The Church Disaster Mental Health Project: A Gulf Region Training Network

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Abstract

The purpose of this poster is to introduce the Church Disaster Mental Health Project (CDMHP). The CDMHP provides active in-person and online outreach, education, and consultation on disaster mental health topics. Another emphasis of the CDMHP is to reach clergy in the Mississippi Gulf Region, especially pastors and church leaders from African-American churches.

www.churchdisasterhelp.org
Support for Project

*The Church Disaster Mental Health Project is funded by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts and Rand Gulf States Policy Institute

*This research was funded by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health (Prime Award Number CPIMP06018-01) through a grant from the University of Mississippi Medical Center's Mississippi Institute for Improvement of Geographic Minority Health whose quest is to eliminate health disparities.

*The Clergy/Mental Health Partnership is funded by the Red Cross Resilency Fund and Foundation for the MidSouth.

*The Clergy Disaster Response Network is funded by the United Jewish Communities Foundation.

The findings, opinions and recommendations expressed therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the funding agencies.
Background

- Researching the role of the African American Church in overcoming disaster mental health disparities following Hurricane Katrina
- Found that African American clergy discussed their need for disaster training
- The findings from this study led to the CDMHP
A Model for Training Clergy to Respond to Disasters

“You train the pastors, we train the congregation, and the congregation trains the community…”

- The CDMHP is based on a three-tier training model which evolved from clergy interviews
- Training needs (e.g., crisis counseling, recognize trauma symptoms, disaster response plan)
- Training delivery formats (e.g., in-person trainings, seminars in churches, roundtables, online training)
Community Training & Education

- Develop community training and education infrastructure:
  - Created diverse church advisory board
  - Providing in-person training and education seminars for pastors and church leaders
    - October Pastoral Care Development Conference
    - Disaster Preparedness training with World Vision
    - First Responder training with Department of Mental Health and Department of Health
    - Mental Health-Pastoral Care Summit and Learning Collaborative with MS Interfaith Disaster Task Force
Online Training & Education

- Develop online training and education infrastructure:
  - E-Newsletter (highlights trainings, resources, research)
  - Created online training and resource website:
    - 70 online training modules
    - 60 fact sheets
    - 36 online disaster manuals
    - Online mental health resources and links (e.g., Red Cross Access to Care Therapists)
Research Activity

- Develop research infrastructure:
  - Studying effectiveness of project and refine model
  - Establishing collaborative research partnership with local churches and leaders
  - Disseminating findings
  - Pursuing additional funding and refining training model
Clergy/Mental Health Partnership

- Sample services:
  - Organizing two-day Mental Health Summit with mental health, pastoral care, and mental health-pastoral care collaboration tracks
  - Networking religious leaders and mental health providers to facilitate appropriate bi-directional assessment, services, and referral
  - Providing mental health training for religious leaders and spiritual sensitivity training for mental health providers
  - Offering emotional support/resiliency programs for religious leaders
Disaster Clergy Response Network

- Sample services:
  - Providing disaster first responder training to clergy
  - Developing ethical codes, application process, and requirements for disaster clergy credential
  - Working with MS Departments of Mental Health and Health to integrate credentialed clergy into the state disaster response plan