

# **RED CROSS DISASTER MENTAL HEALTH VOLUNTEERS**

Red Cross Disaster Mental Health volunteer teams are active throughout the United States, meeting the emotional and psychosocial needs of disaster survivors and fellow Red Cross disaster workers. These teams respond to disasters of all sizes, from single family home fires to large-scale events.

If you are interested in joining a Disaster Mental Health team in your community, register to volunteer now, before a disaster occurs. This will give you time to take required courses and become acquainted with the Red Cross Disaster Mental Health program.

## **Becoming a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Team Member**

### What does the Red Cross do and what do we need?

The Red Cross provides shelter, feeding, emergency supplies, health and mental health support to hundreds of thousands of people affected by disasters of all sizes across the country. We are actively recruiting new Disaster Mental Health team members to provide support within your local community and on national disaster responses.

### What does a Disaster Mental Health team do?

- Respond to the immediate emotional distress and psychosocial needs of disaster survivors and Red Cross disaster responders.
- Supplement local mental health resources during times of disaster.
- Support the community in building resilience.

### How do Disaster Mental Health interventions differ from most mental health interventions?

Disaster Mental Health interventions are short-term and can range from as little as five minutes of support to a much longer period. Client engagement will occur once or twice, but generally no more than three times. The most effective contact will often involve psychological first aid, problem solving, facilitating the use of good coping skills, psychoeducation and task-centered activities to address basic needs and reduce stress.

### What if I'm already a trauma specialist – why do I need special training?

The Red Cross Disaster Mental Health role in disaster response is different from the regular work of most mental health professionals. Training is needed to understand that role.

### After I'm trained how can I help?

- Become a Disaster Action Team member (respond to local home fires)
- Provide Disaster Mental Health support to disaster survivors in your community
- Prepare Red Cross disaster relief workers for out-of-state assignments, support their families while they're gone and provide post-deployment support to workers returning from national assignments.
- Become a Red Cross Disaster Instructor
- Participate in community preparedness activities such as the Home Fire Campaign

- Build and strengthen local community partnerships
- If interested, be available for national deployments

Who is eligible to become a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health volunteer?

**Mental Health Professionals with:**

- **A Master's Degree AND**
- **A Current, Unencumbered License or Certification in any US State or Territory as a:**
  - Social worker
  - Psychologist
  - Professional counselor
  - Marriage and family therapist
  - Psychiatrist
  - School psychologist
  - School counselor

**Current Psychiatric Nurses with:**

- A current, unencumbered state license as a registered nurse
- A minimum of 2 years of experience working in a psychiatric setting

**Recently retired mental health professionals or psychiatric nurses (within the last 5 years)**

To become a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health volunteer:

- Visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).
- Click Volunteer, then click Apply Now to create a Red Cross ID.
- Complete a volunteer application.
- Respond to contact from your local chapter.
- Discuss volunteer options with your local chapter.
- Complete Red Cross Disaster Mental Health training courses.

For additional information or questions, please email [dmh@redcross.org](mailto:dmh@redcross.org).

**HURRICAN MARIA/ PUERT RICO**

The American Red Cross is currently providing disaster relief services to the residents of Puerto Rico, including Disaster Mental Health services. Given the current conditions in Puerto Rico, the Red Cross is relying on Disaster Mental Health volunteers who are already in Puerto Rico. At this time they are not deploying brand new Disaster Mental Health volunteers from the continental United States.

If you are a psychologist in Puerto Rico, please reach out to the Puerto Rico Psychological Association for the most up to date volunteer information. See below for contact information from Dr. Johanna Gracia from PRPA.