

FACT SHEET

Crisis Counseling Assistance & Training Program

FEMA implements the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) to fund mental health assistance and training activities in areas that have received a Presidential major disaster declaration for Individual Assistance upon request by a state, tribal or territorial government. Funding is through a federal grant award application. Within the application, the requestor must identify a non-federal entity to administer CCP.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Center for Mental Health Services, within 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 state and tribal designated mental health authorities.

Program Overview

The mission of the program 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.

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 they encounter as if it were the only one, 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.

Programs Available

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



FEMA

Immediate Services Program (ISP)

- Application is due 14 days after a Presidential major disaster declaration that includes Individual Assistance.
- 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 application is due 60 days after 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 has been approved.

Key Principles

The Crisis Counseling 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.
- **Culturally Sensitive:** The model embraces cultural and spiritual diversity, as reflected in culturally-relevant outreach activities that represent the communities served.
- **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, the CCP strives to be a single, identifiable program.

Services Funded

The following services may be funded under the Crisis Counseling 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.
- **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.