

New Jersey Crisis Counselor

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News for New Jersey's Disaster
Mental Health Responders

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From the Disaster & Terrorism Branch

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Commissioner Martone

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Dear Crisis Counselor:

In basic training, crisis counselors are reminded that their assistance may be needed with disasters that occur in New Jersey, and also needed in adversities occurring anywhere in the United States or out of the country that may immediately and profoundly impact New Jersey residents and families. The major, 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Haiti was indeed such a disaster.

The emotional impact, along with massive residential/building structural damage and human loss, from the earthquake is powerful and ensuing. With a large, vibrant Haitian population located throughout New Jersey, the aftershocks of that disaster ripple through Haitian families, communities and organizations with steep intensity.

Working alongside both military and federal partners at the McGuire Air Force Base (AFB), and with Haitian groups in communities and workplaces, New Jersey's Disaster Response Crisis Counselors have been at the forefront of providing support and comfort to people evacuating or having close ties to those in the quake impact zone. The need for support continues. Counselors are needed to direct their expertise and various aids toward the wide-ranging earthquake recovery effort.

The earthquake in Haiti affected millions of people. I appreciate and applaud the efforts of crisis counselors who provided assistance to people impacted by this disaster. I also encourage others to explore ways to get involved.

Your assistance can help us to continue to support people, the Haitian community and the State of New Jersey's recovery effort.

Best regards,

Kevin Martone
Deputy Commissioner

Haiti: NJ's Crisis Counselor Initial Response



On the Ground at McGuire AFB

New Jersey's Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB) immediately began assisting with mental health needs and coordinating available resources in the first days after the quake in Haiti. The quake was the worst in the region in more than 100

years.

Working in support of the New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJ DHS) and the United States (U.S.) Health and Human Services repatriation efforts happening at McGuire Air Force Base (McGuire AFB), the counselors assisted in greeting and processing evacuees moving on to different points across the U.S. The NJ DHS, along with its Division of Mental Health Services (DMHS) personnel, arrived at McGuire AFB on January 15, and then provided 24-hour coverage at the base through January 17. The personnel also were on stand-by on the 18th for additional U.S. citizen arrivals from Haiti.

NJ DHS is the lead state agency in charge of coordinating repatriation efforts. A total of eight Air Force planes carrying approximately 600 evacuees arrived at the base during the January 15 through 18 time-frames. The evacuees, ranging between three months old to 80 years old, were in fragile physical and psychological conditions.

As planes made landings at McGuire AFB, evacuees were screened by U.S. Customs and then transported to the base fitness center for food, lodging, basic medical and mental health care while arranging for plans to their final US destination. Clothing and other supplies also were made available to people. Once basic needs and travel arrangements were made, the military and NJ DHS coordinated mass transportation to Newark and

Philadelphia airports, as well as to local areas in New Jersey and New York City. The New Jersey State Police escorted military buses to the airports.

Community Response

Throughout the next days and weeks, the Disaster and Terrorism Branch (DTB) worked in partnership with faith-based and community-based organizations to identify effective ways of engaging New Jersey's Haitian community. Support and information was offered to persons affected by the quake through a series of outreach efforts offered at community centers, churches, schools and businesses.

Resource information was shared and disseminated through community organizations: the Salvation Army, Church World Service; United Methodist Church; American Red Cross; United Way and federal contacts. The DMHS brochure that outlines ways of coping with stress was translated into Haitian Creole, and then distributed to evacuees, their family and friends, along with a brochure specifically addressing repatriation stress.

DTB staff attended meetings with New Jersey for Haiti and the Coalition for Haitian American Empowerment to explore ways of supporting the community; and counselors were invited to provide services through an after school program in Union County to children who were affected by the disaster. The school-based support was provided in coordination with the Traumatic Loss Coalition.

