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DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
DISASTER AND TERRORISM BRANCH
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Winter Edition

January/February 2006

New Jersey Crisis Counselor

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**SAMSHA Webcasts
Highlight
Fundamentals of
Disaster Mental
Health**

In response to the
overwhelming need to
ready crisis counselors for

Dear Crisis Counselor:

As you may recall, in the last edition of New Jersey Crisis Counselor, Alan Kaufman recounted his many years leading New Jersey's mental health system and his pride in the work of New Jersey's disaster mental health system. Under his leadership, the New Jersey Division of Mental Health Disaster and Terrorism Branch has become an instrumental part of emergency response throughout the State and beyond. As the newly appointed Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Mental Health, I assure you that the Disaster and Terrorism Branch has my support in the crucial work we do in responding to the emotional needs of people during traumatic events.

[More from Asst. Commissioner Martone...](#)

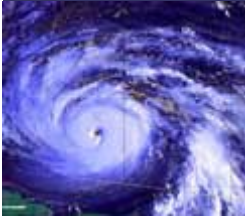
Katrina, the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration launched a Web- based training series, "Fundamentals of Disaster Planning and Response." This series was created as streaming video "Webcasts" including topics such as:

- Key Concepts in Disaster Mental Health
- Managing Your Stress in Crisis Response Work
- Psychological First Aid Approaches
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Disasters

Quick Links...

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

Mental Health Support for Katrina Evacuees



When Hurricane Katrina slammed into the gulf region cities as a Category 4 storm on August 29th, 2005, the nation held its breath. All eyes were on New Orleans, where concern had been expressed for years that the city's infrastructure could not withstand the impact of such a storm. As the nation breathed what would turn out to be a temporary sigh of relief when the city seemed to survive the direct hit from the storm, many New Orleans residents, now living in various New Jersey communities, say that they knew better. The residents of the now infamously devastated Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans were all too painfully aware of their vulnerability in that section of the city. And as events continued to unfold, their fears turned out to be well- founded.

[More about psychosocial supports for Katrina evacuees....](#)

New Jersey's Pandemic Influenza Mental Health Plan



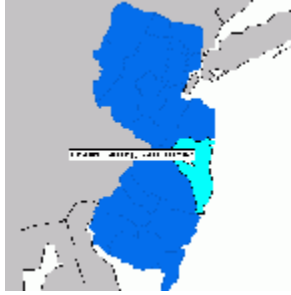
Scientists have long predicted the appearance of an influenza virus capable of killing unimaginable numbers of people. The avian flu, H5N1, has shown signs of becoming that disease.

The White House report on pandemic influenza estimates that potentially 1.9 million deaths may occur in the U.S. alone before a viable vaccine becomes available. The social and economic impact of such an outbreak would be devastating, and the psychological response would present mental health professionals with an unprecedented challenge in providing meaningful support and intervention.

Although it is believed that no state or nation is fully prepared for such an event, New Jersey has developed a robust plan for managing the psychological consequences of a pandemic. In partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services, the Division of Mental Health Services - Disaster & Terrorism Branch has developed a pandemic influenza mental health plan, and provided expert opinions on the federal Health & Human Services plan as well.

[Learn more about the role of mental health responders in New Jersey's pandemic influenza plan....](#)

Ocean County's Emergency Response Committee



States from around the nation often look to New Jersey as a model for a statewide disaster mental health system. The New Jersey system is at the same time, one of the oldest and yet most innovative programs in the country. The success of New Jersey's system is due largely to the efforts of dedicated volunteers

at the local and county level. The Ocean County Emergency Response Committee (ERC), with more than twenty years of experience, has been a critical resource to the broader response system since its inception. The following interview with Jill Perez, Ocean County's new Mental Health Administrator and coordinator of the ERC, highlights some of the achievements and challenges for the ERC over their two decades of services.

[Read more about the Ocean County ERC...](#)

Hostility and Rage Management in Disaster Counseling



Violence and civil unrest are always a possibility in the wake of any disaster. When emotions are extreme, anger and frustration are often directed at authorities and those perceived to have responsibility for the disaster or aspects of the response and recovery. These dynamics were in part responsible for fueling lawlessness and aggression in

the days after Hurricane Katrina. In communities with great socio- economic disparity, anger and frustration can be a constant undercurrent in daily life, but the increased stress resulting from a disaster can easily ignite strong emotions that are otherwise simmering below the surface. Anger is a natural response to situations in which we feel threatened, feel that harm will come to us, or believe that another person or group has deliberately wronged us. All three of these perceptions are common during the response and recovery phases of a disaster. In everyday life, anger may also result from frustration when our basic needs, desires and goals are not being met. It is foreseeable that we may lose our patience, and act impulsively, aggressively, or violently when angry. Since this risk is foreseeable, it is incumbent upon crisis counselors and their supervisors to develop strategies and systems for safely delivering disaster counseling in emotionally charged environments.

[More about counselor safety...](#)

[First 300 Mental Health Responders Complete NIMS](#)

Training



In July 2005, Acting Governor Codey signed an Executive Order mandating that all first responders receive training in the new National Incident Management

System (NIMS). This order pertained to both traditional first responders, such as police, fire and rescue personnel, and non-traditional first responders, such as clergy, public health and mental health workers. As a core component of the National Response Plan, NIMS is the structure that guides all aspects of emergency response during an emergency event. NIMS is a resource management tool that allows emergency response managers to coordinate and command all aspects of the response for emergencies of all types and all sizes. To operate in a safe and secure manner on scene, all responders, including mental health counselors, must work within the NIMS structure.

[More about the NIMS training programs...](#)

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