



Maine Disaster Behavioral Health Messages and Public Education

Response and Recovery Planning for Public Information Sharing during a Disaster and Public Health Emergency



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Promoting Trust, Cooperation & Emotional Well-Being through Risk Communications

How to use this Manual

Introduction

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) slogan for their risk communications initiative following the first 2001 anthrax attacks is established in their evidence-informed principles:

Be First. Be Right. Be Credible.

The primary goal of a disaster behavioral health response is to assist individuals in coping with the immediate psychological aftermath of the disaster, mitigate additional stress and psychological harm, and to promote the development of resilience techniques and coping strategies that individuals, responders and communities may be able to utilize throughout recovery.

What is said and how it is conveyed to key audiences by public officials, spokespersons and leaders can make a tremendous difference in building individual and community resilience and recovery. By building trust, providing realistic assurances and conveying messages of hope and recovery are critical to the emotional well-being of people impacted by the disaster or public health emergencies. Ideally, messages and information sharing promoting adaptive responses and emotional resilience must be interwoven with safety and public health communications strategies and planning. This manual focuses on mental/behavioral health oriented messages to blend into public communications as part of the state and local response and recovery efforts.

History

Natural disasters and violent attacks have combined in recent years to make Americans very much aware of the mental and emotional repercussions of exposure to traumatic events and of the importance of providing support, and when necessary, effective treatment to people who have experienced them.

A disaster and public health emergency may occur with little or no warning and may escalate rapidly, depleting the resources of any single local response organization or jurisdiction to handle. Panic is rare in disasters, but is more likely to occur if persons believe that there is no escape or limited resources. Emergency Managers need to be aware of the importance of communication to the public, particularly in instances where the public might perceive a limited availability of resources or access to treatment such as vaccines, etc. Risk communication will be essential to direct citizens to appropriate care and self-care within their own homes. In addition, both community and health care responders may witness the illness and death of

citizens, co-workers, and family members, and need to process their grief and traumatic responses.

Emergency operations centers are responsible for gathering timely, accurate, accessible and consistent intelligence during an emergency. Situation reports should create a common operating picture to establish and adjust the operational goals, priorities and strategies. During an emergency, the coordinated and verified information is disseminated through the EM Resource, WebEOC, Maine Emergency Management Joint Information Center (JIC) and/or Department of Health and Human Services Public Information Officer about the emergencies to keep the public informed about what has happened and personal protective measures that should be taken.

Purpose

The public's emotional well-being is impacted by messages that provide information about physical safety, and promote the use of natural support systems, such as families, friends, neighbors and communities which includes faith-based communities. These mental/behavioral health messages have a solid foundation in resilience. In keeping with psychological first aid principles, the key goals of these messages are to accomplish the following tasks:

- Encourage adaptive and cooperative behavior that is consistent with individual and community safety
 - a. Understand that everyone who experiences a disaster or public health emergency is affected by it in some way- stress and grief are common reactions to uncommon situations
 - b. Give people action steps to help reduce stress and promote community unity and confidence
- Provide realistic reassurance through fact-based information that counteracts rumors and normalizes strong emotional reactions
 - c. Use risk communication principles that engender trust and credibility with the audience
 - d. Seek partners and experts that increase credibility with target audiences
 - e. Select applicable messages consistent with chronology of the incident
- Reduce stress and promote self-care strategies for stress management and access to needed crisis counseling supportive services

Information sharing supports the ability to estimate people and communities at low, moderate, and high risk for mental/behavioral health impacts. The object is to promote resiliency and recovery practices and to provide information on disaster mental/behavioral health resources and programs. Messages, information and educational materials that address disaster behavioral health issues that may occur during and following a disaster are essential components of the public health messages. Messages should be available in diverse languages and accessible, with cultural and age-appropriate formats. Messages should be delivered promptly and frequently by a credible and trusted source.

Some examples of information to be shared with Joint Information Centers from the disaster behavioral health function include:

- Public health advisories pertaining to disaster mental/behavioral health
- Disaster behavioral health programs and services available
- Status of behavioral health infrastructure, i.e. facilities, providers/personnel, medication supplies, services available
- Disaster behavioral health support being provided to shelters, community centers, Family Assistance Centers, call in centers, businesses, places of worship, mental health facilities, hospitals and medical treatment clinics, points of dispensing and other facilities
- On-line resources to promote behavioral health resiliency, recovery and self-assessment with listings of community, and federal programs and services

Disaster Behavioral Health can publicize enhanced coping techniques for the general public via social media, risk communication and other messaging:

- a. Access to existing internet-based treatments specific for at risk or vulnerable populations on depression and PTSD, grief and loss, anxiety and worry
- b. Brief supportive services available to health care workers and providers
- c. Tele-health capacities such as the National Disaster Distress Helpline
- d. Linkages to community recovery advocates and mutual-help group facilitators, such as Alcohol Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous
- e. Disaster behavioral health resources, including websites, flyers, brochures and pamphlets on affected populations

Core Behavioral Health Talking Points

The core behavioral health talking points in the following charts represent universal messages that can be adapted to most incidents. The matrix provides guidance for media and risk communication efforts related to behavioral health needs of individuals and communities impacted by disasters and public health emergencies.

Core Behavioral Health Messages and Talking Points

<i>Phase</i>	<i>All Audiences/Events</i>
<p data-bbox="289 688 737 779"><i>Real or Potential Threat & Uncertainty</i></p> <p data-bbox="204 842 824 1024"><i>Communication during a period of uncertainty and unconfirmed threat should promote credibility, trust and commitment to public well-being; encourage appropriate preparations and offer realistic reassurance.</i></p> <p data-bbox="431 1152 597 1182"><u><i>Key Themes:</i></u></p> <p data-bbox="363 1232 665 1337"><i>Reassure Reduce Stress Promote Preparedness</i></p> <p data-bbox="240 1579 792 1686"><i>For more information, visit the Maine CDC Disaster Behavioral Health website at www.mainedisasterbehavioralhealth.com</i></p>	<p data-bbox="867 327 1008 357">Reassure</p> <ul data-bbox="915 373 1430 1024" style="list-style-type: none">• Experts are working to determine the nature and extent of the problem/threat and how best to protect us all. It may take time. It is common to experience worry and stress under these circumstances.• It may help to remind ourselves that information will be shared by the authorities and experts when confirmed and verified as factual:<ul data-bbox="1013 762 1430 1024" style="list-style-type: none">○ Factual information helps us take informed protective actions for ourselves and families○ Engaging in speculation or rumors can be a waste of time and resources <p data-bbox="867 1075 1081 1104">Reduce Stress</p> <ul data-bbox="915 1121 1430 1843" style="list-style-type: none">• It is normal to feel anxious and worried about the threat. To relieve stress:<ul data-bbox="1013 1236 1430 1843" style="list-style-type: none">○ Get information from trusted sources○ It is natural to want to confirm and discuss the information with adult family members to develop a plan of action○ We need to remind ourselves and others it is not helpful to guess what may happen○ Discussing your feelings can feel better as long as we don't spend all time or attention on the potential threat.

