

SPECIAL ENEWS

From: Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA

Re: TODAY'S UPDATE (9/7/05)

LEGAL CLARIFICATION

>> “The information that you have just passed on from Texas is taken from the federal education law, No Child Left Behind. Every state has procedures in place to manage displaced families. The national partners in education for homeless children and youth, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, the National Center on Homeless Education, and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty have joined forces to release the [attached information](#). Our website is being updated as information is released.
<http://www.wm.edu/hope>”

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

>> Volunteers with no healthcare background can find information on volunteering – check at USAFreedomCorps.gov or call 1-877-USA-CORPS.

>> HHS Releases Website and Toll Free Number for Deployment of Health and Mental Health Professionals. “The Department of Health and Human Services has established a website (<https://volunteer.hhs.gov>) and toll-free number (1-866-KAT-MEDI) to help identify health care professionals and relief personnel.

Individuals must be healthy enough to function under field conditions. This may include all or some of the following: 12-hour shifts, Austere conditions (possibly no showers, housing in tents), No air conditioning, Long periods of standing, Sleep accommodations on bedroll, Military ready to eat meals. These workers will be non-paid temporary Federal employees, and will therefore be eligible for coverage under the Federal Tort Claims Act for liability coverage and Workman's Compensation when functioning as HHS employees. Although there will not be any salary, travel and per diem will be paid.”

>>The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is a crisis response partner with the American Red Cross response efforts. The call has gone out to NASP and other Red Cross partners for more mental health professionals during this disaster response. Those who are qualified and interested should contact Ted Feinberg, Assistant Executive Director National Association of School Psychologists, 301-657-0270, 301-657-0275 (fax) or by email at tfeinberg@naspweb.org

NASP has a variety of resources for disaster response online at <http://www.nasponline.org>

REQUEST

>> “The Caddo Parish School Board is working diligently with state and local organizations to provide both basic and emotional needs. We have enrolled over 750 students in our parish so far and anticipate enrolling even more in the next few days. We have placed a behavior interventionist, counselor, school psychologist, or social worker at each school site (75 schools) as the primary contact and service provider. We are also working with the Red Cross , Universities, and Mental Health agencies to provide services for the families. If anyone has school psychologist, social worker, school counselor, or educational diagnostician positions available around the United States, please forward this information to me.

Here are some local contact numbers: Louisiana State University in Shreveport (318)797-5235

Caddo Parish School System (318)603-6300

Dr. Barzanna White, System School Psychologist, Caddo Parish School Board / Shreveport, Louisiana – (318)603-6484"

SUGGESTION

>>Consider the following suggestion: take schools or blocks of schools and appoint individuals or groups of individuals to be consultants/providers for urgent care or sustained care for students. For instance, we have three mental health providers in the Adolescent Clinic at Texas Children's Hospital and 4 Adolescent Medicine Physicians. We are already trying to coordinate efforts locally in Houston and are seeing youth from LA in the hospital and in shelters. However, if there were a couple of schools in particular that need consultation, they can contact me at TCH 832-824-2099. Al Hergenroeder

NEEDED IN THE SCHOOLS EXPERIENCING A SIGNIFICANT INFLUX OF DISPLACED STUDENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF:

COORDINATION NOW AND PLANNING FOR THE COMING WEEKS AND BEYOND

Reports from Texas amplify what is a likely state of affairs in many schools. It is essential that those in district and school leadership positions create an effective coordination mechanism with a leader who understands

- (1) Transition concerns from a mental health and individual engagement perspective
- (2) How to address Special Assistance for New Students Who Needed it Prior to the Disaster
- (3) How to address Special Assistance for New Teachers Who Needed it Prior to the Disaster
- (4) How to identify and provide special assistance for those who have been so-traumatized that they require Psychological Aid

(see Planning and Action for the MH Needs of Students and School Staff

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/planningneeds.pdf>)

And, to the degree feasible, it is wise to link such mechanisms (e.g., through email), so that they can learn from and help each other.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

>> “Unfortunately, I do not believe that there is any type of organized system in place that coordinates services among school districts in Texas to respond to disasters and critical incidents. School districts in Texas are ‘independent’ entities and make decisions for themselves through ‘site-based decision-making.’ Some districts are well prepared with response plans/services such as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) or a model supported by NASP. In the current situation, I believe it is important for districts to coordinate their efforts since we have so many in close proximity to one another. At this point, I have received no information indicating a coordinated effort. I have taken the initiative to contact a few of the larger districts in my area (Houston); however, I’ve received no response.

>>“We are a town of about 45,000 with a school system serving around 14,000, midway between Houston and Austin. So far, we have about 2,000 evacuees (of all ages), mostly in hotels but also in several shelters and churches. As of Friday, we had had only 26 evacuated students enroll in our district, of course that number is expected to rise. Actually it has already risen significantly today.

As a psych svc. dept. we are focusing on training and supporting our counselors. We have

provided them with a screener for students and information forms for parents to complete, since each student's experiences could have been so different from the others. We are reviewing the information and making recommendations and will provide direct services where they are needed. The counselors will implement recommendations and monitor the situation, notifying us when increased support is needed for individual students.

Interestingly, our administrators have been advised that these students will only be here for about 4 weeks (beginning last week), which seems significantly unrealistic, to me. So they are planning only very short term interventions and I am thinking this is inadequate and will provide more problems later. It would be helpful to us to have some reasonable estimate of how long it will be before the Louisiana public school system will be operational so that planning can be more accurate/comprehensive.

There is a movement among local mental health providers to organize provision of mental health services to evacuees. I forwarded your information to them, as well. A very large number of people have indicated they want to help and a leader has been identified. He is trying to organize training and screening of mental health providers, etc. As a school system we are encouraging all administrators to run any offers of mental health services through our office for screening (to protect the students from well intentioned but not necessarily highly qualified crisis service providers).”

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