

Disaster Resilience First Aid: A Community Approach to Providing Support and Resources



Emergency Preparedness and Response
Program

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Introduction to Disaster Resilience First Aid

Disaster Resilience First Aid (RFA) is a new community resilience tool for providing basic comfort, practical support, and resources to people during and after an emergency or disaster.

Community Resilience (CR) is defined as a community's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster. Disaster RFA promotes immediate and practical actions for the recovery of individuals, families, neighborhoods and communities. Disaster RFA strategies along with other recovery efforts can help restore both community members and the overall community to an equal or improved state of health and well-being.

A community resilience approach has been used successfully by neighborhoods, community agencies, faith-based organizations and communities working together. Community resilience is most successful when a wide range of people representing their community participate.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in partnership with the Department of Mental Health have developed this tool to help individuals and communities recover as quickly as possible from an emergency, disaster or other event.

When an emergency or disaster happens, many of us want to help people recover. This Disaster RFA tool was developed for use as part of overall efforts to improve community resilience. It differs from traditional emergency preparedness strategies because it focuses on a community response and encourages people to build on their own strengths (*See Table 1 for a comparison of traditional emergency and community resilience approaches*).

Training in Disaster RFA will prepare agencies, organizations and neighbors to respond to the needs of others including linking them to services and resources that will support recovery.

Tools such as Psychological First Aid emphasize support for emotional and psychological experiences and trauma. The Disaster RFA tool includes guidance for stress-related reactions, but uses a community resilience approach to address a broader range of needs. Disaster RFA focuses on steps for community, organizations and agencies working together to provide practical support and resources.

Disaster RFA is comprised of 3 steps: Assess, Respond, Refer. These steps include immediate and practical actions that promote recovery, and can help restore community members to an equal or improved state of health and well-being.

Given the increase in disasters and emergencies including those related to extreme weather, threats of violence, environmental hazards and outbreaks of disease; the need for communities to plan and work together including providing Disaster RFA has never been more important.

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional Emergency and Community Resilience Approaches	
Traditional Emergency Preparedness Approach	Community Resilience Approach
Focuses on individual and household-oriented preparedness and response.	Emphasizes community members, agencies, faith based working together with public health, first responders and government to prepare, respond and recover.
Focuses on the need for individual and household supplies, evacuation and contact information.	Promotes the needs of the whole community including those who may need additional support.
Focuses on individual and family-household plans, check-lists, supplies and kits.	Uses community collaboration and partnership strategies to plan and identify strengths, assets and resources that can be used during an emergency and after to support recovery.
Relies on support from first responders and other government agencies.	Relies on support from neighborhood networks, community agencies, organizations, businesses, other local sectors as well as first responders and government agencies.
Focuses on individual responsibility, education and training.	Focuses on community participation, education, training, and leadership development.
Focuses on major disasters such as earthquakes, floods and fires.	Includes disasters plus a range of emergencies such as extreme heat, outbreaks of disease, threats of violence, and other issues such as pollution or crime.
Focuses on immediate needs of safety, shelter and food. Stress related-needs and reactions are often overlooked.	Promotes Disaster Resilience First Aid as part of an overall effort to improve Community Resilience. Includes support for stress-related reactions. (For more information on Community Resilience see resources at the end of this guide)

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is for groups, agencies or organizations that are interested in providing practical support during and after an emergency or disaster.

Examples of possible Disaster RFA participants include:

- Cultural and faith-based groups or organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Businesses
- Schools and child care
- Community groups
- Volunteers affiliated with a local agency, neighborhood, or community group



Individuals interested in Disaster Resilience First Aid can start by doing the following:

- Form your own volunteer group focused on emergency preparedness or resilience
- Join a group or agency such as the ones listed above
- Learn more about organizations whose regular daily mission and work include protecting or improving peoples' health and well-being

This guide can be used for group training and discussion. Working as part of a team or community is a more efficient and sustainable approach. Consider who in your community, your organization or agency might benefit from Disaster RFA training. Examples include individuals from key sectors such as faith-based organizations, child care, schools, businesses, and health care. Related tools and resources that may help you implement Disaster RFA are located the end of this guide.

Disaster Resilience First Aid Goals & Objectives

Goals

1. To help people in your community impacted by a disaster or emergency to recover more quickly.
2. To increase community awareness about the benefits of receiving Disaster RFA.
3. Community members, agencies and organizations will learn how to provide Disaster RFA.
4. Disaster RFA will become part of the communities' efforts to build emergency and disaster resilience.