Key Themes:

*Reassure
Reduce Stress
Promote Preparedness*

*For more information, visit the Maine CDC
Disaster Behavioral Health website at
www.mainedisasterbehavioralhealth.com*

- Ask children and teens how they are feeling and provide reassurance
- Limit television exposure to help everyone feel better.
- Use print or radio to avoid exposure to frightening images
- Schedule a limited time to get information rather than leaving the television on all the time
- If you are worrying or pre-occupied a great deal of time, use the time to take action such as:
 - Volunteer
 - Prepare an emergency kit including comfort items and stress relievers
 - Update the “In case of emergencies” listing family and friend’s cell phones
- Dealing with a sustained level of threat or a series of false alarms takes an emotional toll due to built-up stress
 - Practice healthy nutrition and exercise
 - Limit caffeine and alcohol
 - Seek the support of people you enjoy to relax and spend leisure time with
 - Establish “safe zones” when you and others can banish all thoughts and worries for a period of time

Key Themes:

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Promote Preparedness

- It is common to experience worry and stress under these circumstances
- Take steps to improve preparedness in case the threat is real
- Extra precautions to protect ourselves and our families include:
 - Stay away from X location or public gatherings
 - Report any unusual activity such as...
 - Avoid handshaking and casual contact that may spread germs
 - Wear masks
 - If you were at X location during the time period of X a.m. to X p.m. on X day, contact local public health authorities at xxx and follow their guidance
 - Contact your primary care physician if you experience the following...
 - Use alcohol swipes and hand cleanser frequently
 - Stock up on supplies, such as...
- Find comfort through meaningful social contacts and support:
 - Provide support to neighbors, family members, faith-based communities and others by reaching out to others.

Event & Response

Communication during an event should promote cooperation, confidence and coping

Key Themes:

Reassure
Reduce Stress
Reconnect

- It will be important not to blame others for the threat or not taking care of us, it is important to extend a helping hand to everyone in our community.
- Identify and promote solutions and response to the threat that are fair and equitable
- If the stress and worry interfere with your home or work life, ask for help. Many work places have Employee Assistance Programs, or call your primary care physician for a referral.
- Access the 24/7 Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112 for referrals to community behavioral health agencies

Reassure

- None of us is untouched by this...and the losses we have experienced in____.
- We are all concerned and want to extend our hands and hearts to those in need at this difficult time.
- For their safety and ours, emergency medical providers must act quickly in emergency situations:
 - Trust and follow their direction. Our lives may depend on it.
 - Generally people respond appropriately during an emergency
 - Many respond heroically
 - Some may become stronger due to their experiences

For more information, visit the Maine Disaster Behavioral Health website at www.mainedisasterbehavioralhealth.com

- Be prepared for uncertainty and limited information during the earliest phase of this incident.
 - Reliable information calms fears and assists us all in making informed decisions
 - Available information may seem complex and confusing
 - Under stress, it may be more difficult to process information. Review key facts as needed.
 - Rumors are common in fast-moving emergency events, check information through credible sources
 - Do not waste time, energy and concern on misinformation
- Mandatory evacuations may occur, some with little warning. The physical health and safety of families and communities is the main goal.
- Stress may be caused due to:
 - Deciding what to do and what to leave
 - Clogged evacuation routes or poor public transportation
 - Temporary housing in public shelters, motel/hotels or private homes with friends/family members for extended periods under less than ideal conditions.

Reduce Stress

- The Maine CDC Disaster Behavioral Health program coordinates the FEMA crisis counseling program to

ensure access to a variety of behavioral health services.

- Crisis counseling services will become available after a large scale, federally declared event to those impacted by the incident.
- Seek professional help if experiencing:
 - Isolation and social withdrawal
 - Mood swings or sadness that interferes with daily life
 - Intrusive thoughts or images
 - Drinking or drug use that interferes with work or family life
 - Family conflict or domestic violence
- Stress and emotional reactions are normal responses to emergency events
 - Grief reactions are common when we face losses including material, financial or changes in lifestyles
 - Feelings of denial, sadness, crying, irritability and anger may occur
 - Family and friends may experience the stages of grief differently based on age, life skills, gender and culture. Be patient.
 - People who experienced previous traumas in their lives may be especially vulnerable
- Stress causes our brains and bodies to react in ways that make it hard to think through decisions as carefully

- When feeling overwhelmed, it makes it harder to make decisions
- It is okay to postpone large decisions
- Stress and anxiety can show up as physical symptoms and illness
- Many people find comfort in their faith community for coping and guidance following a traumatic event
- In emergency situations, helpful coping skills include:
 - Keep normal healthy routines and practice self-care
 - Talk to and be with family and friends
 - Get adequate sleep, exercise, meditation or prayer, and relaxation
 - Enjoy hobbies and social activities
 - Write down thoughts and feelings in a journal
 - Limit caffeine, and avoid alcohol and recreational drugs
 - Use activities that worked in the past when facing difficult challenges
- Repeated exposure to tragic and disturbing events can be harmful. Lower risk by:
 - Reduce time spent with media coverage, especially TV and internet
 - Avoid un-necessary or frequent trips to the event location until the area is safe, and you feel emotionally prepared
 - Limit conversations about

*Recovery
Communications during a period of
recovery should promote optimism, help-
seeking, and access to recovery resources
and services.*

the event

Reconnect

- Make a positive difference by volunteering or acting responsibly as a citizen in the community. (Enter one activity specific to the event):
 - Go to X location to help sandbag or pick up trash
 - Give Blood
 - Reach out to others, such as neighbors, seniors and people with disabilities to offer support
- If families are separated:
 - Get in touch with out of state contacts for family check-in
 - Contact agencies, such as Red Cross, for assistance in locating/reuniting with family

Re-Establish Roles

- The best self-help is to re-establish meaningful routines and coping skills through:
 - Family and school routines
 - Nurture relationships
 - Stress Management, i.e. exercise, relaxation, journals
 - Participate in community meetings regarding financial, legal and tax, business and emotional assistance

Key Themes:

*Re-Establish Roles
Foster Emotional Resilience
Commemorate*

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Behavioral Health website at
www.mainedisasterbehavioralhealth.com*

- Balance between work and personal needs
- Families, neighbors, and businesses may relocate due to the incident
 - Reduced access to social supports can be difficult
 - Keep connected to relatives, friends, co-workers through e-mail, weblogs, telephone and other communications
- Buyers beware! Sometimes, people can take advantage of others amid the confusion of the event. Con artists may:
 - Offer goods/services at higher prices
 - May fail to deliver purchased goods/services
 - May provide substandard goods/services
- Only do business with reputable businesses
- Use Better Business and FEMA Hotlines and report complaints

