

Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990 TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746



Disaster Distress Helpline: Overview, Discussion and Q&A

Idaho Preparedness Summit • Thursday, July 31st, 2014



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Disaster Distress Helpline: Public/Private Partnership

- HHS / SAMHSA
- Link2Health Solutions:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 - Veterans Crisis Line
 - Oil Spill Distress Helpline (Oct 2010-Dec 2011)
- Link2Health Solutions is a subsidiary of MHA-NYC:
 - Here2Help Connect, New York City's Crisis Hotline & central component of FEMA Crisis Counseling Programs: Project Liberty (9/11) & Project Hope (Sandy)



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Disaster Distress Helpline: The Basics

What: A national hotline (**1-800-985-5990**) and SMS (text **'TalkWithUs'** to **66746**) service available to anyone in the U.S. states/territories before, during & after disasters that provides 24/7/365 crisis counseling and support via a network of crisis contact centers located throughout the country

Goal: To assist individuals and families experiencing emotional distress related to disaster, in order to help them move forward on the path to recovery

Also:

- **Complements existing local / state / national - I & R / crisis hotlines**
- **Multi-lingual** interpretation services in 100+ languages; live 24/7 crisis counseling in **Spanish** available via the hotline and SMS (text 'Hablanos' to 66746)
- Hotline available to all **U.S. territories**: Pacific Islands can text "TalkWithUs" or "Hablanos" to 1-206-430-1097 & Caribbean Islands to 1-212-461-4635
- TTY (1-800-846-8517) available, and texting also promoted to **deaf and hard of hearing**



Crisis
Behavioral
Health

Disaster

- Pre-Existing Crisis Behavioral Health concerns aggravated, triggered by event: depression, substance abuse, anxiety, etc.
- New Crisis Behavioral Health concerns emerge after event
- Access to care limited or prohibitive during and in the short- and long-term aftermath of event
- Special considerations for vulnerable populations, diverse groups, individuals and families with access and functional needs

= Disaster Behavioral Health

Disaster Distress Helpline: When Someone Calls or Texts ...

All crisis call center staff and volunteers answering calls and texts for the Disaster Distress Helpline are trained in Psychological First Aid and Disaster Crisis Counseling for Crisis Contact Centers:

Disaster Crisis Counseling includes:

Engage (*Establish Rapport*) → **Explore** (*Coping & Social Supports*) → **Connect** (*Resources & Referrals*) → **Conclude**

Using...

Active Listening ("I hear that you are confused and feeling overwhelmed about the evacuation orders ...")

Validation ("It's scary not being able to reach your loved ones after the storm ...")

Normalization ("Feeling angry and abandoned, even months after a disaster, is a common reaction...")

Psycho-education ("The thoughts you're having after volunteering may be what is called 'vicarious trauma' ..")

In addition, DDH-networked crisis counselors provide:

Crisis Assessment, Intervention and Referral: if a caller/texter to the Disaster Distress Helpline indicates that they are or may be in crisis, DDH-networked crisis contact center staff, interns and volunteers are trained and equipped to assess, intervene & refer.

Guiding Principles: The Disaster Distress Helpline treats every caller and texter with respect, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and empowerment. DDH services are open and affirming to all regardless of race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, sex, gender identity, ability, age, sexual orientation, economic status, faith or creed.

Why the Disaster Distress Helpline? Research

The occurrence of natural and man-made disasters has increased in the U.S and its territories by 39% over the past decade¹. The psychological impact these events have on a significant proportion of people who experience them² suggests / illustrates the need for a disaster hotline network with the capacity to provide disaster crisis counseling ... in any part of the country with immediacy.

