

Social Workers in Disaster Work: Survivors, Victims' Families & the Community—A certificate program

*Patricia A. Findley, DrPH, MSW, LCSW
Associate Professor*

Overview

- Illustrate a social work perspective in immediate/short term disaster and emergency response in working with individuals and communities
- Demonstrate how some of Social Work's guiding principles can guide all emergency response work
- Describe the social work certificate program in trauma response and crisis intervention offered by Rutgers University

Introduction

- Training both professional and volunteer workforces, both prior to and after a disaster, is critical
- Key factors:
 - Communication
 - Clarity of roles
 - Understanding needs and purposes
 - Managing for the “big picture”
 - Engaging and coordinating the affected community and outside supports

Crisis work: empowerment

- Individuals
- Families
- Communities



Crisis work: human rights perspective

- Global citizenship
- Basic rights of all people regardless of age, race, culture, gender, or national origin



Vulnerable Populations

- Elderly
- People with disabilities
 - Physical, sensory, cognitive
- Children
- Immigrants, refugees



Focus of Interventions

- Medical model?
- Mental health
 - The incidence of severe mental health disorders following a disaster are actually quite low:
 - 4% compared to 2% in the general population
 - Only 20% experience mild to moderate problems
 - Experts agree that mental health interventions must be culturally relevant for the affected community

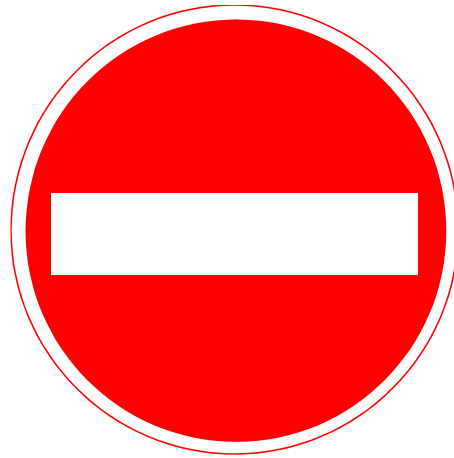
(Rowlands, 2013)

Interventions - Individuals

- Strengths-based
 - We need to acknowledge resilience within individuals
 - Most recover without mental health intervention
 - We also need to acknowledge that children are not as resilient as we once thought
 - Social support and psychosocial care are important, but we also need to allow the individuals and families to experience normal coping in abnormal situations

Interventions - Individuals

- Psychological debriefing for individuals is *not* recommended any longer



- Might be counterproductive and slow natural recovery
- (World Health Organization; Cochrane Review, 2004)

Interventions

- Community development with a strengths-based focus is recommended
 - Information dissemination
 - Needs assessment
 - Advocacy for needed services
 - Social planning post-disaster

Interventions-Community

- Enhance opportunities for community members to interact
 - Builds bonds, social support
 - Delivered where the individuals are
 - Can be rituals such as memorials, concerts, picnics, community meetings to rebuild homes

(Rowlands, 2013)

Specific Interventions-Individuals

- Psychological First Aid
- Crisis Intervention
- Case Management
- Longer term mental health interventions

Specific Interventions: Groups

- Group education
- Support groups
- Couple and family therapy
- Interventions focused on children and adolescents
 - Including education for adults on coping needs of the children
- First responder interventions

Tasks of a Social Worker in Trauma Response

- Training
- Project management and capacity building
- Personnel and organizational management
 - Social workers
 - Volunteers
- Psychological first aid
- Fundraising
- Case management
- Programming for children
- Consultation and counseling

Certificate program-post MSW



Certificate Program in Trauma Response and Crisis Intervention

- Designed for clinicians, mental health professionals, and practitioners from other disciplines who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills in the field of trauma response and crisis intervention.
- Workshops will address a variety of traumatic events such as interpersonal violence, natural disaster, terrorism, and personal/family crises.
- Certificates of completion are offered after each workshop and upon completion of the final certificate.