Objectives

After reviewing this Disaster RFA guide, participants will be able to:

- List two benefits of receiving Disaster RFA
- Name the three steps of Disaster RFA
- Identify at least one action item under each Disaster RFA step
- Describe the different stress-related reactions specific to Disaster RFA in children, teens, adults, and older adults
- Apply the three Disaster RFA steps through the practice example scenarios

The Impact and Effects of Emergencies and Disasters

An emergency or disaster can have a wide range of impacts on people, ranging from increased stress to a loss of property or the death of a loved one.

Given the increase in disasters and emergencies including those related to extreme weather, threats of violence, environmental hazards and outbreaks of disease, the need for communities to plan and work together including providing Disaster RFA has never been more important.

Recent emergencies and crises in Los Angeles County have included:



2015 and 2014

City of Los Angeles and UCLA Water Main Breaks: flooded garages and buildings, submerged walkways and streets and daily routines were disrupted. Estimated property damage was in the tens of millions of dollars.



2014

The Wilmington Port Fire: a section of the docks was engulfed in flames and ships and employees were evacuated. Nearby schools were closed and students were relocated. Poor air quality impacted the health of the larger community.



2013

Santa Monica Community College Shooting Rampage: seven people were killed including two students. This campus as well as nearby elementary and middle schools were put on extended lockdown.



2008 and 2005

Chatsworth and Glendale train derailment: more than 30 people died and many more were injured. The response and recovery required hundreds of emergency workers and caused major service disruptions.

Many factors influence the types of support and resources people will need after an emergency or disaster. These include:

Safety of Family, Friends, Pets and Personal Belongings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being separated from family and friends • Not being able to communicate with family and friends • Missing family members or friends • Death of a family member or friend • Losing or not being able to access home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Losing or not being able to access home personal belongings • Damage to home or belongings • Losing a pet • Exposure to ongoing safety issues or risk of additional harm • No access to personal medications or necessary medical equipment

Need for Shelter and Access to Important Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to evacuate or being unable to evacuate • Lack of transportation • Losing important documents and identification • Loss of personal phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to email or computer • No access to personal banking resources including cash and credit cards • Lack of important contact information (physician, insurance, school, work)

Need for Food, Clothes, or Other Household Items	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to dietary items for vulnerable populations (infants, children, older adults) • Loss of comfort and activity items for children and adults (toys, crayons, games, books, magazines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recovery • Lack of pet supplies • Lack of cleaning equipment (shovels, trash bins, gloves, masks)

Common Stress Related Reactions to Emergencies and Disasters

During an emergency or disaster it is common for people's basic needs and stress-related reactions to be overlooked. People involved in an emergency or disaster may have one or more of the following reactions:

- Sadness
- Grief
- Fear or panic
- Difficulty listening or concentrating
- Headaches
- Shock
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Irritability and anger
- Trouble sleeping
- Problems getting along with others

Factors that will influence stress-related reactions include:

- The type of emergency or disaster, and how severe it was
- Personal and physical impact; loss, or injury
- Existing resources and social support system
- Personal physical and mental health
- Personal experience and coping skills
- Age, cultural background, and beliefs
- Access and functional needs

Activity

Read the scenario below and answer the following questions to compare the needs of different people during a disaster. Consider if you and your community are prepared to help. Please note that there are no wrong or right answers.

Wind Storm

During the winter of 2011 a severe wind storm in the San Gabriel Valley caused 55,000 customers to lose power. Many remained without electricity for several days, and did not have heat or refrigeration for their food.



Answer the following questions:

- What experiences do you think the people who lost electrical power had?
- What needs did they have?
- How do you think the loss of electrical power for several days impacted their stress level?
- How would this event impact a single mother, college student or older adult differently? What kinds of support and resources do you think might have helped these people until their power was restored?

The following is a list of examples of support and resources that can be provided through Disaster RFA:

- Providing a list of shelters
- Helping people connect to family and friends, reunification services, or search and rescue operations
- Connecting people to physical and mental health care
- Connecting people to food distribution services
- Telling people about pet care options that may be available

In Preparation to Use this Guide

It's recommended that the following activities are done by your agency, organization or group in advance. Additional resources are located the end of this guide.

