NATURAL DISASTERS AND HOMELESSNESS

[Webinar]
Tuesday, May 21, 2019 \ 2:00 - 3:15 PM EDT
Housekeeping

HAVE A QUESTION?
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About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and technical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website: http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org
- Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/SchoolHouseConnection/
- Newsletter: https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Our Presenters

- Debra Sanders
  - Foster and Homeless Youth Education Services Coordinator, Sonoma County Office of Education
- Frank Zenere
  - District Coordinator, Student Services/Crisis Program, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Debra Albo Steiger
  - Director of Community Outreach, Project UP-START, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
FIRE’S IMPACT
On Sonoma County Public Schools

Debra Sanders, Foster and Homeless Youth Education Services Coordinator, Sonoma County Office of Education

Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D.
Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools
The Fire's Aftermath

- 1,450* public school students lost homes
- 250* public school employees lost homes
- One public school farm and onsite teacher residence was destroyed
- Two public schools were partially or fully destroyed
- Two public campuses were closed for months due to toxic ash/debris in the neighborhoods surrounding them

Sonoma County Office of Education
Initial School Response

Supporting Families:
- School staff called families to see who was affected
- Prepared support for when students returned

Transportation:
- School buses/drivers played a critical role in transporting material supplies to shelters and medically fragile patients to safety

Shelter:
- Numerous schools opened as shelters, with educators providing staffing
Initial Challenges

Coordinating Support:
- Districts had diverse needs
- Not part of city/county government
- Required special state task force to address needs

Reopening Schools:
- Air quality
- Toxic ash
- Transportation
- Safety inspections
- Relocating 500+ displaced students from destroyed schools
Addressing Student Trauma

Trainings on student trauma
- For school counselors
- Follow-up trainings/support as needed (coordinated by SCOE’s System of Support Team)
- On-site trainings for teachers/classified staff

- Counseling support from County Behavioral Health, regional networks
- Support/training for districts from National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement
- Increased support for Restorative Practices (grant funded)
- Two-day intensive training for 60 school counselors in Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) this August (grant funded)
- Santa Rosa City Schools: Integrated Wellness Center (grant funded)
Ongoing Challenges

**Loss of Average Daily Attendance (ADA)**
- Students changing districts/moving out of county due to fire
- Net decrease in ADA of about 1,000 for non-charter public schools between 2016-17 and 2017-18 (not all fire-related)
- Will know more after October enrollment count
- State budget: Includes “hold harmless” provision to protect fire-affected schools from ADA loss

**Ongoing need for student/staff mental health support**

**Rebuilding** of schools/surrounding communities

**Preparing for the next disaster**
- Application for grant to create Hazard Mitigation Plan for schools
- Application for FEMA Integrated Emergency Management Course
Frank Zenere
District Coordinator, Student Services/Crisis Program, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Supporting Students Following a Disaster
Long-term Impact of Disasters

- The first year post-disaster during which many children are forced to relocate and change schools results in significant life-disruption and can be associated with increased risk of developing post-disaster post-traumatic stress symptoms.
- A 2010 study found that it took several years after Hurricane Katrina for children to see a lessening of post-traumatic stress.
- Surveys completed seven years after Hurricane Katrina found that the rate of diagnosable mental health problems increased by nine percent in the New Orleans area.

Schonfeld, D., National Children’s Bereavement Center
Impact of Natural Disasters on Displaced Families and Children

- Post Hurricane Katrina:
  - Families moved an average of three times before locating permanent housing.
  - Evacuated to 48 states, separating families from support systems, friends, schools and churches
  (Pfefferbaum, Houston, Wyche, Van Horn, Reyes, Leon, Slaughter and North, 2008)

- Post Hurricane Katrina:
  - Displaced students in Louisiana public schools in the year following the storm performed worse in all subjects and grades compared to other students
  - Experienced problems related to attendance, mental health, behavior, and academic performance
  (National Commission on Children and Disasters, 2010)
Long-term Impact of Disasters

- Not all victims of disaster suffer significantly from long-term stress reactions.
- Many victims may continue to be reminded or re-experience some degree of crisis reactions over a longer period of time.
- These crisis reactions are often associated with trigger events, environmental cues, that remind the person of the disaster. These cues can bring back the intense emotion and physical reactions of the original trauma.

