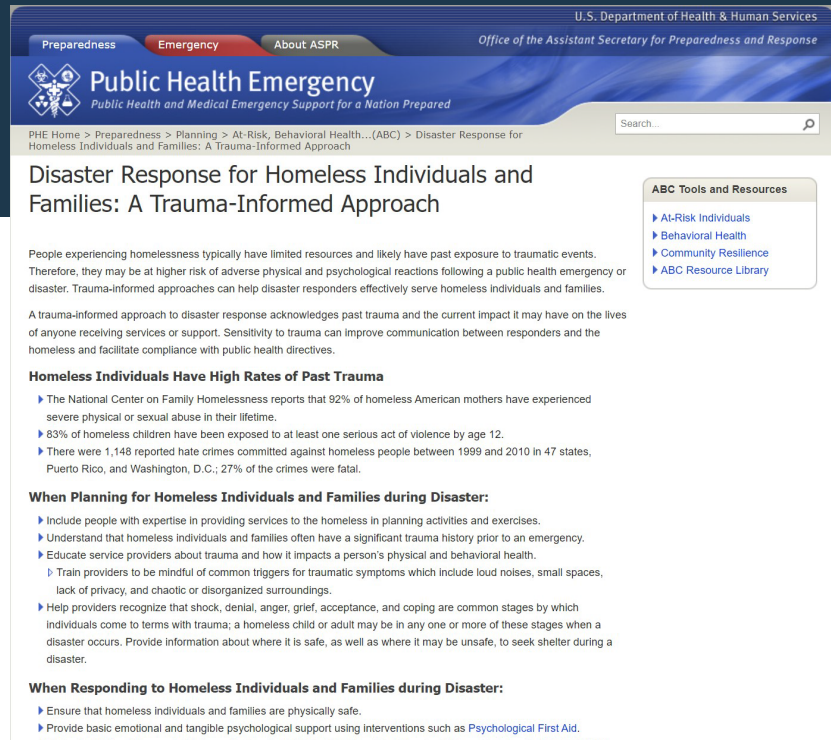


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Tips for Survivors: Coping with Retraumatization

- Helps providers identify and respond to traumatization and Retraumatization among program participants (and staff)

HHS Office of Preparedness and Response



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response

Preparedness Emergency About ASPR

Public Health Emergency
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PHE Home > Preparedness > Planning > At-Risk, Behavioral Health... (ABC) > Disaster Response for Homeless Individuals and Families: A Trauma-Informed Approach

Disaster Response for Homeless Individuals and Families: A Trauma-Informed Approach

People experiencing homelessness typically have limited resources and likely have past exposure to traumatic events. Therefore, they may be at higher risk of adverse physical and psychological reactions following a public health emergency or disaster. Trauma-informed approaches can help disaster responders effectively serve homeless individuals and families.

A trauma-informed approach to disaster response acknowledges past trauma and the current impact it may have on the lives of anyone receiving services or support. Sensitivity to trauma can improve communication between responders and the homeless and facilitate compliance with public health directives.

Homeless Individuals Have High Rates of Past Trauma

- ▶ The National Center on Family Homelessness reports that 92% of homeless American mothers have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime.
- ▶ 83% of homeless children have been exposed to at least one serious act of violence by age 12.
- ▶ There were 1,148 reported hate crimes committed against homeless people between 1999 and 2010 in 47 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C.; 27% of the crimes were fatal.

When Planning for Homeless Individuals and Families during Disaster:

- ▶ Include people with expertise in providing services to the homeless in planning activities and exercises.
- ▶ Understand that homeless individuals and families often have a significant trauma history prior to an emergency.
- ▶ Educate service providers about trauma and how it impacts a person's physical and behavioral health.
 - ▶ Train providers to be mindful of common triggers for traumatic symptoms which include loud noises, small spaces, lack of privacy, and chaotic or disorganized surroundings.
- ▶ Help providers recognize that shock, denial, anger, grief, acceptance, and coping are common stages by which individuals come to terms with trauma; a homeless child or adult may be in any one or more of these stages when a disaster occurs. Provide information about where it is safe, as well as where it may be unsafe, to seek shelter during a disaster.

When Responding to Homeless Individuals and Families during Disaster:

- ▶ Ensure that homeless individuals and families are physically safe.
- ▶ Provide basic emotional and tangible psychological support using interventions such as [Psychological First Aid](#).