- Learn about the risks, threats, emergencies or disasters in your community.
- Determine what emergency and disaster preparation, response and recovery resources are available in your community. For example, learn about organizations that provide food, water, shelter, mental health, and family reunification services.
- Share what your agency or organization can provide.
- Learn about resources to recover and rebuild personal property (including government agencies, charities and insurance).
- Make sure your neighborhood, community, agency or organization is prepared for an emergency or disaster.
- Encourage members of your agency or organization and their families to be prepared for an emergency or disaster.
- Work together with others to plan, and share resources and information.



Disaster Resilience First Aid in Three Steps

There are three steps of Disaster RFA: **Assess**, **Respond** and **Refer**. These steps include key activities that will help those providing Disaster RFA (members of organizations, community groups, and others) to determine people's needs and provide appropriate support and resources. These steps are intended to help people recover more quickly during and after an emergency or disaster.



Step One: ASSESS

In this step you will **Assess** the situation to help determine what people's needs might be, and the resources available to them. You can do this by taking the following actions:

- Assess the situation before and when your group arrives to the scene of the emergency.
- Determine if there is ongoing danger to the people around you or others in the area.
 - Don't place yourselves in danger. If necessary, move to a safe area.
 - If you can, help others get to a safe place.
- Determine the severity of the event. What types of damage or injuries have occurred? What types of responders and support are present?
- Stay informed and share as much information as possible with your group.
- Identify what information can you share and what still remains unknown.
- Find out what additional resources are available for this specific event. This includes: updated information about the incident, shelter, food and water, rescue services, help to reunite families, mental health, transportation, and other needed supplies.



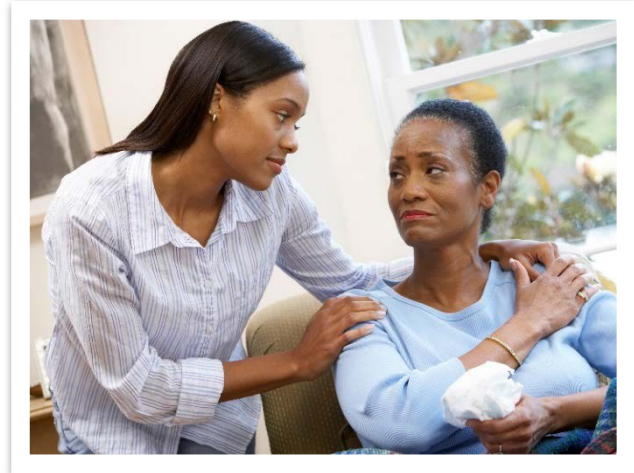
Helpful Reminders:

- Stay informed
- Make sure you have the permission of first responders and or law enforcement to be present at the scene
- Coordinate with others who are providing support and resources
- Introduce yourself and the organization you represent and ask for permission to help

Step Two: RESPOND

After you have completed step 1, you will have some of the information you need to provide more direct Disaster RFA.

In this step you will **Respond** to a person's needs, including stress-related reactions, and provide support. After an emergency people will react in many different ways. Some people, but not everyone, will need or want help. Ask how you can help. Once you have permission, you can help by taking the following actions:



- Get an understanding about their basic needs and concerns.
- Use simple words instead of technical terms when talking.
- Be aware of issues of privacy. People who are vulnerable may not be able to protect their own boundaries. If possible, work with your group to identify a safe area that provides privacy and protects their confidentiality.
- Give practical assistance and information that is accurate and up-to-date about the event.
- Address immediate needs such as giving them food, water or a blanket if it's cold.
- Ask questions to determine how the event has impacted them and what their immediate needs and concerns are.
- Help identify needs such as being able to contact a family member or locate a missing family member or friend.
- Identify their current sources of support such as family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues.
- Be respectful of people's age, culture, gender, religion and social norms.
- Listen without pressuring them to talk; allow for silence.
- Provide optimistic statements and use positive terms of support, such as "there are people here to help you" or "we will do our best to meet your needs today."
- Be honest about what you don't know and what you can or cannot do.

Step Two: RESPOND (continued)

Helpful Reminders:

- Model calm behavior, such as using a quiet tone of voice and talk slowly.
- Don't tell people to "calm down"
- Don't rush or interrupt when someone is sharing their experience
- Don't talk about your own problems; it is not helpful
- Provide reassurance but don't make promises you can't fulfill. For example, don't tell people "everything will be ok"

Note: Some people may have serious distress reactions (thoughts or expressions to hurt themselves or others). It is best to connect them to appropriate professional support (mental health providers). If professional support isn't available right away, and it appears that the person is in danger of hurting themselves or others, contact law enforcement. If you are a mandated reporter, follow your agencies mandatory reporting policies and procedures.

