



## Crisis Counseling Assistance & Training Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) implements the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) as supplemental assistance available to states, locals, tribes, and territories. Section 416 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 5183, authorizes FEMA to fund mental health assistance and training activities in areas that have received a Presidential major disaster declaration that includes Individual Assistance (IA). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) works with FEMA through an interagency agreement to provide technical assistance, consultation, grant administration, program oversight, and training for state mental health authorities and designated tribal authorities.

### Program Overview

The mission of the CCP is to assist individuals and communities in recovering from the psychological effects of natural and human-caused disasters through the provision of community-based outreach and educational services. The CCP supports short-term interventions that promote counseling goals to assist disaster survivors in understanding their current situation and reactions, mitigating stress, reviewing their disaster recovery options, promoting the use or development of coping strategies, providing emotional support, and encouraging links 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 states, local, tribes, and territories' mental health authorities and designated tribal authorities through two grant mechanisms:

- **Immediate Services Program (ISP)** provides funds for up to 60 days of services immediately following the approval of IA for a disaster; and
- **Regular Services Program (RSP)** provides funds for up to nine months from the date of the notice of award.

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:

- **Strengths Based** – CCP services promote resilience, empowerment, and recovery.
- **Diagnosis-Free** – 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 waiting for survivors to seek their assistance.
- **Culturally Sensitive** – The CCP model embraces cultural and spiritual diversity as reflective in culturally relevant outreach activities that represent the communities served.
- **Flexible** – Services may be conducted in nontraditional settings, crisis counselors make

contact in homes and communities, not in clinical or office settings.

- **Builds local capacity** – Services are designed to strengthen existing community support systems, the CCP supplements, but does not supplant or replace, existing community systems.
- **More Practical than Psychological** – Crisis counselors help survivors in developing a plan to address self-identified needs and suggest connections with other individuals or organizations who can assist them.
- **Unified Identity** – The CCP strives to be a single, easily identifiable program, with services delivered by various local agencies.

## 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 who may assist them.
- **Basic Supportive or Educational Contact:** Provides general support and information on resources and services available to disaster survivors.
- **Group Crisis Counseling:** Hosts group sessions led by trained crisis counselors offering skills to help survivors cope with their situations and reactions.
- **Public Education:** Offers information and education about typical reactions, helpful coping strategies, and available disaster-related resources.
- **Community Networking and Support:** Builds relationships with community resource organizations, faith-based groups, and local agencies.
- **Assessment, Referral, and Resource Linkage:** Assesses needs of adults and children and provides referral to additional disaster relief services or mental health or substance abuse treatment.
- **Development and Distribution of Educational Materials:** Distributes flyers, brochures, tip sheets, educational materials, and web site information developed by CCP staff.
- **Media and Public Service Announcements:** Works in partnership with local media outlets, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, charitable organizations, or other community brokers to develop and share public messaging.

## 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, encourage them to talk about their experiences, and teach 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, local agency, tribe, and/or territory 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.

###

*FEMA's Mission: "Helping people before, during, and after disasters."*

*Last update: May 2018*