



## **Early Interventions Following a Disaster: Advice for those responsible for providing psychosocial support for adults, children, families, communities, schools, workplaces and other groups**

### **THE FIRST TWO WEEKS**

**The focus is identifying the need and providing practical psychosocial care and support. At the same time, the on-going psychosocial support programme should be defined, resourced and implemented.**

#### **This will involve the Responding Agencies:**

- Ensuring that those affected by the disaster have adequate housing, food, clothing and other essential resources
- Provide a telephone helpdesk for people seeking psychosocial support with trained personnel able to answer questions on the support available and an ability to signpost people to other resources
- If not done pre-disaster, decide on types of early intervention to be offered and the processes for monitoring and evaluating interventions
- Check on the availability of trained first responders (e.g. teachers, social workers, youth workers, health professionals, mental health practitioners, counsellors and psychologists)
- Screen volunteers who offer to work as first responders or trauma therapists
- Identify venues where support can be provided for individuals and groups
- Set up the administration database to record:
  - Those affected by the disaster: contact details and needs, to allow for follow-up
  - First responders: contact details, experience and availability to provide support
  - Monitoring and evaluation results
- As necessary, provide simple early intervention training or refresher training for local first responders
- Provide simple psycho-education on trauma responses through social media and leaflets (this should be age, and culturally appropriate and translated where necessary)
- Consider screening those who go through an early intervention as a mechanism of evaluation
- Trauma Skilled Responders to provide supervision for First Responders, help desk and administrators.

#### **First Responders should:**

- Be trauma informed professionals with an understanding of psychological trauma
- Recognise the different styles of trauma response of individuals
- Provide time for those that wish to talk about their experience and make sense of their experiences
- Provide simple psychosocial education appropriate to the age, understanding and need
- Recognise the need to support and safeguard children and young people
- Work with individuals and/or facilitate support groups
- Assess and signpost where there is a need for specialist medical or psychological help

#### **Trauma Skilled Responders should:**

- Be experienced in delivering trauma interventions
- Deliver a trauma focussed or support focussed early interventions as directed



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## **ONE MONTH POST-DISASTER**

**The focus moves to maintaining the programme and monitoring and reviewing the outcomes. During this phase, there is a need to be prepared to deal with any emerging issues or problems and to ensure that those with on-going difficulties are provided with appropriate support.**

### **This will involve the Responding Agencies:**

- Assessing the levels of resources required to meet the needs of the next phase of the programme
- Monitoring and supervising for all responders, helpdesk and others
- Identifying where First Responders can be stood down and returned to their normal role
- Ensuring that when First Responders leave the programme they are debriefed and their contribution recognised
- Screen those who are not improving or showing increasing signs of ongoing psychological difficulties
- Identify appropriate Trauma Experts to undertake psychological assessments

### **First Responders should:**

- Assess and refer where there is a need for specialist medical or psychological help
- Maintain a healthy life/work balance
- Prepare for leaving the programme
- Engage in the debriefing process during which time they should give feedback on the programme and any improvements they have identified

### **Trauma Skilled Responders should:**

- Maintain a healthy life/work balance
- Attend regular professional supervision
- Deliver a trauma focussed, or support focussed early intervention, as directed
- Engage in evaluating the programme

### **Trauma Expert Responders should:**

- Undertake clinical assessments of those identified as having significant trauma symptoms
- Identify any special needs for those showing signs of traumatic grief or complex trauma
- Identify needs for ongoing health and social care
- Make recommendations for evidence based trauma interventions (e.g. TF-CBT or EMDR)
- Deliver trauma interventions as directed
- Engage in evaluating the programme



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### **THREE TO SIX MONTHS POST-DISASTER**

**The focus is the continuation of any trauma interventions and support. During this phase, the focus is on the delivery of services and the support of service users as they start to take up their lives.**

#### **This will involve the Responding Agencies:**

- Assessing the levels of resources required to meet the needs of this phase of the programme
- Consider providing assistance to help people to return to work and other important activities
- Maintain support for survivor groups and other valued resources
- Monitoring and supervising for responders, helpdesk and others
- Ensuring that as responders leave the programme they are debriefed and their contribution recognised
- Screen people not improving or showing increasing signs of ongoing psychological difficulties
- Continue to psychologically assess people showing signs of ongoing traumatic distress

#### **Trauma skilled responders should:**

- Maintain a healthy life/work balance
- Attend regular professional supervision
- Deliver a trauma focussed or support
- Engage in evaluating the programme

#### **Trauma expert responders should:**

- Undertake clinical assessments of those identified as having significant trauma symptoms
- Identify any special needs for those showing signs of traumatic grief or complex trauma
- Identify needs for ongoing health and social care
- Make recommendations for evidence based trauma interventions (e.g. TF-CBT or EMDR)
- Deliver trauma interventions as directed
- Engage in evaluating the programme