

**Special ENEWS**

From: Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA

Re: Info in Response to Query about Planning and Action for the Mental Health Needs of Students and Schools Staff in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

Related to the displacements of students and families due to the recent storms and flooding, we have been collating info from a wide range of folks in directly affected states about planning and action for the mental health needs of students and schools staff.

Thanks to folks who have been able to share info, the following is a synthesis of what we have been able to glean so far.

Much is being done; clearly, much more needs to be done.

Naturally, the first concerns have been to deal with survival and related basic needs and with accommodating those who have been displaced (e.g., see [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) ; [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) ; [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) and specific state websites)

The first contact to our center was from a colleague in the Louisiana Department of Education. While she recognized and is involved with the department's priority of locating students and getting them enrolled in school, she was also worried about starting to plan for the mental health concerns of students and schools staff (including mapping "where our displaced school based mental health professionals are").

Since this is a critical time to start planning for the mental health needs of students and schools staff, we reached out for whatever information folks could share. We asked:

Do you know:

- >Is there a planning infrastructure that is addressing how to help schools deal with the mental health needs of affected students and staff?
- >If not, do you have a thought about how we might be a catalyst to help get such an infrastructure in place?
- >If there is, who should we contact to find out about the plans so that we can communicate to those who are asking for assistance?

We also stressed that a specific request we received is for training for school staff (especially support staff) who will need to respond to those affected. Do you have recommendations about this we can share.

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Here is what we have been told so far about what is happening related to planning for the mental health needs of students and schools staff:

**\*\*\*LOUISIANA**

>>News release from the Louisiana Dept of Education (8/31):

“Hurricane Katrina has destroyed or damaged schools in at least six Louisiana parishes. That means that more than 135,000 students must, temporarily, find somewhere else to go. Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard said his number one priority is getting those children back in school, ‘I implore Superintendents around the state to take these children in....

Superintendent Picard said he knows there are many issues that must be dealt with but that the most important thing is for parents to get their children signed up in the school system that they are taking shelter in right now, 'We will worry about school records, funding, payrolls and waivers,' Picard said. 'Let us work out those details. Right now I need parents and school systems to make sure these children have the stability of a classroom as soon as possible.'

Thousands of teachers have also been displaced by Katrina. They will be needed by the school systems who will take in students who have been forced to evacuate. The Department of Education urges any teacher who is able, to apply for work in the school system in which they are taking shelter. To those who aren't in a position to work right now, Superintendent Picard wants you to know that you are eligible for temporary unemployment benefits. Also, the Department is working with Superintendents to get all payroll systems up and running again. A special note for Orleans Parish, members of Alvarez and Marcell are physically trying to rescue payroll documents and get them to Houston where they can be processed.

The Department of Education is setting up teams to work out the details such as MFP funding, accountability, teaching certificates, waivers, payroll and missing school records. Superintendent Picard said, 'We will work with every superintendent in the state, the BESE Board, the Legislature and the federal Department of Education to resolve these issues. It will take time and we ask for your patience.'"

Superintendent Picard knows that space will be an issue for schools taking in extra students. He is calling on businesses and churches to provide space for temporary classrooms especially in East Baton Rouge, Ascension, Lafayette and Caddo Parish where large shelters are now up and running.

Any Superintendent or teacher who needs help with any of these issues is urged to get in contact with the Department of Education call center. That toll-free number is 1-877-453-2721. The Department will also set up a special space on the Teach Louisiana website to help with certification issues.

Offers of help with enrollment and materials are coming in from around the nation. The Superintendent of Education in Florida is sending the 'action plan' they put into place after the hurricanes hit there last year. And the Federal Department of Education has offered any help that Louisiana might need. ...

'This is an extraordinary time for our state. We are experiencing a disaster unlike anything we've ever seen before. Our job is to help you do the very best that you can to get every child in this state back where they belong; in the classroom.'"