Participant Attends

- **9** Required Workshops
- **2** Elective Workshops
- **13** Days in Total

Program Learning Goals

1. Preventive intervention
 - Ability to assist with intervention and mitigation
2. Protective
 - Crisis intervention, work with vulnerable groups
3. Developmental or therapeutic
 - Contribute to short term and long term recovery efforts for both individuals and communities

Program Format

- 50 students
- Conference room
- Lecture, small group work, large group work

The Effects of Trauma across the Developmental Spectrum

- Describe the effects of trauma on the emotional, cognitive, neurological, and physical human systems
- Discuss neurophysiological and neurochemical changes and the efficacy of medication.
- Examine the short and long term effects of trauma across the life span (infancy, child, adolescent, adult)
- Identify the differences between normal grief and grief resulting from trauma

Foundations and Models of Crisis Intervention

- Examine the history and evolution of crisis intervention and trauma response over the past century
- Describe the different models and techniques currently used with different populations and discuss their effectiveness
- Identify public and private resources within the community available to clinicians and individuals affected by trauma
- Review the international psychosocial intervention programs and lessons learned from these efforts

Self-Care in Trauma Work

- Discuss secondary or vicarious traumatization among clinicians who work with trauma
- Explore the issues of transference and countertransference as it pertains to working with trauma
- Identify practical skills/methods for self-awareness/self-care

Differences and Diversity in the Experience, Effects and Treatment of Trauma

- Examine how culture and ethnicity influence the experience, effects and treatment of trauma
- Explore how pre-incident mental health and pre-existing mental health conditions (e.g. substance abuse, affective disorder) influence the experience, effects and treatment of trauma
- Identify special populations (e.g. refugees, children of war, etc.)

Responding to Disaster

- Describe different types of disaster including natural disaster and terrorism
- Discuss individual and community responses to disasters
- Examine the four phases of disaster response: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery
- Describe the elements and protocol of New Jersey's disaster response and available public and private resources

The Ethics of Trauma and Disaster Response: Doing Right, Doing Good

- Explore ethical consideration such as confidentiality in crisis intervention and trauma response
- Discuss ethical issues such as palliative care and family presence during death and critical medical treatment
- Discuss frameworks for making difficult ethical decisions

Family Treatment Approaches in Working with Trauma

- Examine how trauma experienced individually or as a group, affects the family system
- Utilizing the different family systems theories, explore approaches to treatment



Group Treatment Approaches in Working with Trauma

- Explore different group treatment modalities including defusing, debriefing and education, as well as short and long-term group therapy
- Describe how the modalities apply to different populations
- Examine the curative factors unique to group treatment

Individual Treatment Approaches in Working with Trauma

- Delineate the different theories related to trauma work
- Discuss the major approaches to trauma treatment, including their philosophical assumptions, strategies and techniques employed, and available outcome research
- Consider the role of spirituality and complimentary treatments in treating trauma

Two 1-day electives are required in addition to the required workshops

- **Some examples:**
 - The Impact of Gangs on Trauma Informed Care
 - The Neuroscience of Optimal Well-Being
 - Mental Health Responses to Mass Violence
 - The Application of Multi-Sensory Mindfulness Practices in Trauma Treatment
 - The Impact of Trauma
 - Cultural Competency in Trauma Treatment

Considerations in Teaching the Material

- Be culturally sensitive
 - Race/ethnicity, urban/rural, etc.
- Know the community you are working within
- Be familiar with the literature in the area
- Do not pathologize the community
 - Disrespectful, ignores the true appraisal of needs
- Practice ethically when delivering services or interventions or making decisions
 - Hierarchy is not important, everyone is a hero
- Self-care is critical

Adult Learning Methodology

- Mixed teaching methods
 - Lecture
 - Role play
 - Group work
 - Video and audio
- Engaging the audience
- Moderate discussion
- Thank the audience
- **Assess for negative impact of content



Questions?

- Thank you!
 - Patricia Findley, DrPH, MSW
 - Associate Professor
 - pfindley@ssw.rutgers.edu