

Preparedness in the Southwest Course

Module 8: Disaster Mental Health

Disasters can induce significant trauma and psychological stress in all persons involved. Therefore, it is essential for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to incorporate mental health services as part of their response plan. This module provides an overview of the structure and organization of the Disaster Mental Health (DMH) services as well as the role public health professionals play in providing mental health services. It also introduces the professional to the fundamentals of DMH, the impact of disasters on individuals, and the basics of crisis intervention.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define disaster mental health and what issues it encompasses.
2. Describe the role public health workers can play in providing mental health needs in a shelter.
3. Understand why public health personnel are important in meeting disaster mental health needs.
4. Understand how disaster characteristics can impact the levels of response in both individuals and communities.
5. Become familiar with the key tenants of providing disaster mental health services.
6. Understand the difference between the terms victim and survivor.
7. List at least three common reactions to trauma.
8. Identify behaviors and reactions in an individual that require a referral to advanced mental health services.
9. Identify steps public health personnel can take in managing their own stress.
10. Become familiar with the basic skills needed to provide counseling and intervention services
11. Understand the multi-faceted and multi-organizational approaches needed to address issues of disaster mental health.

Core competencies addressed:

Competency 1: Describe the public health role in emergency response in a range of emergencies that might arise.

Competency 2: Describe the chain of command in emergency response.

Competency 3: Identify and locate the agency emergency response plan (or the pertinent portion of the plan).

Competency 4: Describe his/her functional role(s) in emergency response and demonstrate his/her role(s) in regular drills.

Target Capabilities:

Worker Health & Safety

Responder Safety & Health

Triage & Pre-Hospital Treatment