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Healing takes time. Expect setbacks and give yourself time to return to a “new normal”
- Watch for signs that we may need additional help of a professional:
 - Isolation and withdrawal
 - Mood swings or sadness that interfere with daily life
 - Thoughts of self-harm
 - Intrusive thoughts or images
 - Drinking or drug use that interferes with work/family
 - Holding onto blame and anger
- Encourage friends and family to tell

us if they are worried about us or if they are worried about their own reactions and feelings

- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and recreational drugs since they can interfere with coping abilities
- Most people recover with natural supports and no special assistance
- Accept help from community programs and resources
- Participate in community activities, i.e. CERT, faith-based initiatives, etc.
- Support groups can facilitate the recovery journey
- For some people, it may be six months, one or two years after the event, before they ask for help. It is never too late to ask for help!
- Remember FEMA crisis counseling services are free and confidential

Commemorate

- Symbols and rituals are important tools for coping and recovering after an event
 - Memorial and commemorative activities can be helpful to individual and community recovery
 - Faith-based activities and counseling are important as people struggle with powerful spiritual questions
 - Some activities may be comforting and healing
 - Different cultures use different customs, rituals for grief, hope and recovery
- The event may alter community traditions and cultural patterns depending on where the impact

occurred and what groups were affected:

- Focus on honoring the culture and memories while building new traditions
- Encourage and respect involvement and ideas from all members
- Promote community consensus and resilience
- Establish ways to make the community feel safer while honoring those who were injured or killed
- Contribute to charitable or memorial funds for victims and their families
- Patronize local businesses that contributed to the recovery or were economically impacted by the event
- Offer thanks to those who have helped is important. The simple act of expressing and receiving thanks is important for our well-being and emotional recovery
- It is normal that anniversary dates, holidays, media accounts of similar events, and other reminders can trigger stress and cause use to re-experience the incident.
- To help a community heal, rebuild and recover:
 - Recognize that the rest of the world will move forward while affected communities rebuild and recover
 - Remember the media, disaster response agencies and volunteers will eventually leave for other assignments. There is hope



and strength in what we have learned together from the experience.

- Get the help you need without shame or embarrassment; we can move forward stronger, together

Event –Specific Behavioral Health Talking Points

The following information identifies some unique and specific talking points that are relevant to types of disasters or public health emergencies. These messages can supplement the core talking points.



Bio event/Infectious Disease Outbreak

Real or Potential Threat

Reassure and Reduce Stress

- Be prepared for uncertainty during periods of alert. It is reassuring to know that the best scientists and medical experts are working diligently to provide the public with reliable scientific information to protect us all.
- It may take some time for authorities to determine whether an illness is naturally occurring or an epidemic is taking place, or if a terrorist has released a biological agent
- Seek health information from the experts, U.S. CDC and Maine CDC, with the most current information on the threat

Promote Preparedness

- It is OK to take extra precautions to protect ourselves and our families. Until we know more, we may wish to: (Give specific examples appropriate to the situation):
 - Stay away from large public gatherings or venues
 - Avoid handshaking and other casual contact that may spread germs
 - Wear masks
 - Avoid traveling to areas impacted by the event
 - For example: “If you were at X location during the time period of X to X on X day, contact local authorities at XXX and follow their guidance”
 - Use alcohol swipes and hand cleanser frequently
 - Stock up on supplies such as...

Event & Response

Empowerment & Confidence

- You may have to listen or read information several times to understand what is happening or how to minimize risk of exposure for your family.
 - Under stress, it is more difficult to take in information
 - The information may be complex and unfamiliar to us
- Good information is one of the best antidotes for fear
 - Maintain connections by phone, email, or other safe communication means
 - Gather information from trusted sources and use it to make informed decisions
- Practice self-care strategies that help us stay healthy emotionally and physically.
 - Respond to fear with positive protective action
 - Take reasonable steps to protect ourselves and our family from the illness but maintain normal routines as much as possible
 - Reassurance and positive attitudes are strong resilience factors that help emotionally and benefit our immunity to disease
- Don't let worries about getting sick be a barrier to staying well
 - Make time to eat properly, exercise and rest
 - Schedule time to do enjoyable things, such as hobbies and social activities
 - Care for yourself, even having fun will help you stay balanced and enable you to better deal with stressful times
 - Public Health authorities may be the best source of information during public health emergencies rather than your primary care physicians

Coping and Emotional Support

- Clear, consistent medical information and care is an important emotional support during a public health emergency
 - Listen carefully for guidance from local, state and federal public health and homeland security authorities
 - Immediately follow their guidance, especially related to seeking healthcare. It will be very detailed information about what people should do based on their exposure, health status, and the seriousness and how contagious is the disease
 - It may be safer to stay home, if instructed, than to go to hospitals and emergency rooms
 - If large numbers of people rush to the emergency rooms, contagious disease can spread faster and we may un-necessarily expose ourselves and others to risk

- Remember some diseases are not contagious and do not spread human to human
- If a contagious disease is the cause of the health emergency, it may be best to seek individual guidance and advice by telephone as a way to prevent further spread of the disease.
 - Hotlines to get information about medical issues will be set up but may be overwhelmed with callers. Be patient.
 - Hotlines for emotional and behavioral health will also be activated
 - Internet resources and email may also be an option to get additional information from legitimate authorities, i.e. www.cdc.gov
- If we or a family member are exposed to the illness, and do not wish to further expose others, we should discuss options with a healthcare professional about how to protect our family from further risk
- Social distancing is an important strategy to prevent the spread of disease and illness, but it has emotional impact for all of us. Especially when it interferes with important events, such as weddings, reunions, birthday parties, graduations or other milestones.
 - Plan to recognize and celebrate as soon as authorities say it is safe to have social gatherings again
 - Use alternative means to stay in touch by exchanging digital photos, writing personal notes or other ways to stay connected
- The fear and stigma of the disease can be nearly as devastating as the disease itself. Maintain social connections to prevent the emotional consequences or isolation and/or being treated with suspicion, fear or anger.
- Decontamination can be an emotionally upsetting event:
 - Removing clothing in front of strangers is embarrassing for most people. Reminders that this could save lives and prevent loved ones from being exposed can help whether we say it to ourselves or gently share with others.
 - Use positive thoughts to get through the decontamination process
 - Find a “buddy” going through the decontamination process, a friend or person who is calming, comforting and capable of handling this experience
 - Ask for and offer assistance to people who may have to give up their eyeglasses, hearing aids or wheelchairs until they can be decontaminated.
 - Offer and seek comfort from those nearby
 - After the stressful experience of decontamination, individuals may need support immediately to help deal with strong emotions
 - People who have experienced trauma in the past such as rape, living in a refugee camp, wartime experiences, or other similar events may find decontamination triggers memories of earlier trauma and may need additional help.