>>Look for updates from the state dept. of education at –  
<http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/index.html>

>>From the Division of Planning, Evaluation & Information Technology, Office of Mental Health, Department of Health and Hospitals, Baton Rouge, LA

"You may have received an email regarding volunteer efforts through the Office of Mental Health of the Department of Health and Hospitals during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Tony Speier, Coordinator of Disaster Services for the Office of Mental Health, has asked that Dr. Joseph Comaty and I coordinate volunteer services for psychologists. We are looking specifically for psychologists who are willing and able to assist survivors of this disaster.

This is an extremely fluid situation, and the effort is changing almost hourly to meet the need. Over time, we anticipate calling upon many of our colleagues in Psychology to step up to the plate. Behavioral health services are being provided in a number of settings through the Office of Mental Health. The needs will continue to be great over a long period of time, certainly for weeks and probably for months, and with everyone's help, we can distribute the relief efforts. We ask for your patience as the needs of the community and our response to these needs unfolds. There are a variety of situations that will require psychologists to be present. Some services will be provided in less than ideal situations, where you may be requested to bring your own food, water, etc., depending upon the circumstances. Please understand that there is much planning and coordination going on behind the scenes and although we may not have all of the answers, your professional expertise is very valuable to us and we appreciate your willingness to serve.

We are asking that people who are willing to serve in any capacity send an email to this address: Katrina\_PSYCH\_response@dhh.la.gov Please use this email address only, since Dr. Comaty and I may be working in the field, and unable to access our email on a regular basis. We will establish a roster of individuals who are able to volunteer and we will call upon you as the need arises. In order that we be most efficient with this effort, please include the following information in your response: Name: Credentials: Psychology License Number / State: Special Expertise: Geographic Location(s) willing to serve: Times willing to serve: Are you a Medical Psychologist and willing to prescribe if called upon to do so? Are you a Public / Louisiana State employee? Could you serve 24/7? for what length of time? How much notice would you require? Any limitations in your ability to serve? How can we reach you most efficiently? (Please remember that phone service is still limited in some areas.)”

>>”Our school system has crisis management teams comprised of social workers, psychologists and educational diagnosticians who are trained in crisis debriefing. I would assume that every district does, particularly if the district has implemented PBS. We are ready to respond in Sabine Parish.”

### **\*\*\*MISSISSIPPI**

>>New release from Mississippi Dept. of Education – Preliminary data ... indicates that Hurricane Katrina has impacted 271 schools in 44 districts, representing nearly 160,000 students. “Katrina has devastated the education community,” said Dr. Hank M. Bounds, State Superintendent of Education. “We are aware that we have completely lost some schools and many schools have experienced significant damage on the coast and well inland also. ... stand ready to assist each of you with disaster relief efforts.” Due to the tragedy, many schools will be unable to open for weeks and even months. ...The Department will train and equip teams to provide disaster assistance. After contacting superintendents to determine what type of assistance is necessary, Department personnel stand ready to assist districts to the fullest extent. ... Many families will be dislocated during the coming weeks and months.... The law provides that the Mississippi Board of Education may issue a waiver to a district that is unable to make up the required 187 days for teachers and 180 days for students if the governor or the president has declared the school district’s community a disaster area....

>>The state department of Education has established a special section on its website for info about aftermath activity. “Important information will be posted on this site within the appropriate areas as quickly as it becomes available. If you have information that needs to be posted on this site, please contact the appropriate MDE personnel listed under Contact Information.” <http://research.mde.k12.ms.us/pub/HKDP.htm>

### **\*\*\*ALABAMA**

>>The following was sent by Joseph B. Morton, Alabama State Superintendent of Education to all County and City Superintendents of Education on 8/31.

“As we assess the damage in Alabama, we further are thankful for the fact that it could have been much worse. After speaking with Drs. Harold Dodge and Faron Hollinger, Superintendents of Education in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, respectively, again, we realize how fortunate Alabama was in comparison to Mississippi and Louisiana. It appears that Baldwin County will reopen on Thursday, September 1, and Dr. Dodge is close to making a final determination on reopening since his district received much more severe damage than Baldwin. We are still assessing damages from systems further north that border Mississippi. Many schools in Alabama will be faced with new students enrolling from Mississippi and Louisiana as their parents/guardians seek to find housing close to relatives or friends. In speaking with Dr. Susan

Rucker, Assistant State Superintendent in Mississippi, this morning, she informed me that today's estimate is that 35,000 Mississippi students have no schools to attend — the schools are either too severely damaged to reopen or they are gone as a result of the hurricane. I also spoke with Dr. Cecil Picard, Superintendent of Education in Louisiana, and you may receive students from Louisiana since areas in and around New Orleans could be uninhabitable for weeks, months, or even longer. Additionally, I have spoken with the Assistant Secretary of Education in Washington, D.C., Dr. Henry Johnson, and he has been very understanding and willing to work through solutions to today's challenges.

