

New Jersey Crisis Counselor

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Jon S. Corzine, Governor

Jennifer Velez, Commissioner

Kevin Martone, Assistant Commissioner

News for New Jersey's Disaster Mental Health Responders

From the Disaster & Terrorism Branch

Greetings from Asst. Commissioner Martone

Dear Crisis Counselor:

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These are exciting times for New Jersey's disaster mental health response system. Last fall, the first Disaster Response Crisis Counselors were recognized in a special ceremony at the PNC Arts Center in Homdel. Today, more than 500 individuals have received the DRCC credential and hundreds more are in various stages of completing the credentialing requirements.

The rigorous credentialing process ensures that those individuals, families and communities, often so vulnerable in the wake of a disaster or crisis, are served by well trained mental health responders who follow best practice models of intervention. With miles of coastline along our eastern shore, the Delaware River to the west, and numerous other natural and technological risks, as well as the ongoing threat of terrorism, New Jersey must maintain a constant state of readiness. Along with the entire community of first responders, New Jersey's Disaster Response Crisis Counselors stand ready to serve.

Quick Links...

I applaud those crisis counselors who have achieved the DRCC credential and all of you who are actively participating in the ongoing training and certification program. You are the frontline of our state and national efforts to manage the psychological and social consequences of disasters and crises. Your dedication is recognized and deeply appreciated.

- [New Jersey Disaster Mental Health Online](#)
- [Disaster Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [Personal and Family Preparedness](#)

Best regards,
Kevin Martone,
Assistant Commissioner

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News & Notes: DRCC Certification Update



The New Jersey Division of Mental Health Services-- Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB) operating within the Department of Human Services, in partnership with the Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ) and The Certification Board, Inc., began offering a certification in disaster response crisis counseling (DRCC) to its volunteer workforce in September 2006.

The DRCC certification insures uniformity of screening for competencies necessary for effective crisis counseling, as well as providing a standardized training curriculum for all mental health responders. Through collaborative relationships with county Mental Health Administrators, Office of Emergency Management, Department of Health and Senior Services, Law and Public Safety directors and other emergency response partners and stakeholders, the DTB has actively recruited professionals and paraprofessionals to be certified as part of an organized volunteer workforce. We thank our partners for their support, as this collaborative effort has resulted in a strong network of responders.

As of August 2008, 540 professionals have been awarded the Disaster Response Crisis Counselor certification. Additionally, 125 professionals are awaiting final approval at the September board review meeting, with 980 professionals currently working toward completing requirements for the certification. If all applicants complete their requirements, we will have 1,645 certificated crisis counselors by the end of the calendar year, a figure that has exceeded our expectations for this program within the initial grandfathering period.

[Read more about the certification updates...](#)

Emergency Department Trauma Support for Families



The Family Assistance and Support Team (FAST) is a training program developed to prepare Crisis Counselors to respond to emergency departments or other acute care or mortuary settings in the event of mass casualty disaster. The program was developed by the New Jersey Division

of Mental Health Services in cooperation with Morristown Memorial Hospital.

To date, 11 counselors have completed this intensive training program. FAST introduces team members to traumatic injury, life-threatening illness, acute stress and grief, emergency room and morgue protocols with an emphasis on care-of-self of the trainee. Supervision and contained setting create space for the team members to identify their own coping skills and responses to the work while enhancing their confidence and resilience. Participation in the FAST program creates an opportunity for trainees to determine if in fact the ER or acute care setting is the point in a disaster response within which they want to work.

[Learn more about FAST...](#)

Spotlight on Sussex



Home to one of the few ski areas in New Jersey, beautiful mountain vistas and the New Jersey State Fair, Sussex County features a mix of rural farmland, state and national forests and suburban development at the western extent of the New York metropolitan area.

Sussex, one of New Jersey's most scenic counties, is the fourth largest and northern most county in the state. Much of the area is still dedicated to agriculture (chiefly dairy farming) but over time, Sussex County has become primarily a "bedroom community" as most residents commute to neighboring counties (Bergen, Essex and Morris Counties) or to New York City for work. High Point, located in Sussex County, is also the highest elevation in the state at 1,803 feet above sea level. Much of the county is hilly, as the part of New Jersey most solidly within the Appalachian Mountains.

[More about Disaster Mental Health Response in Sussex County...](#)

Crisis Counselor Self-Care: Make It a Priority!



by Elaine M. Howe, MA, NCC, DRCC

For crisis counselors nothing is as rewarding as knowing that one can make a difference in assisting victims of trauma or disaster. However, while the crisis responder is trained to assist others with their anxiety issues and PTSD symptoms, what about the responder's own self care in the midst of a crisis?

While crisis responders "know the drill" about the importance of self-care in doing their jobs, it seems that this important skill set can become a low priority in the context of taking care of others first. Therefore, it seems appropriate to give a brief review of the best practices of self-care as a review.

[Read "Tips for Crisis Counselor Self-Care"...](#)

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