



Disaster Behavioral Health Newsletter

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention; Public Health Emergency Preparedness

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The DBH training on June 13-14 in Augusta is filled! A second training is being planned for early Fall for all wait-listed applicants.

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IS-100 & IS-700 will be offered in a single day to help complete the DBH application process in Portland on **June 27** at the Fireside Inn and in Bangor on **July 22**. Make sure to register in advance on the DBH website if you are interested in attending.

Special points of interest::

Regional Planning Meetings:

June 4—Auburn

June 7—Bangor

June 10—Portland

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REACTIONS TO TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE

As disaster behavioral health volunteers we are trained to support peoples' reactions after a devastating event. We consider the vast and varied array of emotions that results when tragedy touches lives and leaves survivors coping with loss and the difficult challenges of adjusting to a changed life. Even when we are not directly affected, disaster brings changes that lead us to consider our own vulnerability. Our lives are affected even by the sudden reminder that we may be survivors at an unknown future time. The bombings at the Boston marathon and the school shootings in Newtown, Connecticut are events that elicit strong emotional response regardless of how directly we are affected. As responders we take time to consider the perspectives that we may encounter in offering support, and what reactions might be most prevalent. Yet there are often surprises when we interact with survivors. A marathon runner spoke a week after being close to the first explosion and related her confusion at still being tearful and not being able to sleep restfully despite that fact that she knew she and her family escaped injury. "I feel guilty for my emotions," she said. "We are all okay - why am I so upset?" The validation we can offer to survivors through basic education about human reaction to a traumatic event is often an essential part of our response.



An officer who responded to Sandy Hook School spoke months later explaining that many of his colleagues were still unable to return to full duty. "They weren't prepared for how they would be impacted by what they saw—none of us were," he said. What often seems most effective in healing is our fellowship and connection with our support system. Our first exploration when working with survivors should be helping them to identify their most important supports. Assisting with connectedness and offering validation are essential response tasks, particularly when violent events and acts of terrorism

complicate emotions and add surprising reactions such as anger and guilt. When survivors cannot understand their own reactions, our ability to offer education and validation may provide the cornerstones for rebuilding and beginning the healing process.

STATE SURVEY OF PROVIDERS

AdCare Educational Institute, working on behalf of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has completed a statewide survey of service providers aimed at identifying preparedness planning gaps. Data from the survey, which was distributed to mental health providers, crisis response agencies, counseling centers, shelters and other support organizations will be discussed in three regional meetings. The ultimate goal of Identifying readiness and emergency planning needs is to bring together organizations that can share resources and begin forming coalitions to work toward more comprehensive preparedness. Throughout the healthcare system nationally, hospitals are being encouraged to form coalitions developed with the same goal of more complete preparedness planning.



DBH LEADERSHIP CHANGE

It has been a great privilege to get to know and work with the volunteers on the Maine Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team. I respect each of you and the commitment you make to support Maine citizens. I am confident that a behavioral health response and support for special populations in a time of disaster will continue to be a national priority, and that the skills we develop through this work will serve us and our communities well. I am planning to retire from full time work in July, but I hope to remain active in a response capacity and I am sure our paths will cross in the future!

Best wishes to you all,
Pam Holland

Functional Exercise

The next step in our preparation for a full scale drill, to be scheduled for later this winter, is a functional exercise. Continuing work toward our goal of a HSEEP-compliant drill, and focusing on issues identified in the tabletop exercise last October, we plan to offer a functional exercise as our annual gathering/retreat. Scott Parker, who led us through the tabletop exercise, has agreed to work on the functional exercise, which will be our last exercise before the full scale drill. **SAVE THE DATE!**

Tuesday

OCTOBER 22, 2013

HAN Update

The Health Alert Network is in the final stages of an upgrade that will improve our ability to communicate details about an alert. Equally important, it will be more 'user-friendly' so that when you sign-in, the process is simple and responding easier! You will soon hear directly from Nate Riethmann, HAN Coordinator, with instructions about getting into the new, improved system. We still plan to ask DBHRT volunteers to also register in Maine Responds, and details about that system will follow in a month or so. Maine Responds will also become our badging facility requiring each DBHRT registered volunteer to convert his/her identification badge to one with a photograph. Dual registration in HAN and Maine Responds will ensure that we have the best opportunity for expanding communication in an event. Maine Responds also offers tracking capability that will help team coordination and reporting.



From S-MRRC: It is always important to do training with exercises and real world experience if it is possible. These past few months have provided just that at SMRRC. We have completed two regional meetings in which we finalized both a Public Health and a Healthcare Regional Hazard Vulnerability Analysis (HVA). This information can be viewed at this website: http://www.smrrc.org/healthcare_HVA.htm. From the analysis at our second regional meeting, we have been developing our first Regional Response Plan. This will include critical areas of regional communications, logistics, resources and response. Many new regional partners are included in our Healthcare Coalition such as long term care facilities, medical centers, hospitals, FQHC's, EMS, public health and others. While all this training and planning was happening, we responded as a region to several emergencies including the partial evacuation of a local hospital, power and water main breaks at an important laboratory, and the state response to the terrorist bombings in Boston. Assistance with the state response required full engagement of our regional communications plan and resource updates including bed counts, blood supplies and triage medical supplies.

SMRRC continues working with partners for upcoming exercises with Southern Maine Medical Center and the Portland Jetport. We are also planning participation in the large scale drill in the fall, the Vigilant Guard, which will include the National Guard and Strategic National Stockpile events.

SMRRC hosted a Disaster Behavioral Health training course in our region several weeks ago and a Psychological First Aid course for the Maine Medical Center Emergency Response Team. We are looking forward to integrating behavioral health into future drills and exercises and we also hope to include our newly formed Cumberland County Medical Reserve Corps into future drills.

Speaking of Vigilant Guard...The Mid-Term Planning Conference recently took place and it promises to be a BIG EXERCISE! Throughout the state, emergency management offices, hospitals, clinics, state agencies, and more have plans to participate. State jurisdictions will have an opportunity to join the Guard exercise in whatever capacity they wish to be involved. Several counties plan to develop local exercise components that coincide with the state plan to exercise. The exercise is sponsored by the U.S. Northern Command in conjunction with the National Guard Bureau, to offer an opportunity to improve communication and operational relationships in a domestic operations environment. DBHRT will undoubtedly be called upon by one or more players in the exercise, so be ready! The exercise is scheduled for early November.