

Red Cross is seeking Disaster Mental Health (DMH) Support

There are two ways to volunteer:

1. **Volunteering in your local community** - local volunteers may be called upon to provide mental health support to volunteers going on national disaster assignments or to Red Cross chapter workers and volunteers who may be experiencing increased stress due to the pressures of coordinating the response to national disaster relief operations while still responding to the ongoing needs of their local community. To volunteer in your local community:
 - Please be aware that mental health volunteers will be expected to first complete Red Cross-specific training in disaster mental health to prepare them for their volunteer roles and to ensure the safety and welfare of Red Cross clients and volunteers as well as those from partnering agencies
 - A health status record and background check will also be required.
 - Be prepared for there to be a waiting period before Red Cross training is available and before you can provide DMH support in your local community.

2. **Volunteering outside your local community** – you must be available for a national deployment for a minimum of 10 days.
 - Prior to deploying on a national assignment, mental health volunteers must be registered as Red Cross volunteers and will be required to complete Red Cross-specific mental health training in disaster mental health to prepare them for their volunteer roles and to ensure the safety and welfare of Red Cross clients and volunteers as well as those from partnering agencies.
 - A health status record and background check will also be required.
 - Please note that Red Cross may not be actively recruiting out-of-state DMH volunteers at the time you approach the local chapter. Also, be prepared for there to be a waiting period before Red Cross training is available and before you can deploy out of state.

Volunteer mental health professionals should be prepared to:

- **Be patient and flexible.**

Preparing disaster relief workers to respond in the aftermath of disaster can be extremely challenging.

Mental health professionals should be prepared to register as volunteers with their local chapter. This will entail completing the paperwork necessary to establish a volunteer relationship with the Red Cross and provide documentation that verifies their professional credentials and training.

The Red Cross places high value in getting the right people, to the right place, doing the right thing, at the right time.

- **Complete specific Red Cross training.**

The Red Cross has a specific role in disaster response and disaster mental health volunteers are critical to carrying out that role.

Prior to utilizing mental health professionals in the Red Cross chapter or on a disaster relief operation outside their local community, volunteers must receive adequate training and information to prepare them to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

New volunteers may be required to take specific Red Cross training courses in Introduction to Disaster and Foundations in Disaster Mental Health in addition to others.

- **Provide non-traditional mental health services.**

In the aftermath of disaster, psychological first aid, triage, assessment and basic support are the most common and appropriate interventions.

Psychotherapy is not appropriate. Instead, early intervention is primarily focused on assisting disaster survivors and response workers in meeting their most basic needs. This includes helping people feel safe and secure, obtain food and water, address their physical health needs (first aid and access to their medications) and connect to their family, friends, and other social support networks.

Providing emotional comfort and support and helping individuals focus on their disaster-related needs is the most important mental health intervention you can provide at this time.

- **Support local Red Cross chapter activities.**

Mental health volunteers can assist their local chapter with preparing Red Cross disaster relief works for out-of-state assignments, supporting the families of disaster relief workers out on assignment, providing supportive to those returning from disaster relief operations, and conducting media interviews on the common reactions individuals experience in the aftermath of disaster.

Mental health workers may also be called upon to assist with other chapter support duties such as answering phones, preparing meals, filing, etc. While not typically considered traditional mental health services, helping out with these activities can go a long way to preserving the mental health of other Red Cross workers and staff.

What is the DMH Eligibility Criteria?

You must be licensed in the state in which you reside.

Your license must be:

- independently-licensed, master's level (or higher) social worker or other mental health professional.
- State-licensed or state-certified school counselors and school psychologists
- RNs with a certification for psychiatric and mental health nursing to include RN-BC, PMHNP-BC or PMHCNS-BC.

For more information or to volunteer, go to: <http://www.redcross.org/en/volunteer>