Step Three: REFER

Now that you've completed steps 1 and 2 you will know more about and possibly have met some of the person's basic needs.

In this step you will **Refer** the person to information, help them to prioritize needs and get them connected to resources and services.

Beyond basic comfort and support, people need resources and referrals to support their recovery. Be prepared to share your knowledge of available services, resources and support. If possible, you will directly connect them to community services

such as: mental health, health care, spiritual support, food distribution centers, shelters and other resources to help recover and rebuild personal property (including government agencies, charities and insurance).



Step Three: REFER (continued)

Only provide connections to, and resources and services from reliable, reputable and established agencies and organizations. Be aware of potential scams and fraudulent offers of support.

Helping people prioritize can empower them to act, decrease feelings of being overwhelmed, build on their strengths and sources of support, and ground them in tasks that are immediate and doable. You can do this by taking the following actions:

- Determine the person's immediate needs and concerns such as reunification with family members, children, friends and pets, food and shelter, recovery of property and transportation, and other needed supplies including prescriptions.
- Help them make and prioritize a list of their needs.
- Help them create a plan of action for the top three items on the list
- Clarify the steps they need to take first
- Provide information and links to both short-term (food, water and shelter) and long-term (rebuilding and recovering property) assistance.
- Help connect them any existing support system.

Inform any person that you have been assisting when you have completed your Disaster RFA role. Confirm they have referrals and necessary information for their next steps. Say goodbye in a positive way by wishing them well.

Helpful Reminders:

- Check-in to see that they don't withdraw from family or friends
- Encourage them to participate in community recovery efforts such as assisting those that still need help and helping to restore local services
- If you are in contact with people over time, check and see if they have new needs
- Focus on the positive and effective things a person has done; and recognize and complement their efforts

Culture, Language, and Beliefs

Los Angeles County is one of the most diverse places in the world. Many of Los Angeles County residents come from different backgrounds and bring with them unique experiences. Fifty-seven percent of people speak a language other than English at home.

After an emergency or crisis you may be helping people from a different culture, who has different beliefs or who speaks a different language.



If you are representing an organization, it will be helpful to know as much as possible about people in the community you live in or serve, including attitudes towards government agencies and openness to receiving support. Learning about customs, traditions, rituals, family structure, gender roles, and social bonds can also help you provide support that is appropriate and effective. It may be helpful if this information is gathered with the assistance of community cultural leaders who represent and know local cultural groups.

When providing Disaster RFA to diverse members of a community, it will help to do the following:

- Offer help in ways that are age-appropriate. For example, older people may have better coping skills but more physical needs than teenagers.
- Be respectful of and adapt what you do so it is in agreement with a person's culture, dress, language, gender, behavior, beliefs and religion.
- Be aware of how your own values and beliefs differ from those of the community being served. This will help to prevent bias that may impact your treatment of others.
- If possible, have interpreters available. Encourage people in your agency who speak an additional language other than English to be trained in Disaster RFA.

Access and Functional Needs Populations

During an emergency or disaster, there are people that may need additional support.

Experiencing an emergency or disaster can create additional challenges and barriers for people who have existing access and functional needs (AFN). These include but are not limited to the following:

- Challenges with vision
- Challenges with mobility
- Deaf and hard of hearing
- Single parent with small children
- Non-English speaking
- People without transportation
- Medical conditions
- People who live alone



When helping people with an access or functional need, include these practices as part of your Disaster RFA support:

- When communicating through a translator or interpreter, look at and talk to the person you are addressing, not at the translator or interpreter.
- Assist anyone who says they have a disability—even if the disability is not obvious or familiar to you.
- Ask a blind or visually impaired person if you can give them your arm to help move about in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Give information on how to access services and resources specific to any AFN they might have.
- Consider connecting the person with a protection agency or other support, to help them with both short and long-term needs.
- If possible, connect them with another person or caretaker once you complete your Disaster RFA role.

People with AFN may also need specific and immediate support with medication, oxygen and respiratory equipment, electricity-dependent equipment, and equipment for mobility.

Activity

The following practice scenarios are from a tutorial developed by the University of Minnesota, School of Public Health; please see the reference section for a link to this tool. This is an opportunity to test your knowledge and skills at applying Disaster RFA concepts.

Earthquake

Question 1: An earthquake has severely damaged parts of your local neighborhood. You and your household members are ok. Your home is ok. You are walking through your neighborhood after the earthquake.

