



FEMA Fact Sheet

Crisis Counseling Assistance & Training Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) implements the Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) as a supplemental assistance program available to the United States and its Territories. Section 416 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 1974 authorizes FEMA to fund mental health assistance and training activities in areas which have been Presidentially declared a disaster. The Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Emergency Mental Health and Traumatic Stress Services Branch (EMHTSSB) works with FEMA through an interagency agreement to provide technical assistance, consultation, and training for State and local mental health personnel, grant administration and program oversight.

Program Overview

The mission of the CCP is to assist individuals and communities in recovering from the effects of natural and human-caused disasters through the provision of community-based outreach and psycho-educational services. The CCP supports short-term interventions that involve the counseling goals of assisting disaster survivors in understanding their current situation and reactions, mitigating stress, assisting survivors in reviewing their disaster recovery options, promoting the use or development of coping strategies, providing emotional support, and encouraging linkages with other individuals and agencies who may help survivors in their recovery process (recover to their pre-disaster level of functioning).

Supplemental funding for crisis counseling is available to State Mental Health Authorities through two grant mechanisms: (1) the **Immediate Services Program (ISP)** which provides funds for up to 60 days of services immediately following a disaster declaration; and (2) the **Regular Services Program (RSP)** which provides funds for up to nine months following a disaster declaration. While SAMHSA provides technical assistance for an ISP, the monitoring responsibility remains with FEMA. FEMA has designated SAMHSA as the authority responsible for monitoring all RSP programs.

Key Principles

The CCP is guided by the following key principles. It is:

- **Strengths Based**— CCP services promote resilience, empowerment, and recovery.
- **Anonymous**—Crisis counselors do not classify, label, or diagnose people; no records or case files are kept.
- **Outreach Oriented**—Crisis counselors deliver services in the communities rather than wait for survivors to seek their assistance.
- **Conducted in Nontraditional Settings**—Crisis counselors make contact in homes and communities, not in clinical or office settings.
- **Designed to Strengthen Existing Community Support Systems**—The CCP supplements, but does not supplant or replace, existing community systems.

Services Funded

The CCP provides the following services to achieve its mission:

- **Individual Crisis Counseling:** Helps survivors understand their reactions, improve coping strategies, review their options, and connect with other individuals and agencies that may assist them.
- **Basic Supportive or Educational Contact:** General support and information on resources and services available to disaster survivors.



FEMA

“FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.”



- **Group Crisis Counseling:** Group sessions led by trained crisis counselors who offer skills to help survivors cope with their situations and reactions.
- **Public Education:** Information and education about typical reactions, helpful coping strategies, and available disaster-related resources.
- **Community Networking and Support:** Relationship building with community resource organizations, Faith-based groups, and local agencies.
- **Assessment, Referral, and Resource Linkage:** Adult and child needs assessment and referral to additional disaster relief services or mental health or substance abuse treatment.
- **Development and Distribution of Educational Materials:** Flyers, brochures, tip sheets, educational materials, and Web site information developed and distributed by CCP staff.
- **Media and Public Service Announcements:** Media activities and public messaging in partnership with local media outlets, State and local governments, charitable organizations, or other community brokers.

Disaster Crisis Counseling Versus Mental Health Treatment

The key difference between traditional mental health services and crisis counseling is the way services are provided. In contrast to the crisis counseling services provided through the CCP, mental health treatment, as typically defined within the mental health community, implies the provision of assistance to individuals for an existing pathological condition or disorder. Typically, the mental health professional and client will

discuss various treatment options and agree to certain interventions and treatment goals.

Crisis counseling individual and group encounters serve to engage people and encourage them to talk about their experiences and teaches ways to manage stress. These activities can help counselors identify people who may need referrals to behavioral health treatment. They also enhance social and emotional connections to others in the community and promote effective coping strategies and resilience. Crisis Counselors work closely with community organizations to familiarize themselves with available resources and to link survivors to needed services.

Program Evaluation and Accountability

CCP Grant awards are contingent upon the State meeting the following conditions:

- Providing regular progress and financial status reports.
- Documenting needs and the manner in which the program addresses the needs of the affected population, the types of services offered and coordination of services if other agencies are involved, training for project staff, and a detailed expenditure report.
- Participating in at least one site visit by FEMA and SAMHSA during the period of the grant. (If any questionable activities are noted or observed, corrective action is immediately taken, up to disallowing the costs).