Hobfoll, S.E., Watson, P., Bell, C.C., et. al.: "Five intervention principles that have empirical support to guide evolving intervention practices and programs following disaster and mass violence. We recommend that these practices and techniques, or their elements, should be contained within intervention and prevention efforts at the early to mid-term stages. These guidelines will be particularly important to those responsible for broader public health and emergency management. These principles are: 1) Promote sense of safety. 2) Promote calming. 3) Promote sense of self- and collective efficacy. 4) Promote connectedness. 5) Promote hope." (Psychiatry 70(4) Winter 2007 pp285-286)

1: http://www.fema.gov/news/disaster_totals_annual.fema

2: Norris, F.H., Friedman, M.J. and Watson, P.J. 60,000 Disaster Victims Speak: Part II. Summary and Implications of the Disaster Mental Health Research, Psychiatry 65(3) Fall 2002 240

Disaster Distress Helpline & FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF):

Core Principle: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL RECOVERY

A successful recovery process addresses the full range of psychological and emotional needs of the community as it recovers from the disaster through the provision of support, counseling, screening and treatment when needed. These needs range from helping individuals to handle the shock and stress associated with the disaster's impact and recovery challenges, to addressing the potential for and consequences of individuals harming themselves or others through substance, physical and emotional abuses. Successful recovery acknowledges the linkages between the recovery of individuals, families and communities.

(p.9)

Disaster Distress Helpline & the NDRF Recovery Support Function: Health and Social Services (Outcomes):

- *Encourage behavioral health systems to meet the behavioral health needs of affected individuals, response and recovery workers, and the community.*
- *Promote self-sufficiency and continuity of the health and well-being of affected individuals; particularly the needs of children, seniors, people living with disabilities whose members may have additional functional needs, people from diverse origins, people with limited English proficiency, and underserved populations.*

(Table 10, p. 54)

HHS Disaster Behavioral Health Concept of Operations (ConOps):

The HHS DBH Concept of Operations plan (CONOPS) describes the conceptual framework and coordination for U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) federal-level behavioral health preparedness, response, and recovery for disasters and public health emergencies. The plan describes how HHS prepares for the behavioral health effects of a public health and medical emergency or disaster and transitions from normal day-to-day operations to coordinated department-wide response and recovery activities.

- *Key Federal Disaster Behavioral Health Actions (p. 7 in February 2014 update)*
- *Response Assets, Resources, Technical Assistance, and Information Dissemination (p.26)*

Why the Disaster Distress Helpline? Gallup Report: DDH Unique Services

Gallup Report, September 2012:

- Provides on-the-spot counseling when most other services feature information and referral services.
- Offers texting and multiple languages.
- Is ready immediately.
- Continues to help over time.
- Can handle overflow in periods of high volume on temporary local disaster stress hotlines.
- Helps outside the immediate disaster zones.
- Provides a permanent disaster stress safety net for vulnerable populations.

Sample Caller Scenarios

(names changed for confidentiality)

- *I received a call from Rosilee w FEMA indicating that she had an individual ('Mary') in her office who was 85 y/o and was just told that FEMA would not be able to assist her with her home which was destroyed. Rosilee reported that Mary was in need of resources, and put her on the phone. Mary reported that she 'has never had to ask for help in her life and that it has been difficult'. I advised Mary that there were resources available & was able to identify the United Way in her area and provided the number. I also provided 'warm support' to Mary, who said she has two children who have been very supportive during her crisis and that her health has suffered a little (Blood pressure has gone up) but that she has been working with her doctor to manage it.*
- *Male, disabled veteran called to thank DDH for helping him with his anxiety regarding possibly experiencing his first hurricane. Caller had recently relocated to [state]. Caller having panic attacks last 3-4 days, felt scared, did not know what to do. Counselor inquired about existing coping skills. Caller identified that he focuses on small goals. Counselor affirmed skill and added that smaller goals eventually get him to bigger goals and help him to feel empowered and in control. Caller stated that he had appointment with his psychiatrist next week. Counselor encouraged caller to be specific with psychiatrist about his current level of anxiety.*

Why Texting for the DDH?