- Asking for follow up information and resources helps people to remember what to do later, and how to get help later if needed
- Worry, fear and stress are common and appropriate if they help us make good choices to protect ourselves and our families. To help with these feelings:
 - Consider doing things that have fostered coping in the past
 - Build supports into our lives by phone and email if getting out is not safe
- If we or someone we know is quarantined:
 - Recognize it is normal to be upset about it
 - Remember different people will react differently
 - Maintain communications by phone, email or other safe ways to stay in touch
 - People who are quarantined may need to express their feelings of frustration, helplessness and loneliness
 - Unreasonable fear and worry about stigmas of those who are ill or recovering is damaging to communities
 - Those who contract the illness are innocent victims and society should not blame them for their misfortune
 - They need our support more than ever

Recovery

Empowerment

- Recovery from a public health emergency or biological event will be an uncertain process and may take an extended period of time. Continue to watch closely for advice and guidance from local public and state public health authorities about precautions to protect yourself and your family.

Stay Connected

- Isolation and withdrawal from social supports can be emotionally very difficult for many people, especially for young people and their parents
 - Use the telephone, email and other communications methods to stay in touch with family and friends
 - Telephone trees, conference calls and scheduled calls can be reassuring supports
- Meaningful contribution can be an important tool for personal and community recovery
 - Increasing our own preparedness by building emergency kits and supplies builds personal and community resilience

- Consider creative ways to volunteer that do not pose a threat to ourselves or others such as:
 - Providing remote support to others
 - Serve on a supportive hotline
 - Prepare supplies to be delivered by authorized organizations to those in quarantine

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Don't let worries about getting sick be a barrier to staying well
 - Make time to eat properly, exercise and rest
 - Schedule time to do the things you enjoy such as hobbies and social activities
 - Care for yourself, even having fun, will help you stay balanced and enable you to better deal with stressful times
 - Blame and anger can be destructive responses to stress and can be redirected into positive outlets such as exercise, problem-solving, and constructive volunteer activities that require physical exertion
- Stress levels may increase or occur at different times based on the events in the recovery phase such as:
 - Beginning of Flu season
 - Rumors or reports of renewed illness
 - Return to buildings that may have been contaminated or housed quarantined individuals
 - Disruption of income due to economic impacts of the public health emergency
 - Long-term physical impairments or disabilities associated with the illness



Chemical Event

Reassure

- Chemical events are self-limiting in nature
 - Chemical clouds usually blow away quickly. Note: use knowledge of local conditions to improve the message by suggesting exact length of time and good outcomes such as local elementary school was not in the plume
 - Soap and water are often the recommended method for decontaminating skin or clothing
- Having a spare set of clothes at the office or in the car may increase a sense of privacy and dignity if contaminated clothes must be removed immediately
- Local hazmat teams are well-trained and have practiced dealing with chemicals that are commonly used in the community
 - They are trained to move quickly to protect more people
 - Remind yourself that if you are feeling embarrassed or scared during decontamination
 - Express your needs and help others get through the line as quickly as possible. The emotional support will be important to help everyone cope better.

Reduce Stress

- Knowing what to look for that might require further medical evaluation for ourselves or family members is important
- Use the publicized telephone hotline to get more information if someone shows signs or symptoms of exposure
- Remember that stress and worry can cause physical reactions or symptoms that may appear to be illness or signs of exposure. Consult a healthcare worker by phone or follow instructions for seeking an examination

- A complete medical evaluation may be appropriate to determine if shortness of breath, distressed breathing, tears, changes in appetite, gastrointestinal distress and other symptoms are the result of normal stress or are signs of exposure to chemicals
- Follow the advice of authorities is the best thing we can do to protect ourselves and our families
- Decontamination can be an emotionally upsetting event.

Recovery

Re-Establish Roles

- It is normal to be concerned and fearful about returning to an area where a chemical release has occurred
 - Information can ease fears and worries
 - Details from authorities and experts can reassure that a safe return to the impacted building or neighborhood is possible
 - Participate in community forums that quickly communicate when safe return is possible to minimize economic impact

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Anxiety and worry may continue after the chemical threat has cleared
 - Use the experience from the event, to add items to family emergency kits
 - Adopt new precautions to improve family health and safety
 - Get help if fear interferes with work or family life, or if substance abuse occurs
 - Use the publicized telephone hotline to get more information if someone shows signs or symptoms of exposure



Explosive/Incendiary

Event & Response

Cooperation

- If an explosion occurs or if instructed by authorities to evacuate:
 - Follow the evacuation procedures and don't delay
 - Be alert to possible presence of secondary incendiary devices at exits or additional explosions at timed intervals
 - Ensure that visitors, guests and those with special needs to evacuate safely, assisting as necessary
 - For everyone's safety, move away from the explosion site to allow rescue workers to do their jobs, to prevent contamination from materials released as the result of the explosion, and to permit law enforcement to collect evidence
- Follow the directions of emergency personnel as appropriate
- Decontamination can be emotionally upsetting event (see core talking points...)
- Remain aware of surroundings and be prepared to take cover or other precautions recommended by authorities

Coping

- Activate family communication plans to reassure and provide information to loved ones
 - Recognize that phone lines may be overwhelmed and it may take time
 - Email or text messages may work when voice calls cannot get through
- If separated from loved ones and unable to reach them, notify authorities and register with appropriate organizations, such as Red Cross "Alive and Well" or National Center for Missing Children programs

- Having to wait for assistance to arrive may increase anxiety. Do things to help rescue workers locate anyone who is trapped and providing assistance to others may help
- Soothing words and comforting gestures may reduce tension and worry

Show Caring and Concern for Others

- Help others who may need assistance leaving the area if able
- Supportive comments or simply listening can offer emotional comfort to others
- Caring responses, such as offering water, a blanket can provide physical comfort

Re-Establish Roles

- Each of us can make a meaningful contribution to recovery by:
 - Participating in neighborhood watch programs as a detection and deterrence activity
 - Getting trained and becoming active members of CERT to learn how to respond
 - Getting volunteer training from Disaster Behavioral Health or faith-based organizations that assist in disaster response or recovery

Foster Emotional Resilience

- After an explosion or bombing has occurred, many people will startle easily when they hear a loud noise; may feel jittery and uneasy afterwards until we reassured that there is no renewed threat to us or our community
- Mass trauma and burn care incidents require large amounts of medical staff and supplies. We can make a difference by giving blood or platelets as a resource to recovery patients over the coming months