I urge each of you to work with your principals and do everything possible to welcome these refugees to your schools should they come to enroll. I am waiving usual and customary requirements for students who transfer into Alabama's public schools from other states, systems within the state, or home schooled/private school students in or from outside Alabama due to circumstances caused by Hurricane Katrina. Many of the people escaped with literally the clothes on their backs and have no humanly way possible to produce birth certificates, immunization records, school records, information for qualifying for the Child Nutrition Program, etc. Additionally, you may be approached by displaced teachers and other school employees seeking employment. Again, we can work out details in the weeks and months ahead. Now is the time to come to the aid of our neighbors. I know I can count on each of you for your complete cooperation in this time of crisis. To aid and assist you and your staff as questions arise, I have appointed a four-member team from the Department of Education. The members are Craig Pouncey, Assistant State Superintendent, (334) 242-9755, cpouncey@alsde.edu; Perry Taylor, State School Architect, (334) 242-9731, ptaylor@alsde.edu; Perry Fulton, Administrator, Child Nutrition Programs, (334) 242-1988, pfulton@alsde.edu; and Maggie Rivers, Director of Federal Programs, (334) 242-8199, mr@alsde.edu. Please contact any of these people for additional information or as questions arise."

>>Look for updates and Q and A on the state department of education website – <http://www.alsde.edu/HTML/HurricaneKatrina.asp>

>>"For what it is worth--- the State of Alabama has suspended the rules on out of district students so that parents of children from the hurricane affected areas may enroll their students in Alabama schools. Many of the storm refugees have begun to enroll students in our N. Alabama district because:

- 1) there is no school to go back to therefore no school year for 2005-2006.
- 2) no home for the family, we are talking zip, nada, none
- 3) no job or income for the family even if they could get "home" due to the destruction...

We know that these students will have emotional problems and will experience all the common problems associated with a move to a new school. These students (thus far) all have their parents and at least some of their personal belongings. Decatur is seeking ways to get the family from hotel rooms to some kind of an apartment or home environment ASAP. We know that many will choose to return "home" after this school year but we are looking at the 'now' and will deal with next summer when the time arrives. If you have ideas on how to help please let me know and I will forward to information to the counselors and to the mental health officials in this area."

### **\*\*\*TEXAS**

>>Message sent out by the Texas Education Agency's Service Center

"...districts are beginning to report that children of Hurricane Katrina refugees are enrolling in school. Katrina refugee students are considered homeless. TEA has issued a 30-day waiver of the immunization requirement. For more information from the Texas Education Agency, go to: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/taa/comm083105.html>

As of 4:00 PM on Thursday, September 1, hotels in Waco, Temple and Killeen are filling up and relief shelters are preparing to open. ESC Region 6, which is in East Texas, reports that

all Bryan/College Station hotels are full and the relief shelter is filling up quickly. Refugees are moving east. Region 12 school districts should plan for more new students on Tuesday, September 6, after the Labor Day weekend. Do not assume these new students will be only in the large districts - even Meridian ISD has reported it has 12 new students on Thursday, September 1 - all Katrina refugees. Do not assume Katrina refugees will be in shelters - many are living with relatives and friends, or staying in hotels. Even these may have arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

What can schools do to prepare?

1) Take ownership of the disaster. This is a nationwide crisis. It is not just "those people in New Orleans." There are more than 1.5 million people from Louisiana and Mississippi who are homeless right now, and they are evacuated at shelters, living with relatives or friends, or living in hotels. Those who are in temporary shelters and are able are deciding to drive further away to live in hotels. As a result, more people are coming to Texas.

