



New Hampshire Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team

Overview

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has developed an organized team of mental health and other helping professionals who respond to the behavioral health needs of New Hampshire residents following disasters (e.g., bioterrorism, manmade or natural disasters). Five regional disaster behavioral health response teams (DBHRT) can be deployed immediately anywhere in the state. These teams would respond to disasters or critical incidents when local behavioral health resources have been depleted or are overwhelmed. The goal of the disaster behavioral health response teams is to provide an organized response to individual victims, family members, survivors, or the community affected by critical incidents or disasters.

Team Composition

Teams include individuals with experience in human services, psychology, mental health, substance abuse, social work, psychiatry, education or spirituality. Over 1000 Behavioral Health Response Team members have completed specialized training. Team members operate under the supervision of DHHS's Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator, receive ongoing training and participate in community/statewide drills and exercises.

Interventions

The DBHRTs provide interventions in three distinct phases that may be delivered at a disaster site, in an affected community, or statewide. The phases and interventions include:

Immediate Response

- Behavioral Health Needs Assessment
- Psychological First Aid
- Crisis Incident Stress Management
- Community Outreach
- Public Information
- Behavioral Health Consultation

Transition to Recovery

- Brief Supportive Counseling
- Information Dissemination
- Screening and Referral
- Support Groups
- Public Education

Preparedness and Mitigation

- Disaster Behavioral Health Planning and Networking
- Prevention Services Designed to Strengthen Community Resiliency
- Specialized Training Initiatives for Team Members and Community Partners

Activation

The Governor, or their designee at the Department of Health and Human Services-Emergency Services Unit, would activate these teams during federal or state emergencies. If an emergency is not declared, local municipalities or emergency response systems may request assistance in order to meet the behavioral health needs of communities in local crises by contacting the Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator at **(603) 271-9454** or **(603) 419-0074**.

For additional information about the role these teams can play in assisting your community, please contact Jennifer Schirmer, Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator, at DHHS via email Jennifer.Schirmer@dhhs.nh.gov or by calling **(603) 271-9454** or **(603) 419-0074**. After 4pm M-F or on weekends DBHRT services may be requested by calling the Duty Officer at Emergency Management **(800) 852-3792**.