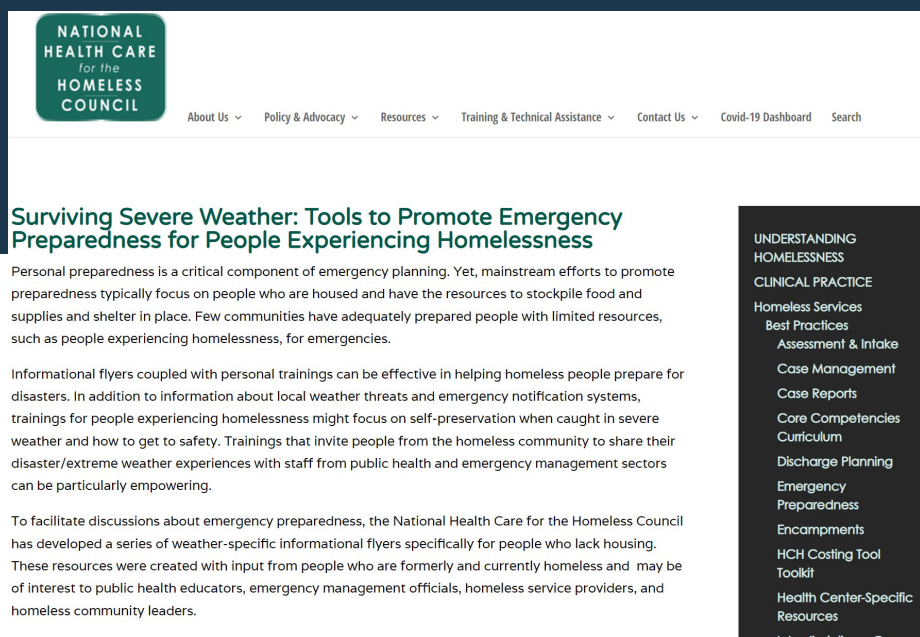
ABC Tools and Resources

- ▶ At-Risk Individuals
- ▶ Behavioral Health
- ▶ Community Resilience
- ▶ ABC Resource Library

Disaster Response for Homeless Individuals and Families: A Trauma-Informed Approach

- Includes high-level guidance on preparing for and responding to disasters specifically for programs that serve people experiencing homelessness
- Links to other planning resources provided by SAMHSA and other Federal agencies

National Healthcare for the Homeless Council



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Surviving Severe Weather: Tools to Promote Emergency Preparedness for People Experiencing Homelessness

Personal preparedness is a critical component of emergency planning. Yet, mainstream efforts to promote preparedness typically focus on people who are housed and have the resources to stockpile food and supplies and shelter in place. Few communities have adequately prepared people with limited resources, such as people experiencing homelessness, for emergencies.

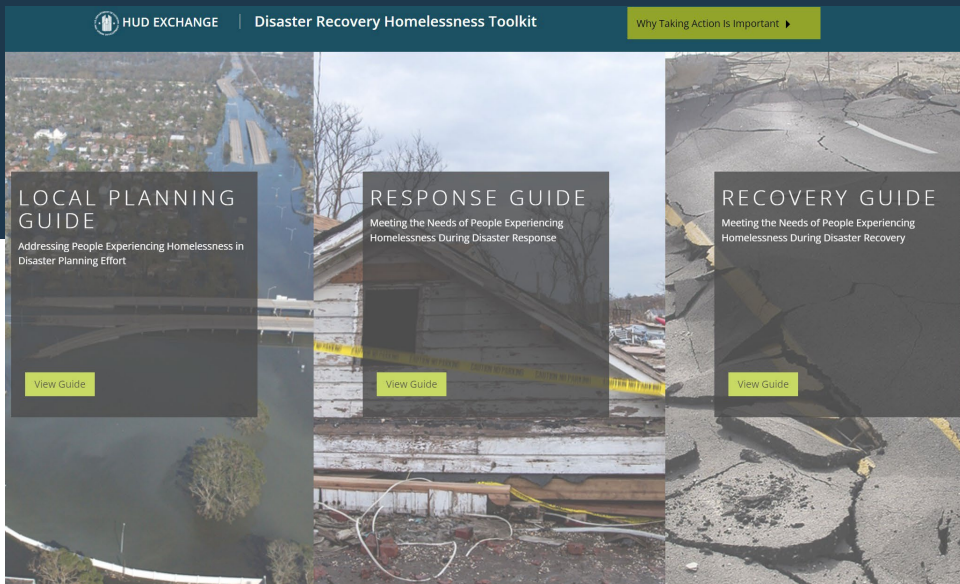
Informational flyers coupled with personal trainings can be effective in helping homeless people prepare for disasters. In addition to information about local weather threats and emergency notification systems, trainings for people experiencing homelessness might focus on self-preservation when caught in severe weather and how to get to safety. Trainings that invite people from the homeless community to share their disaster/extreme weather experiences with staff from public health and emergency management sectors can be particularly empowering.