- 📱 Prevalence of mobile phones, SMS/Texting
- 📱 Study: preferred method of communication for teens, increasingly also for adults
- 📱 Growing form of outreach and engagement for other Helplines and social services
- 📱 Opportunities to reach individuals whom otherwise may go unnoticed ('hard to reach')
- 📱 Engaging individuals in circumstances when they can't make phone calls (anonymity, safety)
- 📱 Best practices in Emergency Preparedness and Response

Sample Texter Scenarios

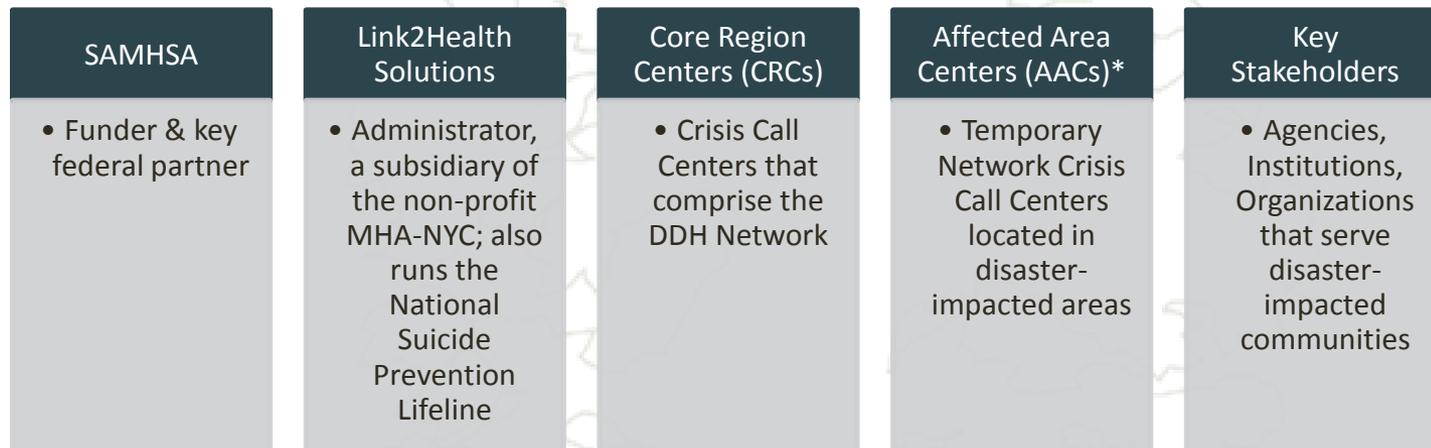
(Transcribed directly, so misspellings/grammar intentional; identifying information changed or deleted for confidentiality)

- *Things have been difficult and very stressful. I lost everything during Katrina and still deal with the emotions of that daily and now having to deal with this again and on the anniversary of it just makes things even more emotional. No one really seems to understand why I am so emotional about the situation! In Katrina I swam and our home washed away! Even where we evacuated to had 18 feet and swam to a roof top. Its just been really hard to deal with*
- *Hey, I feel stupid for texting but I'm having a panic attack and I hope someone can help.*
- *Freaking .. is what I meant to say .. I'm having panic attacks and freaking out about this hurricane coming. I just can not seem to focus and push the storm back for a bit to get myself back in control*
- *Do u think [town] will get hit hard kuz i live in a old trailer and have 3 kids so i wanted 2 know if i need 2 leave thanks*
- *I was really looking for advice about where to go. Im handling my fears fine just trying to find a safe place for me and my family. Trying to be prepared*
- *Evac from [city], daughter need dialysis, mom elderly they not getting along is driving me to tears. I want to go home! Need to talk to someone . Need help!!!*

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Disaster Distress Helpline: Key Players



Disaster Distress Helpline

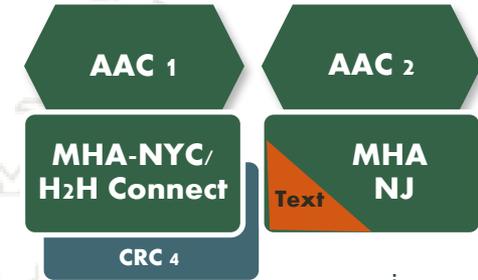
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DDH Core Region Centers

CORE REGION CENTERS (CRC'S):



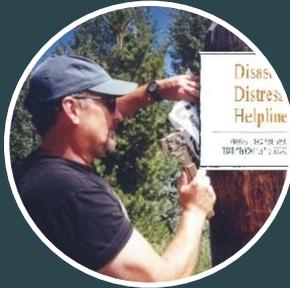
Hurricane Sandy Affected Area Centers (AAC's):



Mental Health Association in New Jersey, Inc.

