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DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
DISASTER AND TERRORISM BRANCH
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Premiere Issue

New Jersey Crisis Counselor

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Greetings!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *New Jersey Crisis Counselor*, a bi-monthly newsletter created for New Jersey's disaster mental health responder community! This newsletter was created as a means of sharing important information about the continuing evolution of both the science and practice of disaster and trauma counseling in our State and around the nation, and to continue to expand our capacity to provide rapid and effective psycho-social support to those impacted by disasters. As the recent disaster in South East Asia reminds us, disasters can strike anywhere and at anytime. Readiness, therefore, is a responsibility we all must take seriously.

I hope that the newsletter will also help us to maintain the strong bonds that have developed during disaster responses, and to further unite us in our shared interest in assisting the victims and survivors of disasters, violence and other crisis events.

Here you will find news of new training programs, the beginning of a credentialing process for disaster mental health responders, winter survival tips for disaster outreach workers, and much more. I encourage you to forward this newsletter to your colleagues involved in all aspects of disaster response, whether they are mental health professionals or not, so that we can continue to inform the larger emergency management community of new developments within our field.

New Jersey Prepares for TopOff III



In an ongoing effort to improve the readiness of the nation's first responders, the third

congressionally mandated national exercise will be held this year in Connecticut, New Jersey, Canada and the United Kingdom. As the sponsoring entity, the U.S. Federal Government will be fully engaged in all exercise- related activities in the states and abroad.

New Jersey's disaster mental health system will play a significant role in anticipating and responding to the needs of mock victims, First Responders and the wider community during this important test.

[Find out more....](#)

Quick Links...

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

I hope that you enjoy this first issue of the *New Jersey Crisis Counselor*! Please take the time to explore the links and other interactive features, and reach out to us with comments and suggestions for future issues.

Best regards,

Alan G. Kaufman,

Director, New Jersey Division of Mental Health Services

Early Psycho-Social Support Tsunami Survivors



A Road Map for Crisis Counseling in South East Asia

Exactly one year to the day before the recent catastrophe in South East Asia, in the early morning hours of December 26, 2003, a major earthquake struck Bam, Iran, resulting in 26,000 deaths and homelessness for more than 75,000. On the morning of December 26, 2004, a major undersea earthquake occurred off the Northwest tip of Indonesia. The quake and subsequent tsunami that struck 11 countries bordering the Indian Ocean has resulted in nearly 150,000 deaths and homelessness for millions.

While a humanitarian disaster of this magnitude is difficult to fully comprehend, the lessons learned in providing early psycho-social support to the survivors of the Bam earthquake are now being used as a road map to begin the daunting task of assisting those ravaged by this event.

In Bam, and now in South East Asia, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is at the center of organizing many aspects of the overall relief effort. The Bam relief operation was the first in the history of the IFRC in which extensive psychological support was deployed immediately following a large-scale disaster. For the IFRC, this is quickly becoming a model for future disaster responses.

The IFRC is long-time supporter of "psychological first aid" as a practical approach for providing psycho-social support during the impact and immediate

post-event phases of a disaster. This model is now being introduced to crisis counselors in New Jersey to help mental health responders in delivering "phase-specific" interventions in the field. The Institute of Medicine and other academic bodies are increasingly suggesting that psychological first aid (PFA) may be the preferred model of intervention during the initial stages of a disaster, when acute fear and anxiety prevail.

You can find out more about PFA in this issue of *New Jersey Crisis Counselor* and learn more about the IRCS psychological support program by clicking on the link below.

[IRCS Psychological Support in Bam](#)

Psychological First Aid



NJ Begins New Training Program for Mental Health First Responders

Crisis counselors are often advised to have a "tool kit" of different trauma counseling and crisis intervention skills. In the professional development of crisis counselors the focus of training is most often on recognizing and addressing traumatic stress reactions. As such, counseling, debriefing and other approaches are often the appropriate tools for intervention. But when counselors have participated in bioterrorism exercises and other events that have required intervention techniques to deal with the immediate fear and anxiety of the situation, post-trauma interventions often don't seem to fit the bill. Alternative tools, such as Psychological First Aid (PFA) are now recommended to broaden the counselor's skill set and better prepare them for the challenges that face disaster mental health first responders.

[Read the Full Story...](#)

Credentialing Disaster Mental Health Responders



Pilot Credentialing Program Launched in 7 NJ Counties

Selecting, training and sustaining a disaster mental health workforce is integral to the success of any disaster mental health plan. New Jersey is one of the first states to recognize the critical importance of a focus on the disaster mental health workforce, and that recognition is now being moved a step further in development as the Division of Mental Health Services launches a pilot credentialing process. The purpose of credentialing disaster mental health workers is to assure that only the best trained and most highly skilled workers are providing critical services at each phase of disaster response.

[More About the Credentialing Process...](#)

Winter Safety for Crisis Outreach Workers



Personal Preparedness: Adapting Your "Go Kit" for Winter Emergencies

Winter weather can complicate a disaster "call-out" for all first responders, including crisis counselors. There are several steps disaster mental health responders can take now to prepare for the possibility of a winter disaster mobilization and to improve their safety for all types of winter travel.

[Learn more...](#)

Redefining Readiness



NY Academy of Medicine Explores Public Perception in Disaster Response

In September 2004, the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health at the New York Academy of Medicine released an in-depth report examining how Americans would likely react in the face of two public health crises: a

radiological dirty bomb and a smallpox outbreak. *"Redefining Readiness: Terrorism Planning Through the Eyes of the Public"* challenges some of emergency planners' assumptions about how people might respond during certain types of terrorist events. Not only does the report explore the public's reaction to these crises, it also examined who people want to talk to during and after these disasters. The results of this survey of 2,545 randomly selected households are important to emergency planners and responders alike.

[Full Story](#)