

## **MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS RECRUITMENT INFORMATION For American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health (DMH) Responders**

The American Red Cross Disaster Cycle Services (DCS) is client-facing throughout the entire disaster cycle of preparedness, response and recovery. DCS response provides relief when disasters strike for those affected by residential fires, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, transportation accidents, terrorist attacks, mudslides and other man-made and natural disasters 24 hours a day, 365 days-a-year (over 70,000 disasters in the US each year). All American Red Cross assistance is free.

Mental Health Professionals who desire to serve their communities in times of disaster or crisis are urged to join their local American Red Cross Chapter before a disaster happens. With its effective infrastructure and resources, the Red Cross is at the forefront of disaster response education and training. The Red Cross actively recruits, trains, and deploys licensed mental health professionals to provide support services to those affected by disasters and workers across the entire disaster cycle.

We are always looking to recruit new Disaster Mental Health volunteers to provide support within the local community and on out-of-state relief operations.

### To become a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health volunteer:

1. Enter your zip code under “Find your local Red Cross” at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) to find the chapter closest to you.
2. Register as a volunteer with the chapter by:  
On your chapter web page click on “Volunteer” on the left side and submit an application by making an account in Volunteer Connection.
3. Complete the application:
  - a. Read and sign the conduct documents
  - b. Complete a background check
  - c. Attend an orientation
  - d. Fill out a Health Status Record.
4. Take Disaster Mental Health: Fundamentals, Disaster Cycle Services: An Overview and Psychological First Aid training.
5. Fulfill any other training or paperwork that your chapter may require.

### Who is eligible to volunteer with the Red Cross as a DMH volunteer?

- Independently-licensed, master’s level (or higher) mental health professionals (licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), psychologists ( PhD), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC), Licensed Marriage & Family Therapists (LMFT), and psychiatrists (M.D.)
- School counselors and school psychologists with a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential.
- RNs certified for psychiatric and mental health nursing to include RN-BC, PMHNP-BC or PMHCNS-BC
- Must be licensed and live in California.

While interns or associates, and unlicensed mental health personnel in all mental health disciplines who lack the above qualifications are not eligible to participate in the Red Cross Disaster Mental Health activity, they are encouraged to serve as volunteer providers of other client-oriented Red Cross services such as Disaster Action Team (DAT), client casework services, working in shelters, and mass feeding. These vital disaster services require excellent people skills and working in close collaboration with the disaster health and mental health services activities.

### Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Training

**Disaster Mental Health: Introduction [30 Minutes]** is a web-based course for credentialed professionals who are interested in becoming Red Cross Disaster Mental Health responders. The course presents an overview of the services that Disaster Mental Health responders provide both on a local response and on a large disaster relief operation and identifies the next steps to becoming a volunteer. It is currently not a required course for Disaster Mental Health volunteers but it is strongly encouraged that interested volunteers take the course before moving forward with additional trainings. <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/disaster-training> Click on “Online Training Modules” tab to see link for DMH Introduction

**Disaster Mental Health Fundamentals [3 Hours]** is a basic level, webinar or instructor-led course that introduces the key concepts, knowledge and skills required of a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health (DMH) responder. It provides participants the opportunity to apply their learning to real-world examples that reflect challenges experienced by DMH responders, be it on a Disaster Action Team (DAT) response or serving on a larger disaster relief operation. *Note: This course was formerly titled, Foundations of Disaster Mental Health.*

**Psychological First Aid [4 Hours]** is a basic level, instructor-led course. It provides a framework for understanding the factors that affect stress responses in disaster relief workers and the clients they serve. Participants engage in practice exercises and complete a self-review questionnaire.

**Disaster Cycle Services: An Overview** is a web-based course of 60 minutes or instructor-led of approximately 120 minutes. It provides an overview of how DCS fulfills the Red Cross mission and describes the whole cycle process of helping individuals, families and communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. The course also reviews the role of community and government partners and describes opportunities for volunteers in Disaster Cycle Services.

#### How can a mental health professional help in my community?

- Work with your local chapter to provide 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.
- Participate in local responses, such as providing support to a family who has experienced a house fire.
- Be involved in preparedness efforts, such as the Home Fire Campaign and community disaster education (Coping in Today's World).
- Facilitate long-term recovery for clients by providing emotional support and connection to local resources.
- Conduct media interviews on behalf of the chapter to discuss the common reactions individuals experience in the aftermath of disaster.
- Assist with other chapter support duties such as answering phones, preparing meals, filing, etc. While not typically considered traditional mental health services, helping out with these activities can help preserve the mental health of other Red Cross workers and staff.

#### How can I help outside my local community?

- Give your local Red Cross chapter your dates of availability via Volunteer Connection.
- If assigned, make arrangements to be away from home for at least 10 days.

- Be prepared for the possibility that out-of-state deployment opportunities will not be available at the time you approach your local chapter.
- Be prepared for there to be a waiting period before Red Cross training is available and before you can deploy out of state.

### What is different about volunteering with the Red Cross?

- **Be patient and flexible.** Situations in disaster change rapidly and needs are fluid. You may be asked to work at one site providing one type of service and then be switched to another site within a short period of time.
- **Our co-workers are also our clients.** 90% of Red Cross staff are volunteers just like you. They need your support.
- **You won't have an office.** Most mental health work done in disaster is done in non-traditional settings, like shelters and service centers. You may be providing support as you're going for a walk or sitting under a tree.
- **Provide non-traditional mental health services.**
  - Psychological first aid, triage, crisis intervention, assessment and basic support
  - Early intervention is primarily focused on assisting disaster survivors and response workers in meeting their most basic needs.
    - Helping people feel safe and secure
    - Obtaining food and water
    - Addressing physical health needs (e.g., first aid, medications)
    - Connecting to family, friends, and other social support networks.
  - Psychotherapy is not appropriate.
- **The work is very satisfying .... And very frustrating.** You're working with people who have immediate needs for emotional support, food, shelter and other basics. The most crucial need is information, which often you don't have because the situation is constantly changing. We do the best we can with the limited resources we have.

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

- The Red Cross has a specific role in disaster response which is different from the regular work of most mental health professionals. Training is needed to understand that role.
- In order to minimize frustration, you need to understand the disaster response system and organization of the Red Cross.
- Most trauma interventions are not appropriate in the early aftermath of disaster, but your specialized training can be helpful in identifying those who are at risk for longer-term complications.

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