



The Importance of Collaborative Networks in Responding to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav

Joy D. Osofsky, Ph.D.

Howard J. Osofsky, M.D., Ph.D.

Tonya C. Hansel, Ph.D.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

March/April 2010, Chile

Hurricane Katrina

- August 29, 2005
 - Over 1800 lost their lives
 - Millions were left homeless
 - Over 189,000 children in Louisiana were displaced following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita shortly after; many were displaced in Mississippi

What to Expect Following a Major Disaster

- Chaos
- Helplessness
- Individuals trying to rescue and provide help immediately- no organized response
- Many children and families suffering
- Children and adults looking stunned, numb, unresponsive, anxious

The Evacuation & Rescue following Katrina

- Poor planning
- Slow response to basic needs – water, food, shelter
- Very slow response to help the city and its citizens
- The desperation to save lives led to separation of children and families

Pre-Katrina Preparedness

- Louisiana Rural Trauma Services Center
 - Funded in 2003 as a Category III NCTSN center
- Goal: to provide, improve, and enhance urgently needed services for rural children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events in Louisiana; primarily school based
- Resources:
 - Clinicians trained in empirically validated treatments
 - Strong partnerships and experience in working with systems
 - School systems
 - State and Local Government (Office of Mental Health, Dept of Education)
 - Primary Care and Hospital Settings
 - Juvenile Courts

RESPONDING TO THE HURRICANES

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

A PARTNER IN
NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

A Life in the Community for Everyone
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Outcomes

- Immediate disaster response
 - Psychological First Aid (Brymer et al., 2005)
 - First responders working in the field
 - Individuals and families living in shelters
 - First responders and families on cruise ships
- Louisiana Spirit
 - Federally funded crisis counseling program
 - Specialized Crisis Counseling Services
 - Practice Directorate

LOUISIANA
Spirit
HURRICANE RECOVERY

A PARTNER IN
NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

A Life in the Community for Everyone
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Louisiana Spirit



Specialized Crisis Counseling Services: Child and Adolescent program

- Children
 - Information & education
 - Counseling (crisis, trauma, grief, loss)
- Adults
 - Support for the adults so they can help the children
 - Information & education
- Institutional Gatekeepers
 - Information and education
 - Referral services

Repair the invisible damage.

Hope is the enemy of despair. If you think
you've lost yours, call to put fate and be heart.

1-800-273-TALK

A PARTNER IN
NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

A Life in the Community for Everyone
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Louisiana Spirit Practice Directorate

- Consultation at the State, Agency, and Team level to Louisiana Spirit's Specialized Crisis Counseling Services
- Goals:
 - Provide consultation and training
 - Insure implementation fidelity
 - Provide support with complex situations
 - Aid in the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the program

Strengths of the Collaboration for the Practice Directorate

- LSUHSC/LRTSC
 - Leadership of a State NCTSN Center
- SAMHSA/NCTSN/NCPTSD
 - Knowledge, objectivity, and resources of other centers and a government agency

What it is Like Currently in Some Areas Heavily Devastated by Katrina

A PARTNER IN
NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

A Life in the Community for Everyone
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

LSU Health Sciences Center and NCTSN Center Evaluation and Treatment Services for Traumatized Children

- NCTSN Hurricane Assessment and Referral Tool (with adaptation of the UCLA PTSD Index) administered in collaboration with schools to over 17,000 children and adolescents in heavily impacted areas – 2005-2009
- Importance of rebuilding schools for recovery
- Individual and group treatment services offered in school settings for children meeting cut-off for referral for services or requesting services

LSU Health Sciences Center and NCTSN Center Training and Supportive Services in Schools

- Supportive services and training for **teachers** (trauma and impact on children and parents; “red flag” behaviors to recognize risk; traumatization of parents, teachers, first responders)
- Consultation for school counselors and social workers
- Parent groups
- Resilience/leadership groups in schools



Resilience Building Activities

- Youth Leadership Program
- 2009-2010 year over 200 students participating
- Increase self efficacy through active participation in school and community activities
- Volunteer service to community

4th -12th Graders in Greater New Orleans Area

- In 2006, 45% met cut-off for referral
- In 2007, 30% met cut-off for referral
- In 2008, 35% met cut-off for referral (assessed after Hurricane Gustav evacuation)
- Children who were still displaced and could not return endorsed as many or more mental health symptoms as children living in areas of New Orleans that are still being rebuilt

Primary Recovery Concerns

- Children with previous trauma are more likely to exhibit symptoms and be referred for services
 - The chaos and deprivation of the living environment following the hurricanes exacerbated problems of daily living for families

Lessons Learned about Disaster Response

- In a major disaster, the impact may continue over time due to the extent of the devastation, slowness of recovery within communities, and concerns about safety
- Collaboration among agencies and groups is crucial for recovery and rebuilding

Lessons Learned about Disaster Needs for Children and Families

- Most children will be resilient, especially with support from adults
- For prevention and intervention, it is crucial to build capacity and provide supportive services in settings accessible to children and families (i.e. preschools, schools, community centers)

Lessons Learned about Disaster Response and Recovery

- Training on trauma and implementation of , evidence based interventions for trauma is very important
- Support and services are needed for teachers, school personnel, and parents
- Continuing preparedness for schools and communities is crucial to support recovery and resilience

Lessons Learned about Disaster Response and Recovery

- It is important to recognize the needs of and provide support for volunteers, outreach workers and interveners, health and mental health professionals who may experience PTSD and/or “compassion fatigue.” In recovery, it is essential to emphasize the need for self-care