2) Be proactive in your local area. If there are hotels and/or shelters nearby, a single point of contact from the district office should contact them to determine if there are children there. The district office should determine whether or not to coordinate distribution of collected goods for those children. With teacher guidance, your students can prepare clothes, food, water, personal items, and activity supplies for those children already in your area. Ask your students if they know of any relatives or friends coming to stay with them to inform the district.

Do not box up goods to send to Louisiana, Mississippi or Alabama. There is no one to sort them and distribute them. The Red Cross needs money for immediate water, food and medicine (see Red Cross Relief for Hurricane Katrina). Red Cross does not need blankets and clothes.

If your school community insists on collecting tangible things to send to the Gulf Coast, save half of those collected goods for use in your own community for the refugees to come. If your community does not receive many refugees, then donate the goods to local organizations who can redistribute them to those in need. Often after a disaster, charity goes out of the locality, and then the locality has no supplies for its own disaster. We could still have fire, tornado or other disaster in our own region.

3) Be creative. One South Texas high school is rallying high schools to collect money for Red Cross at Friday night football games. A North Texas school district is taking laptops and wireless networks to local hotels to help refugees find their relatives and friends, and get up-to-date information that cannot be found on TV.

4) Increase school security. People are entering schools not only to enroll their students, but looking for social services. Sometimes they are going to the school because they cannot find a relief shelter and assume the school has one. All teachers and staff, especially front-line staff - should be ready for anyone to come through the doors. These people will be emotionally and physically exhausted. Consider adding temporary staff or parent volunteers to help the front-line staff.

5) Prepare welcome kits for new students and families. Be sure to have a printed list of local social services, plus local banks, supermarkets, gas stations, mechanics, hospitals, and retail stores. Have a map of the area with these major necessities marked. You may have to orient the parents to your community quickly. Real estate agents and apartment complexes also should be considered. Many of the refugees will never return to the Gulf Coast.

Welcome kits for students can include: children's books, coloring books and crayons, notebooks and other school supplies, small toys: vehicles, action figures, dolls, small travel games, stuffed animals.

6) Counsel the student victims. This may be the most vital step. Begin with an entry meeting with the counselor, with the parents there. Be prepared for at least 30 minutes per meeting. The counselor should ask the following questions:

>Where are you from? When did you evacuate?

>How did you evacuate? How did you react emotionally during that time? How did you react physically?

>Are you physically OK now? (if not, be sure to find some help)

>Since the evacuation, what has been your main concern? What has been the one memory you keep replaying?

>What do you think will happen next? What are your practical concerns?

Start a daily 30-minute support group for the refugee students with a counselor or teacher, so that they can talk about their own unique concerns and realize that they are not alone. The first meeting should just ask question #1 and #2 above. Other topics will be news media coverage, concerns about friends, nightmares, adjusting to new community, etc. Realize these new students could come from a very different culture.

Prepare current students how to welcome the refugee students - such as not referring to them as refugees, but as survivors. Tell current students to include new students in their groups, activities and games. Current students should watch for bad behavior from new students and tell teachers; but any current students who get new students in trouble for no reason should be in trouble themselves. Explain to current students that this is a national crisis and they can do their part by welcoming the new students. Let the students think of creative ways to welcome the new students.

Prepare teachers for integrating refugee students into class who will show these signs of crisis reactions:

- >short tempers and behavior problems
- >extreme fatigue
- >inattentiveness, like ADHD
- >trigger reactions, such as fright when it rains or the wind blows hard
- >regressive behavior, acting up to three years younger developmentally
- >survivor guilt; they may have friends and family members that have died or are missing, but they are not
- >physical psychosomatic symptoms: tummy ache, headache, shaking/cold
- >numb emotions or uncontrollable emotions

Teachers should consider the following for refugee students:

- >reassure them of safety and security often
  - >monitor physical health and report symptoms to the school nurse immediately
  - >answer questions truthfully - it's OK to say "I don't know"
  - >do not speculate on happy endings or try to make students feel better
  - >do promise to help all you can, listen and care
  - >prepare to refer students to the counselor if traumatic symptoms last more than 8 weeks
  - >encourage children to write or draw about their experiences, and post them in the classroom if appropriate
  - >promote critical thinking and problem solving skills to help students adjust to their new environment
  - >enforce consistent discipline to all students; do not give refugee students special treatment
  - >watch for other baggage - people bring personal crisis (such as divorce, lost pets, etc)
  - >create activities that give new students the ability to make choices and re-establish control of something
  - >reduce stigma and shame by creating collaborative activities with current students
- 7) Be aware of your own faculty and staff members with relatives and friends who are missing. Reach out and assist them as well. These people also may need a daily support group."

