

Immediate Services Program Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Why should County Mental Health (CMH) mobilize?

Your County received a Presidential Disaster Declaration due to the recent disaster event. Section 416 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 100-707) authorizes the President to provide crisis counseling assistance and training to alleviate mental health problems caused or exacerbated by major disaster. The Act reads as follows:

- *Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training.* The President is authorized to provide professional counseling services, including financial assistance to State or local agencies or private mental health organizations to provide such services or training of disaster workers, to victims of major disasters in order to relieve mental health problems caused or aggravated by such major disaster or its aftermath.

What mental health issues may surface?

Problems such as sleep disturbances, depression, irritability and family discord commonly occur following a disaster. The Immediate Services Program (ISP) for Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training was developed in response to the recognition that disasters provide a variety of emotional and mental health disturbances, which, if untreated, may become long term and debilitating. Programs developed under Section 416 are designed to provide timely relief and to prevent long-term problems from developing.

What funding is available through the ISP?

Assistance under the Stafford Act is limited to Presidentially declared major disasters. The program is designed to supplement the available resources and services of the State and local governments. The support for crisis counseling services to disaster victims may be granted if existing programs and resources cannot provide these services. Funds may be needed to mobilize crisis counseling teams, evaluate the range and duration of crisis counseling services to be provided, train staff, staff FEMA Disaster Assistance Centers, etc.

How does the County apply for ISP funds?

The County begins by assessing the disaster mental health needs through an Initial Needs Assessment that must be initiated within 10 days of the date of the Presidential declaration. If the county determines that available county resources cannot meet the need for disaster mental health services, an application for ISP funds may be submitted.

What consultation is available from the California Department of Mental Health (CADMH)?

The CADMH Disaster Assistance Coordinator is available to consult with the County in organizing a mental health response. For assistance contact:

Gladys Mitchell, Disaster Assistance Coordinator

1600 9th Street, Room 100

Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 654-3598 (phone)

(916) 591-1785 (cell/pager)

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E-mail: gladys.mitchell@dmh.ca.gov

Is the ISP pilot application a form or an outline?

Essentially, it is both. The application is set up so the applicant is prompted for the necessary information and can fill in the blanks, boxes and tables of information, as needed, to complete the application.

Can the ISP pilot application be submitted to CADMH electronically?

The application may be submitted electronically for review purposes, but a hard copy containing an original signature from the County Mental Health Director or designee on the signature sheet is required. It is preferred that the application be submitted in both hard copy and e-version so parts of the application may be cut and pasted into the State application as needed.

Who may sign for the application?

It is important that the County Mental Health Director or designee signs off on this application. The application must be submitted with an original signature.

Who reviews the application and awards funds and how much time is available to prepare and submit an application?

The CADMH reviews each application and compiles individual county requests into one State application for funding. The State application is then forwarded to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES). OES must submit the application to FEMA no later than the 14th day following the Presidential disaster declaration. Given this short time frame, the county will have less than 14 days to complete an application. The CADMH Disaster Assistance Coordinator will establish a timeframe for submission of the county application. Please be prepared to devote personnel resources to the application process for any length of time and hours necessary to complete and submit the application to CADMH by the date specified.

FEMA and CMHS jointly review the State application. FEMA may award money to reimburse the State (or local providers) for disaster mental health services provided prior to the Presidential declaration if these services were beyond State and local resources. In addition, disaster mental health services may be funded for up to 60 days from the Presidential declaration date.

What types of positions does the ISP typically fund?

Typically the positions listed below are funded as project positions to provide disaster mental health services. Many positions may be part-time in basis and some may be in-kind contributions.

- **Crisis Counseling Project (CCP) Manager**

Typical Duties: Lead coordinator for the crisis counseling response at the local level. Ensures adequate and appropriate staffing and training, complies with Federal/State/local reporting requirements, responsible for fiscal tracking/monitoring, liaison to other disaster services agencies to ensure non-duplication of services. Regularly conducts site visits to providers, accompanies crisis counselors as an observer to ensure that appropriate services are delivered.

- **CCP Assistant Manager**

Typical Duties: Depending on the size and scope of the disaster and subsequent staffing requirements, an assistant may be needed to complete the duties as outlined above.

- **CCP Fiscal/Contracts Coordinator**

Typical Duties: Ensures that funds are monitored and tracked so funds are used efficiently and effectively. Oversees fiscal administration, reporting and reviews program budget for modifications as needed.

- **CCP Team Leader**

Typical Duties: Leads the crisis counseling response in the field for whatever size team is assigned. Usually, this person is a mental health professional. Depending on the size and scope of the disaster, providers may have more than one team leader on staff.

- **Crisis Counselors/Outreach Workers**

Typical Duties: People who work as crisis counselors may have a bachelor's degree or less in a specialty, which may or may not be related to counseling or they may be mental health professionals. Whatever their education background, good crisis counselors/outreach workers have strong intuitive skills about people and how to relate well to others. They possess good judgment, common sense, and are good listeners. They may or may not be indigenous workers. Crisis counselors/outreach workers will conduct outreach, counseling, education, provide information and referral services, and work with individuals, families and groups.

Who is eligible to receive ISP services?

The FEMA Guideline of who is eligible for ISP services includes:

1. Disaster Mental Health/Crisis Counseling Services.

An individual may be eligible for crisis counseling services if he/she was a resident of the designated major disaster area at the time of the disaster event or was located in the area at the time of the disaster event and if he/she has mental health needs caused or aggravated by the disaster or its aftermath.

2. Training.

The crisis counseling project employees or consultants to the project are eligible for specific instruction that may be required to enable them to best provide appropriate disaster mental health crisis counseling to eligible individuals. All Federal, State, and local disaster workers responsible for assisting disaster victims are eligible for general instruction/training designed to enable them to deal effectively and humanely with those persons affected by the disaster.

When applying for ISP funding, please be aware of the following:

- Attention should be given to high-risk groups such as children, the frail elderly, the disadvantaged and minorities.
- Prolonged psychotherapy measures are inappropriate for this program.
- Local resources and indigenous personnel are preferred and encouraged.
- Programs should be adapted to local needs, including special cultural, geographic or political constraints.

Completing the ISP pilot application package:

The application is available in an electronic version via e-mail attachment or by downloading it from the CADMH website: **www.dmh.ca.gov**

At the Department of Mental Health home page (www.dmh.ca.gov) select and click-on "Community Mental Health Services" in the far left column. This leads to a menu of programs. Select and click-on "Disaster Assistance to Counties" for the application package.

By using the electronic version (e-mail attachment, disk or web download) the applicant can fill in boxes, tables and areas marked in with a gray box () with county specific information. Simply click on the gray box and begin typing.

Submitting the ISP application package:

The application may be submitted electronically for review purposes, but a hard copy containing an original signature from the County Mental Health Director is required. It is preferred that the application be submitted in both hard copy and e-version so parts of the application may be cut and pasted into the State's overall application to the federal government.