Commemorate

- Establish ways to make the community safer while honoring responders and those who were injured or killed
- Contribute to charitable or memorial funds for victims and their families
- Patronize businesses that contributed to the recovery or were economically impacted



Natural Disasters

Event & Response

Empowerment & Adaptive Coping

- Threats to our health and safety are the most stressful events we can experience
 - Only after we are safe, can we begin to take care of our emotional needs and address our psychological reactions to the event
 - Experts agree that we must have the necessary strength to protect ourselves and our families
- Sometimes, emotions in a stressful situation overlook basic information about safety:
 - We put emergency responders and others at risk if we do not follow basic safety rules or evacuation orders
 - Recognize the importance of the buddy system or checklists to help you follow basic safety rules when stress makes it difficult to think
 - Notify local authorities of health and safety hazards and let them handle it
- Public authorities will work hard to assure that you are safe. Their efforts will be more effective and our stress will be less if:
 - We recognize it may take time for assistance to arrive
 - We use supplies and materials in our emergency kits including those that promote calm and comfort
 - We use self-care skills for our physical and emotional well-being until help arrives

Recovery

Re-Establish Roles

- Accept help from community programs and resources, it is healthy
- Focus on strengths and abilities will help with healing
- Being displaced from home, especially for long periods of time, can increase stress for families
- Living in smaller spaces can limit privacy
- Find creative ways to give everyone time and personal space can help
- Find ways to stay connected to friends, family and faith-based groups to maintain a support network for each family member

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Don't try to do too much at once
 - Be aware of both physical and emotional exhaustion
 - Set priorities, pace yourself
- Each of us has different needs and ways of coping
 - Expect ups and downs in the recovery phase
 - It is normal to feel discouraged at times
 - Ask for support from family and friends to get through the low times

Reconnect

- Celebrate family strengths and accomplishments on the road to recovery
 - Schedule more family activities or mini-vacations to promote and support and provide hope and anticipation
 - Celebrate any "missed events" due to the disaster such as holidays, birthdays, vacation, or graduations
 - Families should reinstitute family routines and traditions in recognition of their triumph over adversity



Radiological

Event & Response

Reassure and Reduce Stress

- Being assessed for radiation exposure can be frightening and unfamiliar:
 - Disposing of clothing in a plastic bag can reduce exposure by 90%. Ask for modesty clothing or store an extra change of clothes at work, if possible
 - Ask questions and get written informed instructions. It will be hard to absorb information due to the stress but later you will want to know. Get a phone number to call for questions.
 - The uncertainty of dealing with “invisible” exposure like radiation can be very stressful. Worry and fear are normal, but we can find ways to cope through the support of family, friends and experts.
 - Early treatment can be helpful. Ask about treatment options. Pregnant women and children will receive treatment in different amounts and types to protect them
- Decontamination can be an emotionally upsetting event (See Core Talking Points...)

Promote Social Cohesion

- Unreasonable fear and stigmatization of those who are exposed or recovering is damaging to families and communities
 - People exposed/decontaminated are innocent victims
 - They need our support more than ever

Recovery: Empowerment

- It is normal to be concerned and fearful about returning to an area when radiological event has occurred
 - Information and empowerment can ease fears and concerns
 - Details from authorities and experts can reassure that a safe return to the impacted building or neighborhood is possible
 - Participate in community forums to ask questions and be involved in public decisions

Coping and Emotional Resilience

- Returning to an area where a radiological release has occurred can be frightening. Authorities will provide information about when it is safe to go back inside a building or neighborhood where a release took place
- Sometimes our emotions cause us to want to return to our homes, even when it is not safe to do so. We should listen to authorities about safe return, so we do not put ourselves and our families at greater risk
- There are helpful ways to prepare to return to a building associated with traumatic memories. Clinicians and Employee Assistance Programs may be able to help us prepare for and deal with our emotions during a transition
- Setting up support groups where people can normalize their experiences and reactions, as well as provide support and encouragement can be an important part of recovery
- Businesses should have recovery plans that quickly communicate when safe return is possible to minimize economic impact
- Ongoing supports and crisis counseling may be needed to help with long-term health and disability consequences of radiation exposure

Commemorate

- Honor those exposed to, or become ill or lost their lives due to the event
- Examine ways that citizens, businesses and communities can be better prepared to prevent or reduce the risk of another event
- Make a difference by volunteering with public awareness campaigns, educational brochures, memorial contributions to response agencies or other activities



Terrorism

Real or Potential Threat

Reassure & Reduce Stress

- We can expect to be more frightened by things that are unfamiliar, that violate our sense of how the world should be; what causes disfigurement or death or targets children
 - Limit exposure to TV coverage of the threat, especially for children
 - Limit conversations about the threat and try to maintain normal routines
- It is normal to feel jumpy and anxious since thinking about intentional violent acts shakes our sense of safety and security
 - Find calming and reassuring activities or rituals to ease worries, such as prayer, meditation, exercise, recreation or play, making a meal with family
 - Monitor surroundings and take reasonable safety precautions consistent with advice of the authorities
 - Reach out to family and friends
 - Encourage family and friends to take steps to be prepared; especially those who live alone or require special assistance
 - Don't leave unfinished business with family. Say thank you and I am sorry more often

Promote Preparedness

- Preparedness is extremely important for terrorist events. Because terrorist events occur without warning and are meant to disrupt our lives and cause fear, normal reactions include worry, anxiety, vulnerability and even, anger.
 - Prepare and talk about terrorism can be stressful for people
 - It is harder to prepare for events that have no warning
 - Thinking about intentional violent acts shakes our sense of safety and security

- Preparing requires us to think on our feet since we do not know what to expect
- It is tempting to not prepare at all, because we could like to believe that it could never happen to us or happen in our community

Event

Reassure

- The good news is that research shows, even in the most horrible events, people do not generally panic, especially those who have accessed official information in advance about protective actions and how to help others
- Grief and trauma will extend well beyond the boundaries of the community that experienced the terrorist attack. It is normal for people to observe the event through media coverage to have strong emotional reactions

Reduce Stress

- Watching TV coverage, especially graphic images of injury, death or destruction, for extended periods is highly associated with adverse mental health outcomes after an event. Such outcomes include depression or other conditions. Limit TV viewing and internet exposure, and consider radio and print coverage to get essential information.
- Terrorism affects us in different ways than natural disasters. We should be prepared for stronger emotional reactions to an international event designed to cause harm and fear
- It has become common for people to gather at the location of the event and to create impromptu memorials after a community loss:
 - Going to the site can trigger emotional reactions for those who have experienced trauma in the past
 - For investigation and criminal purposes, access to the area may be restricted. Spontaneous crowds can interfere with access and investigations.
 - Flowers and other items left a memorials typically do not meet the immediate needs of the survivors
 - Consider volunteering for agencies with disaster missions to address the needs identified by authorities, and to assist in response and recovery