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA, 2009)
Factors Impacting Recovery

Cascading Events: the disaster is just the beginning.

- Increases in:
  - domestic violence
  - child abuse
  - alcohol/drug abuse
  - health complaints
  - school/work absenteeism
  - depression/suicidal behavior

NOVA, 2012
Factors Impacting Recovery

- Characteristics of post-disaster environment
- Mobility/relocation
- Engagement in coping
- Level of resiliency
- Family functioning
- Losses incurred

NOVA, 2012
Factors to Consider When Assessing for Psychological Trauma Potential

- Type of disaster
- Degree of warning
- Duration
- Threat perceptions
- Exposure to death and destruction
- Physical injury

NOVA, 2012
Factors to Consider when Assessing for Psychological Trauma Potential

Circles of Vulnerability

- GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY
- POPULATION AT RISK
- PSYCHOSOCIAL PROXIMITY

Lahad, M. CSPC, Kiryat Shmona, Israel
Disaster Survivors Most Likely to Experience Severe Psychological Reactions

Includes survivors who experienced:

- Intense exposure;
- Loss of loved one;
- Major disruption of basic needs and services;
- History of prior trauma;
- Major life stressors

Reissman et al., 2010
CRISIS INTERVENTION
Crisis Intervention Goals

- Provide **Safety** and **Security** (S & S)
- Allow for **Ventilation** and **Validation** (V & V)
- **Predict** and **Prepare** for the future (P & P)

NOVA, 2012
Crisis Intervention Goals

- Protect from excessive exposure to reminders
- Restore equilibrium and routine
- Open and enhance communication
- Reduce disaster-related stressors
- Reinforce pre-existing strengths and resilience
- Support natural recovery

NOVA, 2009
The severity of a disaster’s impact on individual children is directly correlated with the stability of their broader environment. In the midst of such upheaval, schools have the opportunity to be a source of stability.

- Dr. Joy Osofsky, Louisiana State University
Post Disaster: What Students Need Help With

- Meeting basic needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, school supplies)
- Transition to new schools
- Dealing with losses
- Strategies to help them understand their disaster experience
- Strategies to cope with anxiety and other strong emotional responses
- Establishing social support and connections
- Adapting to the “new normal”
Helping Children After Disaster: Tips for Teachers

- Remain calm and reassuring
- Acknowledge and normalize feelings/reactions
- Encourage expression about disaster-related events
- Emphasize children’s resiliency
- Encourage help-seeking

University of Oklahoma Health Science Center, 2005
Establish/reinforce routines and expectations

Provide opportunities for children to share their concerns

Involve children in activities that allow them to make choices and resume a sense of control over their environment

Incorporate information about the disaster into related subject areas, as appropriate
Helping Children After Disaster: Tips for Teachers

- Listen to and observe children’s behavior
- Be sensitive to the disruption that relocation may cause
- Consider the developmental level and unique experiences of each child
- Involve students in recovery-related activities/projects
- Identify children at risk and make a referral to the appropriate school or community-based resource

University of Oklahoma Health Science Center, 2005
Helping a Child Prepare for and Cope with a Disaster

- Have your child document everything that is being done to prepare for the disaster
- Assign your child tasks to assist in the preparation for the disaster
- Answer questions in a calm and reassuring tone
- Stress that keeping the family safe is the number one priority
- Explain to your child what to expect after the disaster
- Limit media exposure
- Have your child document his/her disaster experience, before, during and after the disaster
- Be a role model

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
Helping a Child Prepare for and Cope with a Disaster