In addition, counselors attended a fundraiser in Asbury Park through the Haitian Coalition and were invited to attend a concert to continue with outreach efforts. Several counselors also attended a candlelight vigil in Asbury Park. Nearly 30 counselors attended specialized training and orientation that included a presentation from native-born Haitians on their culture. In one instance, an employer in Morris County requested and received on-site support for the significant number of Haitians in their workforce.

It is anticipated that New Jersey DRCC's will continue to provide support in many different parts of the community as called upon, as this crisis continues to evolve. Counselors that are interested in participating with these efforts are encouraged to contact their County Mental Health Administrator to discuss such activities.

New Jersey's Haitian Family Resource Center: Counselors Wanted!



Haitian artwork brings warmth and life to the NJ Haitian Family Resource Center. Visitors are greeted by this painting by local Haitian artist, Joseph Thony Moise.

On Monday February 22, the New Jersey Department of Human Services opened the New Jersey Haitian Earthquake Family Resource Center (Resource Center) in Elizabeth. The City of Elizabeth is home to a large Haitian community and is easily accessed via mass transit. The center is located in the lower level of the Sidney Lessner Building of Union County College's Elizabeth campus at 12 West Jersey Street.

The Resource Center is providing vital services for members of the Haitian community affected by the January 12th earthquake that devastated Haiti. The quake struck 10 miles south of Port-au-Prince, the country's capital. Through the Resource Center, many support services are available to the Haitian- Americans and Haitian nationals living in New Jersey, including: interpretation services; assistance with immigration-related issues; family assistance applications; access to telephones and computers to obtain more information about those in their homeland; child custody matters; legal information; and crisis counseling.

In addition to these services, the center is providing daily, official situation reports of the current status of the relief effort in Haiti. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 10 AM to 6 PM. The information provided at the center is also available to people through a combination of telephone and web- based systems. The Resource Center will not take donations of cash or goods, but staff will direct those interested in making a donation to established Haitian relief organizations.

Upon arrival at the center, visitors meet with staff who will assess their needs and provide language interpretation, if

necessary. Visitors are then guided to the appropriate services and also asked for feedback about the services received to gauge the effectiveness of services being offered and to identify any additional needs.

The Resource Center is either directly staffed or supported by a wide range of State, Union County, and other agencies that have access to vital and reliable information. State, city and local agencies that are providing support include: New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services; New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness; American Red Cross; Salvation Army; the Emergency Management section of the New Jersey State Police Homeland Security Branch; Union County Department of Human Services; New Jersey Department of Children and Family Services; U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services; faith-based community member; NJ4Haiti; and the New Jersey Department of Human Services Office of Emergency Management and Division of Mental Health Services Disaster and Terrorism Branch.

Resource tables are also provided at the Resource Center. These tables are set with informational materials, which are available in English, Creole, and French, from a variety of sources. The information includes questions and answers pertaining to adoptions, temporary protected status, community seminars, and fraud/scam prevention. Due to confidentiality considerations, the media outlets and press will not be permitted in the center while families are present and/or receiving assistance.

Crisis counselors have been available daily since the center opened with information and resource services. Any New Jersey Disaster Response Crisis Counselor (DRCC) who wishes to help and volunteer part or all of a day is needed. DRCC's who work four or more hours at the center receive four CEU credits towards their recertification. The registration for Crisis Counseling shifts is done online and is available to you at this web site:

http://www.brownbearsww.com/freecal/DTB_Resource_Schedule.

In addition to Field Operations Supervisors from the Disaster and Terrorism Branch, three to four DRCC's are present throughout the day at the center. DRCC's can visit the online registration tool, review the schedule and sign-up for available times to work at the center in support of the Haitian earthquake response efforts. The directions to the Resource Center and information about parking are available by emailing: mhsttag@dhs.state.nj.us.

Please join the efforts that are being made towards providing support to the survivors of the Haiti earthquake, and gain valuable crisis counseling experience. Many shifts are still open, and your assistance is greatly needed and appreciated.

email: mhsttag@dhs.state.nj.us

phone: 609-984-2767

web: <http://www.disastermentalhealthnj.com>