Reconnect

- Participate in community events, such as:
 - Memorial events for victims and their family members
 - Recognition events for the responders

- Religious or spiritual activities that may be especially meaningful and comforting after a terrorist event
- Listen to the public authorities for ideas of constructive contributions and volunteer opportunities through recognized affiliated agencies

Recovery

Re-establish Roles

- Communities can be stronger after an event if people take constructive and supportive action to rebuild and to support their neighbors, especially those most affected
- If we participate, become part of a neighborhood watch program or CERT; or training to become a volunteer from many faith-based and community organizations

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Special services are available to crime victims and communities following a terrorist event; government funding supports assistance through the National Organization of Victims Assistance
- Mass trauma incidents require large amounts of medical staff and supplies.
- Terrorists want us to be divided from each other and our government.
 - Confront racism or other forms of discrimination to promote acceptance and understanding in our communities
 - Advocate in our neighborhoods, faith communities, cultural groups to live by the principles of fairness, acceptance and understanding
 - Help all groups to embrace unity and inclusion rather than blame and divisiveness
 - Reach out to community members who might face stigma by involving them in neighborhood activities
- Emotional reactions to terrorist events happen a long time after the event. One to two years later, it may be helpful to speak to a behavioral health professional when persistent fear or emotions interfere with daily routines or important relationships

Commemorate

- Symbols and rituals are important tools for coping and recovering after an event
 - Comfort and healing are functions supported by these activities
 - Different cultures use different customs and rituals for grief, hope, recovery
- Returning to life as usual or finding a new normal may be an important way to pay tribute to those who lost their lives to a terrorist event

Audience-Specific Behavioral Health

Talking Points

These talking points are designed for use with specific audiences to more effectively address unique circumstances and vulnerability of different populations. These can be used to supplement talking points in the Core talking points matrix.

Culturally Diverse Groups

Event and Response: *Communication during an event should promote cooperation, confidence and coping*

Cultural and Linguistic Accessibility

- In emergency situations, individual's cultural background and traditions have an effect on coping. Crisis counseling services will be adapted to be responsive to, and respectful of, cultural and language differences
- Find trusted sources of information that provides real-time information:
 - If available, listen to a 24/7 radio station that broadcasts in your native language
 - Watch TV or cable stations that broadcast news and emergency updates with translated subtitles
 - Ask for an interpreter or call XXX to request translation
- Carry identification, health information and emergency contact information at all times, including information about preferred language, communication devices, religious preferences and the name of an English-speaking advocate

Recovery: *Communication during a period of recovery should promote optimism, help-seeking, and access to recovery resources and services*

Reduce Barriers

- Ask for a crisis counselor who speaks your native language; children should not serve as translators unless absolutely necessary. It is unfair and stressful burden for adults and children.
- Different cultures have different ways of expressing grief and loss. Recovery is difficult when:
 - Separated from family who may still be in their native country
 - Living on limited income with limited assets
 - Rituals and symbols associated with loss, grief and recovery are not understood in the culture where one resides now
- For people who came to this country as a refugee or had major losses/trauma in their lives will need special considerations on how they manage their emotional reactions

Promote Natural Supports

- Different cultures have different ways of coping with stress
 - Educate the public and clinicians by educating on accepted methods of coping
 - Suggest that healing traditions from diverse cultures be incorporated into commemorative activities to promote inclusion and community cohesion

- Invite the larger community to a culturally specific commemoration or recognition that promote emotional recovery and healing

Community Cohesion

- Treating others poorly because they have a different culture or nationality is unacceptable behavior. When people become the target of hateful actions because of their race or culture:
 - Report the actions to the appropriate authorities for necessary protective precautions
 - Ask for the emotional support you need
- No formal application is required when a disaster survivor uses the federally funded Crisis Counseling program
 - Identification and citizenship information are not required
 - The counseling services are free

Emergency Responders

Traditional first responders includes fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical technicians, emergency management personnel and disaster volunteers who are at the forefront of disaster and public health emergency response and recovery. These talking points can be used as a specialized outreach and education campaign for emergency responders and their families after mass casualty incidents, especially if emergency responders are injured or killed, or where they experienced significant risk to their own health.

Event

Promoting Resilience

- Practice stress management principles for self-care and in our family life
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) as instructed for the event and use a “buddy system” to promote safe and effective PPE use
- If feeling overwhelmed by the nature of the event, take a break and seek out a supervisor for some relief and respite
- Practice self-talk, compartmentalization and other strategies to minimize over-identification with victims and their families. Over-identification can interfere with emotional well-being and our ability to cope
- Supervisors of emergency response workers can make assignments based on experience, training and past performance to minimize the likelihood of adverse emotional reactions:
 - Consider pairing more experienced responders with those with less experience
 - Prepare inexperienced responders for the reality that they cannot save everyone
 - Ask questions to help identify people who may not be coping well. Don’t expect responders to ask for help.
 - Work alongside responders to get a better sense of how the work may be affecting the responders
 - Give detailed instructions regarding use of PPE and enforce their use
 - Emotional reactions will be greater in mass casualty and mass fatality events
 - Expect questions about how work on the scene may affect families in terms of safety and health risks, i.e. air quality after a terrorist event

Promote access to Counseling Services

- Notify the Employee Assistance Program or other resources for emotional support when high stress events occur to ensure that availability of supportive counselors

- Identify at-risk individuals and refer appropriately
- Manage referrals, support confidentiality, be respectful, and recognize accessing services as a normal reaction to an overwhelming situation
- Individuals with past trauma or behavioral health conditions may have a greater need for preventive and early interventions rather than waiting for a referral

Recovery

Emotional Resilience

- Take time to emotionally decompress after working a shift
- Drinking alcohol may increase after a traumatic event, interfering with emotional recovery and disrupting healthy family routines. Practice relapse prevention if you are in recovery
- Develop healthy coping strategies that build cohesiveness with family and friends
- Journals, meditation, exercise and reconnecting to faith communities can be powerful coping mechanisms after a traumatic event

Adaptive Coping

- Peer support and recovery groups can be important support systems when coping with the aftermath of a traumatic event
- Sometimes reactions to terrorist events happen a long time after the event, it may be helpful to speak to a behavioral health professional
- If reactions to the event are interfering with work or home life, seek confidential help through Employee Assistance Programs or healthcare providers
- Get help if experiencing persistent fear or emotions that interfere with daily routines and important relationships such as:
 - Anxiety or feelings of panic
 - Overwhelming sadness
 - Persistent depression
 - Isolation and social withdrawal
 - Uncontrollable anger, or irritability

Health Care Professionals

Following the events of September 11th, Hurricane Katrina or naturally occurring diseases, such as SARS or Pandemic Flu, Health Care Professionals have become front-line in public health emergency response. If the precipitating event requires a surge in medical response or places health care professionals at risk, these talking points should be used for a specialized outreach and just-in-time education related to the stress and emotional needs in taking care of patients.