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Outreach



Training



Resources



Communications



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Outreach & Training

Outreach

- Identify key stakeholders in disaster behavioral health & disaster preparedness, response & recovery
- Develop relationships
- Network & coordinate services related to disaster behavioral health throughout all phases of a disaster (preparedness, response & recovery)
- Via stakeholders, promote the DDH to disaster survivors, loved ones, first responders, rescue & recovery workers (self-care resource)
- Advocate for inclusion of disaster behavioral health needs/services

Training

- Training provided for DDH-networked 'Core Region Centers' and 'Affected Area Centers'
- Resources available for all 160+ Lifeline-networked crisis centers via the Lifeline Network Resource Center, Disaster Behavioral Health Section (launching July 2014)

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Resources

Program Literature

- DDH outreach resources (brochures, wallet cards) geared towards disaster distress risk groups and available to stakeholders for distribution; in English & Spanish; brochures have blank spaces for adaptation to promote local resources :

Línea de Ayuda
Para Los Afectados
Por Catástrofes
TELÉFONO: 1-800-985-5990
MENSAJE SMS: "Hablamos" al 66746
<http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

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Having Trouble Coping After a Disaster?
Talk With Us.

Call us:
1-800-985-5990

Text:
"TalkWithUs" to 66746

Visit:
disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

Like us on Facebook:
facebook.com/distresshelpline

Follow us on Twitter (@distressline):
twitter.com/distressline

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TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746 to get help and support for any distress that you or someone you care about may be feeling related to any disaster.

The **Helpline** and **Text Service** are:

- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, year-round
- Free (standard data/text messaging rates may apply for the texting service)
- Answered by trained crisis counselors.

TTY for Deaf / Hearing Impaired:
1-800-846-8517

Spanish-speakers:
Text "Hablamos" to 66746

ISPHC Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline

SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Ever since the tornado, I haven't been able to get a full night's sleep ..."

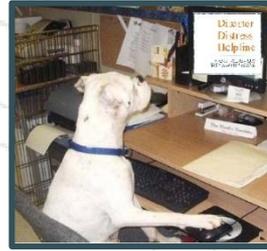
"I can't get the sounds of the gunshots out of my mind..."

"Things haven't been the same since my shop was flooded ..."

Talk With Us!

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Communications

Disaster Distress Helpline Website

- <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>
 - 🖱 Resources for providers, risk groups, general public
 - 🖱 Education & Information
 - 🖱 Updated regularly + immediately following major disasters



Social Media

-  /distresshelpline
-  @distressline

February 22, 2012
@Rebuild Tuscaloosa:
Thanks for sharing & thank
you for what you do to help
others :) It takes a team to
get through things like this.



DISCUSSION: How can DDH L2HS STAFF & Idaho Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery Stakeholders work together?

- **Promote the DDH and its local/state crisis behavioral health partners** as resources for individuals and communities served & as resources for self-care among rescue, recovery & relief workers who may be at risk for vicarious trauma, burnout, etc. related to deployments;
- After large-scale disasters, **Provide the DDH** with resources for inclusion in our crisis contact center resource databases to assist callers and texters in distress;
- **Connect through social media** before, during and after disasters to share resources, communicate with Idahoans re. behavioral health, coping, etc.; **include DDH services in press releases, blog updates, other communications as appropriate** (particularly when large-scale disasters impact multiple regions-as a reminder, after providing crisis counseling DDH always refers callers back to local services for follow-up care & support);
- **Coordinate service delivery** before, during and after disasters so that behavioral health is included in any response plans; DDH L2HS staff can also continue to participate in any Idaho Preparedness, Response & Recovery stakeholder-sponsored forums, coalitions, list-servs, etc.

Communication – Coordination – Collaboration – Cooperation (National VOAD)

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Q & A

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For more information

We're
waiting for
your call!
(Or text.)



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