Which is the best response?

- A. “Hi. I am _____. I've always wanted to help with disaster victims. This is new to me and I want to help you as much as I can.”
- B. “Hi. I am _____. I am checking on how people are doing. Would it be all right if we talked for a few minutes? Can I offer you a bottle of water?”
- C. “My name is _____ and I will help you with all of your problems.”



Answer: B!

When first approaching a survivor, it is important to introduce yourself as well as to ask permission to help. Focus on the survivor's needs and not on your own need to help. Avoid promising more than you will be able to provide. Offer items such as water or a blanket to help meet their immediate basic needs.

Why not A?

When first approaching someone, it is important to introduce yourself and the agency you represent as well as to ask permission to help. Focus their needs and not on your own need to help. Avoid promising more than you will be able to provide. Offer items such as water or a blanket to help meet their immediate basic needs.

Why not C?

When first approaching someone, it is important to introduce yourself as well as to ask permission to help. Focus on their needs and not on your own need to help. Avoid promising more than you will be able to provide. Offer items such as water or a blanket to help meet their immediate basic needs.

Activity

Question 2: He responds to your introduction: “Hi, sure we can talk. I am Charlie. Thanks for the water. It was a strong earthquake, but I am doing all right. My neighbors have it worse than I do. You better check on them.”

Which is the best response?

- A. “Thanks for letting me know. I'll go and check on your neighbors.”
- B. “Well, it looks like you've had some major damage and are going to need a lot of help around here too.”
- C. “Thanks for the heads up about your neighbors. Sounds like you are working on getting things back in order. If you decide you need further help or just someone to talk to, here is the phone number of my agency. Feel free to call.”

Answer: C!

Not everyone will need help or be ready to accept it. Respect their decision and leave the door open for them to access help later. Validate their resiliency and let them know about available services if they decide they need support in the future.

Why not A?

Not everyone will need help or be ready to accept it. Respect their decision and leave the door open for them to access help later. Validate their resiliency and let them know about available services if they decide they need support in the future.

Why not B?

Not everyone will need help or be ready to accept it. Respect their decision and leave the door open for them to access help later. Validate their resiliency and let them know about available services if they decide they need support in the future.

Activity

Act of Violence

Two weeks following a terrorist attack, you are staffing a Community Assistance Center. Your job is to be the first point of contact with people as they arrive. There are many resources available including disaster assistance, behavioral health services, and other community resources.

“It's been a long time since my 4-year-old sucked her thumb, but ever since the blast she's been doing it all the time. We live two blocks from where it happened and the evacuation really scared her. Do you think I should be worried?”

Which is the best response?

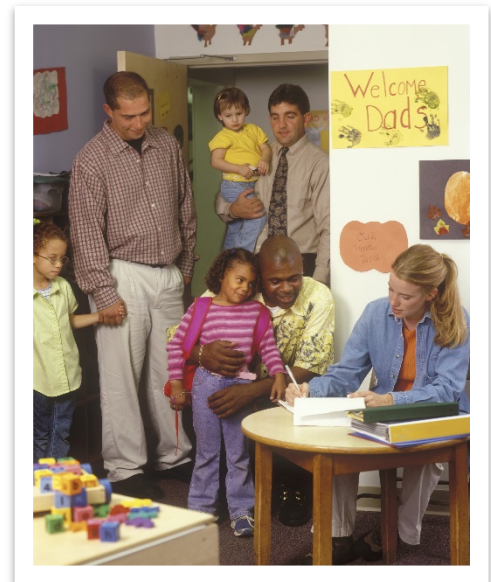
- A. “You really should discourage your daughter from sucking her thumb.”
- B. “You should talk to a Mental Health Professional regarding your child.”
- C. “After a traumatic event, it is common for children to return to behaviors they had when they were younger.”

Answer: C

Pre-school age children often regress to earlier behaviors. Listen to the parent to better understand the situation. Extra parental attention can be supportive to a child as they cope with the event, and allow the parent the opportunity to watch for other behavior changes that could indicate something more serious is occurring. If available, written materials on helping children cope with disasters could be provided.

Why not A or B?

Pre-school age children often regress to earlier behaviors, so thumb sucking does not indicate a need for a referral to a Mental Health Professional at this time.