Event & Response

Integration of Behavioral Health into Medical Response

- Apply basic principles of psychological first aid to patients
 - Conduct thorough medical evaluation offering reassurance and sound scientific information
 - Initial psychological interventions should focus on well-being rather than mental health
 - Encourage sufficient rest and sleep
 - Normalize eat, sleep and work cycles
 - Limit exposure to media
 - Avoid triggers, such as traumatizing images, sounds, smells
 - Provide adjacent location for observation and presence of individuals who can offer reassurance and support
 - Refer for behavioral health services when indicators of concern arise related to harm to self or others
 - Do not force people to talk about what they have just experienced. They will talk when they are ready.
 - Experts do not recommend use of psychological debriefing
- Triage, evaluation and treatment must integrate knowledge of
 - Psychological response to disasters and public health emergencies and grief
 - Somatic symptoms of stress and distress
 - Management of “concerned individuals” with medically unexplained physical symptoms (MUPS):
 - Conserve medical approach
 - Limited testing
 - Frequent observation
 - Reassurance
- Be open to consideration that some illnesses may present as behavioral disorders, but may be atypical presentations of a biological agent causing neuro-psychiatric symptoms

- Once an illness or agent is identified, learn about preventive strategies that have been effective; and use recommended actions for your own protections and to inform and advise patients and family members of protection methods

Promoting Emotional Resilience for Health Care Professionals

- The health and well-being of responders is important:
 - Practice effective use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - Use a “buddy system” to promote safe and effective PPE use makes everyone more aware and cautious
- Health care response during a medical surge or public health emergency can be emotionally draining and stressful. Stress management and practicing self-care strategies are critical for health care professionals in emergency situations.
 - Keep routines as normal and healthy as possible
 - Use exercise, sleep, diet, meditation and prayer, and relaxation to cope with stress
 - Write down your thoughts and feelings in a journal, protecting confidentiality of patients and their family members
 - Take breaks that help refresh and rebuild energy and stamina
 - If we are feeling overwhelmed by the nature of the event, take a break and seek out a supervisor for relief and respite
- Practice compartmentalization and other strategies to minimize over-identification with patients and their families. Over-identifying can interfere with emotional well-being and ability to cope during emergencies.
- As a supervisor of health care professionals, make assignments based on experience, training and past performance to minimize the likelihood of adverse emotional reactions:
 - Psychological effects are most likely to occur among staff that has the greatest contact with the deceased, and those dealing with children and pregnant women. These effects are heightened when staff is severely fatigued by being on duty for long periods of time, over days and weeks.
 - Use a psychological first aid team that includes behavioral health professionals and volunteers
 - Healthcare organizations can assign clinicians to dedicate time to support staff
 - Provide for rotation of staff to reduce fatigue
 - Staff will be concerned for their own families, so establish a communication liaison for them

- Hard decisions may be required of responders and healthcare professionals about whom to save and who not to save.
 - Develop and implement Crisis Standards of Care policies and procedures
 - Expect that professionals develop a sense of personal guilt when they cannot treat and do as much as possible for each patient. These concerns can result in anger, frustration, sense of helplessness, chronic depression and sleep disturbances leading to compassion fatigue
 - All of these effects will be exacerbated by fatigue and exhaustion
 - Notify the Employee Assistance Program and make referrals appropriately for at-risk individuals with past trauma or behavioral health conditions

Recovery

Practice Self-Care

- Take time to emotionally decompress after working a shift.
- Develop healthy coping strategies that build connections with family and friends:
 - Journals, meditation or prayer, exercise, nutrition, reconnecting with communities of faith can be important coping mechanisms after a traumatic event
 - Peer support and recovery groups are important support systems for coping
- If reactions to the event are interfering with work or home life, seek confidential help through an employee assistance program or health plan provider

Parents and Caregivers of Children

Warning and Uncertainty

- Offer realistic reassurance and answer questions the children may have with age-appropriate information
- Limit exposure to television coverage and dramatization of events
- Involve children in rehearsing safety measures and preparing supplies for emergency kits.

Event & Response

Reassure

- Use emotional first aid principles when working with children
 - Provide safety and basic needs
 - Give support and a consistent “presence”
 - Comfort children
 - Clarify and provide reliable information
- Consider child-friendly guidelines:
 - Give clear directions and assist children to safety
 - Be sensitive to language and cultural needs
- Children base their reactions in part on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a disaster calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children.
- Self-care and preparation are critical for parents and caregivers. The more prepared, rested, and relaxed they are, the better they can respond to unexpected events and the more they can make decisions that will be in the best interest of those for whom they are responsible.
- Children will need extra time with parents and caregivers, and their friends as they cope after an emergency event
- Share plans to keep them safe
- Return to healthy daily routines as quickly as possible; and keep them nearby as they may fear being away or separated from us
- We need to reassure and provide love and attention to children even when our own stress might make it difficult to give them extra attention

- Children grieve, too, and will be important to tell them their feelings of sadness, denial, crying and irritability are normal reactions to grief
- Children may regress to an earlier developmental phase after an emergency event, and we need to be more patient during this time
- Children may show some of the behavioral/emotional symptoms:
 - Stomachaches or physical complaints
 - Fears of separation
 - Need more attention
 - Social withdrawal or avoidance, i.e. not going to school, avoiding friends
 - Temper or emotional outbursts
- These responses are common, and encourage that children talk about their feelings with a trusted adult or professional. Promote healthy coping skills
- Most behaviors disappear in the weeks following the event. If children display self-harming behaviors, i.e. drug or alcohol abuse, get professional help immediately.
- If an event is “human-caused”, youth may express retribution or revenge at the groups or cultures responsible. Explain that promoting hate hurts everyone.
- Children with special needs, such as pre-existing behavioral health issues, learning disabilities and health conditions may need additional resources and attention.

Reduce Stress

- Limit adults and children’s exposure to the media. Children up to age 7, may believe the event is happening again and again when they hear repeated media stories.
- Older children may feel guilty that they could not intervene to diminish the tragedy; allow them to participate in safe volunteer opportunities during the recovery phase
- Children may feel afraid and allow their imaginations to over-run their coping skills
- Share accurate information with children to dispel rumors without exposing them to too much detail. Be situated at their eye level and reassure them that as a family we will get through this together.
- If directly impacted, tell children what has happened and the next steps to be taken. For example, Tonight we will stay at your Aunt’s house, or we will visit the doctor to keep you safe and healthy.

