

# Crisis Counseling Assistance & Training Program

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The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP)<sup>[1]</sup> is a supplemental program that provides financial assistance for mental health services and training activities in jurisdictions that have received a Presidential major disaster declaration that includes Individual Assistance (IA) and authorizes CCP.

FEMA provides CCP funding through a federal grant award. A state, tribe, or territory (STT) may submit an application to FEMA for CCP that identifies a non-federal entity to administer CCP. The CCP award enables STT and local government agencies to either provide crisis counseling services directly or to contract with local mental health service providers familiar with the affected communities. CCP is authorized under section 416 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as codified at 42 U.S.C. § 5183.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Center for Mental Health Services, within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), works in partnership with FEMA to provide technical assistance, consultation, grant administration, program oversight, and training for STT designated mental health authorities.

## Program Overview

CCP's mission is to assist individuals and communities in recovering from the psychological effects of disasters through the provision of community-based outreach and educational services. It supports short-term interventions to assist disaster survivors in understanding their current situation and reactions, mitigating stress, 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.



Services are provided at no cost and are available to any survivor who has been impacted by the disaster. These services are delivered in accessible locations, including survivors' homes, shelters, temporary living sites, and places of worship. Services can be provided in a group setting or one-on-one. CCP must be delivered in an equitable and impartial manner, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency, or economic status. Providers of CCP must plan to meet the needs of people with access and functional needs, such as people with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities, such as people who are deaf or hard of hearing who may use sign language or captioning.

## **Disaster Crisis Counseling vs. Mental Health Treatment**

The key difference between traditional mental health services and crisis counseling is the way services are provided. Mental health treatment, as typically defined within the mental health community, implies assistance to individuals for a diagnosable disorder. Typically, the mental health professional and client will discuss various treatment options and agree to certain interventions and treatment goals.

In contrast, crisis counseling seeks to help survivors understand that they are experiencing common reactions to extraordinary occurrences. Crisis counselors treat each individual and group encounter as if it were the only one and keep no formal individual records or case files. They also find opportunities to engage survivors, encouraging them to talk about their experiences and teaching ways to manage stress. Counselors help 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 so they can refer survivors to behavioral health treatment and other services. CCP is anonymous and non-clinical.

## **Programs Available**

Supplemental funding for crisis counseling is available to state, territorial, and designated tribal authorities through two separate federal grant programs.

### **Immediate Services Program (ISP)**



- The ISP application is due 14 days after the date of a Presidential major disaster declaration that includes IA.
- FEMA provides funds for up to 60 days of services immediately following the approval of IA for a disaster.
- FEMA awards and monitors the ISP federal award in coordination with SAMHSA.

### Regular Services Program (RSP)

- The RSP application is due 60 days after the date of a Presidential major disaster declaration that includes IA.
- FEMA provides funds for up to nine months from the date of the notice of award.
- SAMHSA awards and monitors the RSP federal award in coordination with FEMA.

These are separate programs that require separate applications. ISP is not a prerequisite for RSP, nor is RSP required automatically when ISP is approved.

### Key Principles

The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program is guided by key principles:

- **Strengths based:** Services promote resilience, empowerment, and recovery.
- **Diagnosis free:** Crisis counselors do not classify, label, or diagnose people, nor keep records or case files.
- **Outreach oriented:** Crisis counselors deliver services in affected communities proactively rather than waiting for survivors to seek their assistance.
- **Flexible:** Services are conducted in nontraditional settings, not clinical or office settings.
- **Capacity building:** Services are designed to strengthen existing community support systems.
- **Practical more than psychological:** Crisis counselors help survivors develop a plan to address self-identified needs and suggest connections with other individuals or organizations who can assist them.



- **One identity:** While delivered by various agencies, CCP strives to be a single, identifiable program.

## Services Funded

The following services may be funded under the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program:

- **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 either in person or via a crisis counseling hotline or other accessible communication method.
- **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 crisis counselors offering skills to help survivors.
- **Public education:** Offers information about reactions, coping strategies, and available resources.
- **Community networking and support:** Builds relationships among 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, mental health or substance abuse treatment.
- **Development and distribution of educational materials:** Produces and distributes flyers, brochures, tip sheets, educational materials, and website information developed by CCP staff.
- **Media and public service announcements:** Works in partnership with local media outlets, governments, charitable organizations, and/or other community brokers to develop and share public messaging.

## Footnotes

1. [Individual Assistance Program and Policy Guide \(IAPPG\) \(fema.gov\)](#) (Chapter 5)