Stress Reactions & Coping with Disaster Related Stress



Children



Teens



Adults

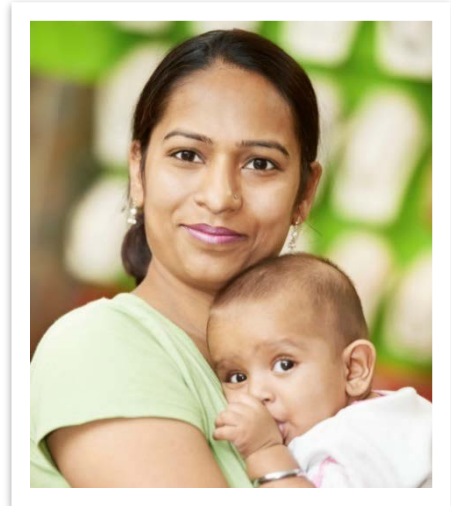


Older Adults

Stress Reactions in Children Age 0-5

Most of the reactions from children in this age group are a result of the changes in routine and environment and as a reaction to the stress of caretakers. While many are non-verbal fears and anxieties, there are no “normal” reactions; each child will have a unique response to the emergency or disaster event.

Young children may not fully understand what is happening around them and need extra time and attention from caregivers. Children cope better when they have a stable, calm adult around them.



You can support caregivers by doing the following:

- Reassure them that there are people working to get their community back in order
- Remind them that everyone in the household is doing their best to cope with the situation and children are not acting-out on purpose
- Encourage good self-care (such as getting rest, exercise and eating well) so that they are better able to take care of their children
- Help them make a plan for who would care for children if they cannot

Common Reactions from Children Age 0-5

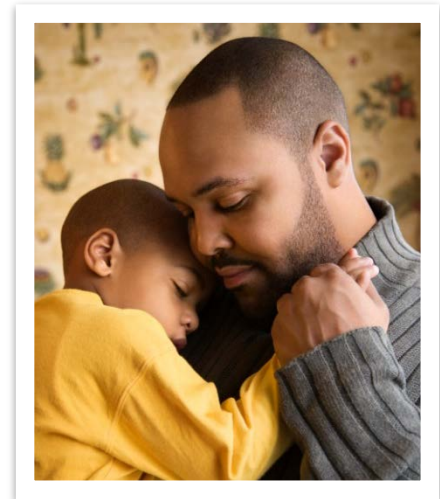
- Crying in different ways, such as whimpering, screaming, and clear cries for help
- Becoming immobile, trembling, or having frightened expressions
- Clinging to their caretaker

Return to earlier behaviors as a result of fears and anxiety, such as:

- Thumb sucking
- Bed-wetting
- Loss of bowel/bladder control

Reactions to disaster including fears and anxiety

- Sleep terrors, and/or nightmares
- Not able to sleep without a light on or someone else present
- Changes in appetite (not eating like normal)
- Sensitivity to loud noises
- Weather fears (such as lightning, rain, high winds)
- Irritability or confusion
- Sadness, especially over loss of persons or prized possessions



Suggestions for Support

- Let children talk about the trauma and ask questions
- Reassure children that it's ok to feel sad
- Do not pressure children to talk if they are not ready
- Give children simple, accurate and age-appropriate answers to their questions
- Hold them, keep them warm and safe, and give cuddles and hugs
- Keep them away from loud noises and commotion
- Keep a regular feeding and sleeping schedule
- Speak to them in a calm and soft voice
- Keep them away from TV, radio and computer stories that can remind them of the disaster

Family Reunification

If children are separated from their families or caregivers it is important to reunite them. Do not try to do this on your own. Try to connect immediately with law-enforcement or a child protection agency. *See Resources at the end of this guide.*

Stress Reactions in Children Age 6-11

Children ages 6-11 have more awareness of real danger that can impact them or their loved ones. Their reactions include fear for themselves, others and the environment. They may also have imaginary fears that seem unrelated to the emergency or disaster.

The loss of prized possessions, especially pets, is very difficult for children in this age group. The school environment and relationships with peers is central to the routine of this age group.

Children's well-being depends a lot on the stability of their caregivers. Children in this age group understand and process events based on messages they receive from caregivers. Meeting the needs of and helping caregivers to process their experiences and use positive coping is the first step in supporting children.