Reconnect

- Children previously traumatized or impacted by an event, or have existing behavioral or emotional difficulty will be more at-risk and will need additional professional support

- Children with cognitive or emotional issues may be more susceptible to rumors and false information on the internet or social networks. Provide accurate information.
- Find practical ways to reach out to lessen the effects of the event by volunteering with community and response groups within the community

Recovery

Re-Establish Roles

- Children are resilient with caring support and reassurance from trusted adults, they can survive and flourish. Most children and adults recover without professional help.
- Re-establish routines are important; provide opportunities to play and spend time with caregivers and parents, and family members which helps reduce their stress.
- Emotionally healthy routines may include:
 - School activities and friends
 - Family time together, with shared meals and playtime
 - Community or faith-based activities
 - Hobbies and Sports
 - Creative projects, such as writing, art, music
- After an emergency event, children may become afraid that :
 - The event will happen again
 - Someone will be injured or killed
 - Become separated from family or being left alone
 - Behaviors to watch for:
 - avoidance of school or friends
 - Other behaviors that are not age-appropriate for them
 - Aggressive play or artwork
 - Nightmares and crying

Foster Emotional Resilience

- As adults, we are responsible for the well-being of our community's youth and children, and should reach out in practical ways to lessen the effects of an event
- We can limit our children's media exposure, particularly TV and internet access, following the event.
- We should seek behavioral health assistance for our children, if their reactions over time become worse than better, i.e. nightmares, aggressive play or fears

- Counseling after a tragic event is common and promotes healing. It is healthy to obtain help for children who may need additional support to move forward

Commemorate

- Everyone may experience heightened stress during anniversary dates of the event. Talking about these feelings with our children will help them get through these dates.
- When deciding whether to include children in memorials, consider the following:
 - *Age, maturity and understanding*; include age-appropriate activities such as releasing balloons or butterflies
 - *Appropriateness for children*; personal tributes include sharing stories or photos with close family or friends may be more fitting
 - *Struggle with spiritual questions after an event*; allow expression and discuss their feelings in an age-appropriate way; or seek out trusted spiritual leaders

Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

Event & Response

Reduce Stress

- Tell emergency responders of any special assistance that you or anyone in your home requires to expedite evacuation and rescue activities
- If you need to seek shelter, be prepared to share information about your healthcare history and special needs. Inform the shelter if you have a service animal that they will need to accommodate.
- Asking for help is hard. Reach out to family, faith leaders, healthcare professionals to request assistance.
- Resume your healthy routines of sleep, exercise and nutrition
- Stay involved in decision-making and choices that are made when you are displaced from your home

Coping/Reconnect

- A challenge for seniors or people with disabilities during and after an event will be same challenges that you experienced before the event:
 - Transportation
 - Isolation and social withdrawal
 - Low income and few resources
 - Medical needs
- Re-establish links with established personal and home health providers to let them know what you need and where you are currently staying
- Due to your life experience and coping skills, seniors are typically able to resume their “new normal” within a few months
- It is frightening if our ability to live independently is threatened because of this event:
 - Rebuilding a care plan to remain independent takes time and resources
 - Ask for assistance from your local senior center, Area Agencies on Aging, case managers, health care providers
- Seniors and persons with disabilities may experience more health problems after an event, get care as soon as possible as delays can lead to more serious complications

Recovery

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Leaving home for an emergency can be traumatic, especially if your return takes a long time:
 - For your mental health, it is best to remain involved in your decision making about where you will live and how you will return to a “new normal”
 - People adjust better if they make decisions and choices for themselves, and you can develop these plans before an emergency event
- People with histories of trauma in their lives may need extra assistance in coping with an event. It is normal to be reminded of those difficult experiences and it is important to talk to others about your emotional reactions.
- Depression is a normal part of aging. Treatment is available by calling Maine Crisis Hotline at 1-888-568-1112 or contacting your primary care physician.
- Sometimes, people show stress by acting out in anger. If you or know someone that is being mistreated or neglected or hurt by family, caregivers, or others, contact the Office of Aging and Disability Services at 1-888-568-1112.

Victims, Survivors and their Families

Sustained public and community support for victims and survivors is associated with improved mental health outcomes. In addition, effective emotional counseling assistance builds trust and confidence in public and private emergency response systems. Typically, emotional support needs surge after public safety and basic needs are met by response systems.

Event and Response

Reassure

- We are all concerned and want to extend our sincere concern and sympathy to those who lost family, friends, homes, communities at this difficult time
- Stress and emotional reactions are normal responses to tragic events
- Services and supports are available for victims/survivors and their families

Reduce Stress

- After the initial shock and taking care of basic needs, such as shelter, food and medical treatment, many people may need crisis counseling assistance
- Stress and anxiety can show up as physical symptoms and illness
- Developing positive coping skills that worked in the past
- It is OK to postpone decisions or ask for help

Reconnect

- Most people will recover with time, and will need assistance from their families, friends and community members to get through these difficult times
- In emergency situations, cultural background and rituals have an effect on how we grieve and recover:
 - Help clinicians and employers understand the way that culture affects our views on loss, grief and recovery
 - Personal and cultural experiences must be respected to provide helpful supports

Recovery

Re-Establish Roles

- The best self-help is to re-establish meaningful routines and coping skills:
 - Nurturing family members/relationships and friendships
 - Participate in community activities, neighborhood, church or clubs
 - Stress Management techniques such as exercise and relaxation
- Use the services available to help with:
 - Health and behavioral health services
 - Employment
 - Taxes, business and financial matters
 - Legal assistance

Foster Emotional Resilience

- Healing takes time. We may have setbacks but it will be important to give ourselves time to return to the “new normal”
- Sometimes reactions to disasters and public health emergencies are delayed. Talk with a behavioral health professional if fear interferes with daily routines or important relationships. Watch for reactions to include:
 - Anxiety or feelings of panic
 - Overwhelming sadness
 - Persistent depression
 - Isolation and withdrawal
 - Uncontrollable anger or irritability

Commemorate

- Offer thanks to those who have helped is important; and the simple act of expressing and receiving thanks has health benefits
- Symbols and rituals are important tools for coping and recovery after an event:
 - Memorial and commemorative activities can be helpful
 - Faith-based activities and counseling are important as people struggle with spiritual issues
 - Comfort and healing are important functions supported by these activities
 - Different cultures use customs and rituals for grief, hope and recovery
- Anniversary dates or reminders can trigger stress and cause us to re-experience the event and our emotional reactions

Preparedness Resources

As leaders for any disaster or public health emergency, it is important to practice our comments before delivering them to our audiences or the media. Practicing key messages are important to ensure the correct information is conveyed in an empathic way during the crisis.

This section links to the World Health Organization (WHO) Media Communications at

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/en/>

This section links to the CDC Emergency Risk Communications for more specific resources for at risk populations and preparation at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.asp>

This section links to the Maine CDC Public Health Advisories

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/index.shtml>