To facilitate discussions about emergency preparedness, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council has developed a series of weather-specific informational flyers specifically for people who lack housing. These resources were created with input from people who are formerly and currently homeless and may be of interest to public health educators, emergency management officials, homeless service providers, and homeless community leaders.

- UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS
- CLINICAL PRACTICE
 - Homeless Services
 - Best Practices
 - Assessment & Intake
 - Case Management
 - Case Reports
 - Core Competencies Curriculum
 - Discharge Planning
 - Emergency Preparedness
 - Encampments
 - HCH Costing Tool Toolkit
 - Health Center-Specific Resources

Surviving Severe Weather: Tools to Promote Emergency Preparedness for People Experiencing Homelessness

- Information flyers about different types of natural disasters that can be provided to program participants
- Guidance and marketing templates for holding planning discussions with program participants



Disaster Recovery Homelessness Toolkit

- Three guides with sample documents that cover three stages: planning, response, and long-term recovery
- Very detailed guidance intended for community-wide response planning helpful for program staff and even individuals
- Upcoming slides provide an overview of the planning guide with a focus on what individual programs and providers can do to prepare for natural disasters



Disaster Planning and Response

Three sets of questions you should consider now

Find and assess disaster plans that already exist in your community



- **Is there a person, department, or unit in your jurisdiction with the responsibility for emergency preparedness?** They are your best resource
- **Does your community have a current disaster response plan?** Each level of government will likely have one (or more) plans for disaster response, called a “Multi-hazard mitigation plan” or “Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)” to conform to FEMA guidance
- **Do existing plans identify the population you serve as a vulnerable population? Do they provide specific steps for outreach, evacuation, shelter, and/or services for the population you serve?**



Understand the needs of your population

Use quantitative and/or qualitative program data to determine needs for your program participants that may be impacted by disaster:

- What services do they utilize?
- Medications or regular medical needs?
- What specialized housing or shelter may be needed if an evacuation is necessary?

Create your own written disaster response plan



- **Which of your population's needs can be met by accessing the community's existing disaster response infrastructure? I.e., evacuation transportation, shelter, etc.**
- **Which needs do you need to address outside of the community's existing disaster response infrastructure?**
- **What are the defined roles and responsibilities for your internal staff?**
If you rely on other providers, execute written agreements or MOUs and make sure all staff are aware of roles and responsibilities
- **Ensure your program participants are involved in the planning process and aware of their role in responding to the disaster**



Community Presentation/Panel

- Michael Gause, Ending Homelessness Program Manager, Sonoma County Community Development Commission
- Jennielynn Holmes, Chief Program Officer, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa



Overview

- Overview of Sonoma County and Catholic Charities' roles in disaster planning and response
- History of natural disasters in Sonoma County, CA
 - Fires
 - Floods
 - Public Safety Shutoffs
 - Pandemic

Initial Disaster Response Lessons Learned



- Role of disaster shelters and existing emergency shelters
- Closure of disaster shelters and placement
- Communication with those experiencing homelessness
- Geographic considerations
- Primary and secondary needs of those displaced by disaster
- Unique needs of those with mental and/or substance use disorders



Recovery Lessons Learned

- Recovery needs to have equity centered at its core
- Importance of long-term recovery groups
- Impact of trauma on the community

How Your Community Can Be Prepared



- Establish a Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) chapter
- Have a philanthropic plan to distribute funds beforehand
- Be engaged with local Emergency Operations Centers
- Have individual agency disaster preparedness plans



Feedback

Let us know what you'd like to see!

Feedback

HHRC is interested in providing more support around disaster planning and response. Please be sure to complete the post-session survey to help us plan for written products that could assist you!

Thank You!

SAMHSA's Homeless and Housing Resource Center provides high-quality, no-cost training for health and housing professionals in evidence-based practices that contributes to housing stability, recovery, and an end to homelessness.

Contact Us:

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