You can support their caregivers by doing the following:

- Reassure them that there are people working to get their community back in order
- Remind them that everyone in the household is doing their best to cope with the situation; and children are not acting out on purpose
- Encourage good self-care (such as getting rest, exercise and eating well) so that they are better able to take care of their children
- Help them make a plan for who would care for their children if they cannot

Common Reactions from Children Age 6-11

- Irritability
- Disobedience
- Depression
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Visual or hearing problems
- Changes in eating habits
- Complain of unexplainable aches and pains
- Worry about separation and loss
- Concerns and questions about why a disaster happened and if it is going to happen again

Return to earlier behaviors as a result of fears and anxiety, such as:

- Bed-wetting
- Sleep terrors and nightmares
- Sucking their thumb
- Changes in sleep (interrupted sleep, need for night light, or problems falling asleep)
- Increased crying and/or whining
- Weather fears
- Irrational fears (safety of buildings, or fears of lights in the sky)
- Excessive clinging (asking to be held or rocked)
- Startle easy (especially to noise)



Other reactions to disasters include:

- Refusal to go to school
- Behavior problems in school
- Poor school performance
- Fighting
- Withdrawal of interest
- Difficulty concentrating
- Peer problems (withdrawal from play groups, friends, and previous activities or aggressive behaviors and frequent fighting with friends or siblings)

Suggestions for Support

- Sit or squat down to the child's eye level when talking with them
- Be calm, talk softly, and be kind towards the child's feelings (fear, sadness and anxiety)
- Let children talk about the situation and ask questions; without judgment
- Help them name their feelings, worries or questions with simple words like mad, sad, scared, or worried
- Reassure them that their feelings are normal and ok
- Reassure them that it is not their fault when bad things happen
- Don't pressure them to talk if they are not ready
- Give simple, truthful, and age-appropriate answers to their questions
- Turn off TV, radio and computer stories that are repeatedly showing images or discussing the emergency or disaster
- Provide time and space for them to play and relax
- Help them to regain and keep regular routines
- Set clear rules and expectations
- Encourage and create opportunities for them to be involved in recovery effort

Stress Reactions in Teens

Teens may be vulnerable and need special support after an emergency or disaster due to disruptions to their familiar world, including changes in people, places and routines. Stress reactions can depend on their developmental stage such as ability to care for themselves, level of independence and maturity. If caregivers are overwhelmed, teens may not express their needs.



Common Reactions from Teens

- Cope like adults or like young children (pull away from parents or stay closer)
- Feel guilt and helplessness because they cannot take on adult roles to help
- May hide their feelings; might respond with “I’m ok” or remain silent
- May begin to resist authority figures or engage in risky behaviors; such as alcohol or drug use

Suggestions for Support

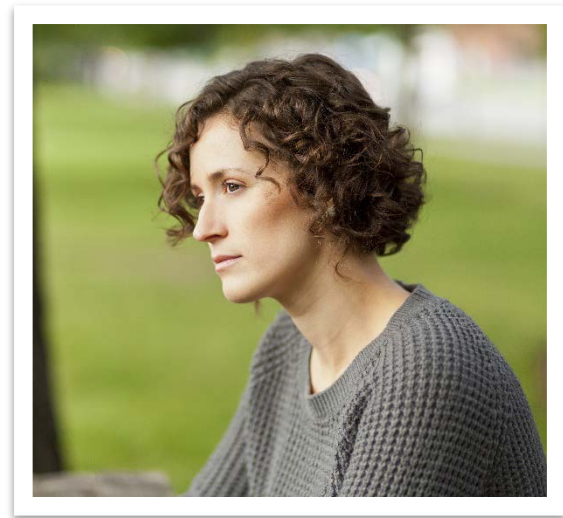
- Listen and do not judge
- Don’t “talk down to” teens and respect their ability to understand information and take direction
- Help teens keep their regular routines
- Provide facts about what happened and explain what is going on now
- Allow them to be sad and express feelings
- Don’t expect them to be tough or more mature than they are
- Encourage involvement in recovery activities and find safe ways for them to be helpful and to feel more in control
- Limit teens from watching TV, listening to radio and computer stories about the disaster over and over; it can make them feel worse
- Talk to teens about the danger of engaging in negative coping strategies; such as using drugs, alcohol or participating in high-risk sexual activities
- Provide supervision until their environment and routine are more stable

Stress Reactions in Adults

Adults who are exposed to or experience an emergency or disaster have a wide range of reactions. Reactions may be physical, emotional, and behavioral. Adults may also be responsible for the needs of others including children, parents, spouse or partner, and may need additional information and support.