- Validate and help your child express his/her feelings in a safe manner
- Provide structure, expectations and establish routines
- Leave your child with familiar people if you have to be away
- Reconnect your child with supportive people, community, culture and rituals
- Reassure your child that you will be there for him/her
- Involve your child in recovery efforts and projects

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
Recommendations for Supporting Displaced Students

- **Conduct a needs assessment** to determine what resources and services are necessary to provide adequate support.
- Provide assistance in accessing school uniforms, if required, and other materials or supplies to support learning.
- **Assign a classroom “buddy” and “adult mentor”** to assist each student in acculturating into the new school environment.
- Meet with the student and parents to provide them the opportunity to share their disaster experience in a safe environment without retraumatization.
Recommendations for Supporting Displaced Students

- Develop an outreach strategy for children who are living in shelters or temporary housing
- Identify ways for students to stay in contact with displaced classmates
- Establish daily routines
- Anticipate the need for increased before-and-after school child care

National Association of School Psychologists, 2016
Recommendations for Supporting Displaced Students

- Design a plan for the student for responding to questions by other students regarding their disaster experience.
- Work with the student as needed in developing coping and problem solving skills.
- **Involve the student in prosocial activities** that will create positive peer connections.
- Be prepared to address a variety of emotional needs, as students may have experienced many losses; said losses may include their home, community, school, friends, neighbors, possessions, feelings of safety and security, a sense of normalcy, lifestyle, and other losses unique to each individual.
Recommendations for Supporting Displaced Students

- Involve the student in school activities to provide support to those in their former community, and other communities that have experienced a disaster.
- Food or clothing drives, collection of school supplies, or writing letters of gratitude to rescue and recovery workers who have and continue to assist others are examples of healing activities
  - These activities give the student a sense of control in taking an active role to help those who have lost so much.

University of Oklahoma Health Science Center, 2005
Recommendations for Supporting Displaced Students

- **Investigate resources** to allow a return to activities they previously enjoyed (sports, dance, band, etc.).
- **Provide information for college bound students** who may have some special concerns following relocation.

*University of Oklahoma Health Science Center, 2005*
Supporting Students Impacted By Disaster

Teach students how to:

- Stay safe
- Manage emotions
- Stay focused on what they can control
- Adjust to what they cannot control

*Lawrence, L., 2017*
School Mental Health Crisis Interventions

- Psychological First Aid
- Psychoeducation
- Classroom/group interventions
- Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Interventions
  - CBITS
  - SSET
  - Bounce Back
- Grief counseling/bereavement support
- Trauma-Informed Care
“In disasters, resilience is the rule rather than the exception. Resilience can be learned and enhanced.”

(Shultz, et al., 2007)
Resources to Help Children Understand, Prepare for, and Cope with Disasters

- Helping Children Cope with a Disaster

- Talking to Children about Disasters (English)
  - https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Talking-to-Children-about-Disasters.aspx

- Talking to Children about Disasters (Spanish)
Resources to Help Children Understand, Prepare for, and Cope with Disasters

- SAMHSA
  - [https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma12-4732.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma12-4732.pdf)

- American Red Cross

- American Academy of Pediatrics
  - [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx)

- CDC
  - [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/HelpingYouthCopewithDisaster.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/HelpingYouthCopewithDisaster.pdf)
Contact Information

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Strategies for District Homeless Liaisons

&

Our

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education

SUPER POWERS
Preparing Before Disaster Strikes

Be actively engaged with your HUD Continued of Care NOW!
Working with your CoC is a Must!
Presentations to School-Based Staff

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)
Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START

Training Session for New School UP-START Liaisons

September 25, 2018
Neighbors Helping Neighbors

- When disaster strikes around your state or even across the ocean, we need to also be prepared to help.
- Often times, students from those schools affected by the disaster come into your schools as homeless.
Remember to Take Care of Yourself

- So often, the District Homeless Liaison is affected by the disaster and asking for help and support is a must.

- Be in contact with your neighboring District Homeless Liaisons, your State Homeless Coordinator, School House Connection, or the National Center for Homeless Education for support and guidance.
How to Reach Us

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