Common Reactions from Adults

- Sadness
- Anger
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulty listening or concentrating
- Shock
- Panic/Fear
- Trouble sleeping
- Difficulty getting along with others
- Worry about the future
- Feeling jumpy or nervous



Suggestions for Support

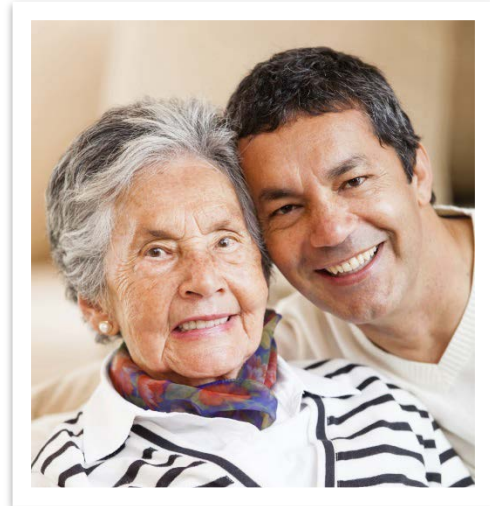
As you provide assistance and support, acknowledge their strengths and any current resources for support. Promote good self-care (resting, exercise, eating well) and discourage negative coping strategies such as alcohol, tobacco or drugs. Connect them to existing networks of support including family, friends, colleagues and faith-based organizations.

Provide the most current and accurate information available about:

- The event
 - Loved ones or others who are impacted
 - Their safety
 - Their rights
 - Their personal belongings or property
 - How to access the services and things they need
- Try to help them meet their basic needs (reunification with loved ones, food, water, shelter and sanitation).
 - Learn what specific needs they have and the people who depend on them (partner or spouse, children, parents). Assess if the need health care, clothing, or other items and connect them to available resources.
 - Ask how they've coped with difficult situations in the past, affirm their ability to cope again.
 - Make sure to meet the needs of *AFN populations and others who may need additional help. *See page 17 for a more complete list.

Stress Reactions in Older Adults

Older adults have strengths as well as vulnerabilities. They have learned good coping skills over a lifetime of dealing with difficulties but may not feel comfortable sharing their feeling or expressing their needs. Be aware if they live alone or far from their family.



Common Reactions from Older Adults

- Complain of headache, stomach ache, or other physical ailment instead of expressing their feelings
- May be scared, but too proud or ashamed to ask for help
- May be worried that if anything happens to them, no one will know
- The health of those who are dependent on others or have pre-existing physical and mental disabilities are especially vulnerable
- May experience greater-than-usual confusion, a decline in overall functioning and a disregard for self-care (eating, bathing, dressing properly and taking medication)
- May do well after an emergency or disaster; emotional resilience is an underappreciated characteristic of older age

Suggestions for Support

- Try to help to meet basic needs such as food, water, shelter and hygiene
- Determine if there are specific needs (medication, health care, or food) you can help them with
- Acknowledge their strengths and any current resources for support
- Promote good self-care (resting, exercise, eating well)
- Repeat contact; call or come by again, set-up a specific time, or connect them to an agency who can do this

What Can You Do to Take Care of Yourself?

Your well-being is important. If you have been supporting others during an emergency or disaster you must also pay attention to your own needs. It's important to participate in activities that will restore you, help you recover and make it possible for you to continue if you choose, to be a source of support.

- Make time to eat and stay hydrated; choose healthy foods and beverages
- Rest and relax; even for short periods
- Participate in physical exercise
- Check-in with fellow helpers to see how they are doing, and have them check-in with you; find ways to support each other
- Talk with friends, loved ones or other people you trust for support
- Learn to acknowledge and reflect on the positive things you did to help others, even the small ones
- Accept the limits of what you could do in the circumstances
- It may be helpful to keep a journal or document your experience
- Find books, movies or television that are relaxing
- Limit the use of alcohol, caffeine or nicotine
- If you struggle with difficult thoughts, feelings or memories, consider seeking support from a health care or mental health professional



Resources

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/ca/los-angeles>
866-GET-INFO (866-438-4636)

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

<http://www.cert-la.com/>

Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County

<http://dmh.lacounty.gov>
Manage your stress
Access Center 24/7 Helpline: (800) 854-7771

Department of Public Health, Los Angeles County

Emergency Preparedness and Response Program
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp/index.htm>
<http://www.bereadyla.org/>

Emergency Network Los Angeles

<http://enla.org/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency Citizen Corps

<http://www.citizencorps.gov>

Los Angeles County Community Disaster Resilience (LACCDR)

<http://www.laresilience.org/>

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

<http://www.mrclosangeles.org>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

<http://www.missingkids.com/home>

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