>>Look for updates on the state department of education website – <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>

### **\*\*Other reports from TX:**

>>"The Houston ISD School District is working on plans for displaced students, and has a 170 member NOVA-trained crisis team to help as students enter our schools. We are working at break-neck speed to be ready, as hundreds of students have already enrolled. We have the capacity to offer support for Louisiana's School Psychology Consortium if that is an interest of the LA Education Dept. Don't know what those logistics might entail. We have an APA-approved psychology internship program here, and we will be receiving a large number of the

Orleans Parish students. ... Please let the LA contact person know my name.” Patricia Weger, Ph.D. Manager, Psychological Services, Houston Independent School District  
pweger@houstonisd.org 832-563-5346

>>“The Dallas Independent School District Friday will send seven assessment teams to Reunion Arena to begin taking needs inventories of students who are in the city because of Hurricane Katrina. The teams will be in place at Reunion Arena from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Friday. Counselors, nurses, psychological services and special education staff will be on hand to begin the process of placing students. We want to make their transition into our school district as seamless as possible and the best way we know to do that is to take assessments first, and make placements when we know what we're dealing with. There are many needing assistance and we stand ready to provide it. Once an assessment of the situation has been made, we will put these new Dallas citizens in contact with the right resources.”

>> >>From Irving ISD in Texas (9/2) – “As of this morning we have 49 homeless children enrolled in our schools due to the hurricane. ... Our priority is meeting the needs of our children. Small children are very confused about why they are here, often asking if they can go home tomorrow. When told they don't have a home, they become very agitated, fearful and tearful. These children are expressing anxiety for family members, pets, or friends that are not with them. Teen-agers are expressing depression and anger. We have several teenagers that have been enrolled in school but are refusing to go to school; they don't want to be seen by anyone and they get upset when referred to as "refugees." All children regardless of their age need very specific attention and counseling for stress, anger and depression.

I have attached our Parent/Student Support Services Response Plan. Please note that this plan includes starting some evening support counseling groups for the families in our schools.”

### **Parent/Student Support Services Response Plan for Hurricane Victims**

I. CAMPUS RESPONSE: A momentous disaster of the magnitude that we are experiencing provides us with a great opportunity to have both historical and humanitarian discussions with all our students. We have a great opportunity right now to discuss kindness, understanding, and empathy with our students. Please consider the following:

- A. Please follow the homeless guidelines when enrolling students who are victims of the hurricane. Take the parents' word regarding where they are staying. However, make sure that the address they provide is in our attendance area. Please refer to Dr. Morris' memo dated Sept. 1, 2005 for more specific instructions.
- B. Teachable opportunities:
  - a. Take a few minutes on Wednesday to reflect on the victim's situation. Inform everyone about the initiatives that your own school, clubs, PALS, organizations, etc. are doing to help the victims.
  - b. Consider having a school-wide 30 minute period of time for teachers to discuss the events with their students both from a historical and humanitarian standpoint.
  - c. Discussions on kindness, sharing, caring, giving, and stewardship are very appropriate and timely for all students.
  - d. All campuses have the banners on the 6 pillars of character. These can be a great springboard for discussions regarding what is going on today.
  - e. High School teachers can add to a lesson on using lap tops to research previous national catastrophes and disasters and what we have learned from them.
- C. The counselors have numerous resources to help the teachers develop a quick 30 minute discussion. Counselors are encouraged to e-mail each other and share their ideas and topics.
- D. Counselors need to make these students a priority and monitor their transition, behavior and progress.

II. MC KINNEY-VENTO PROJECT - the homeless liaisons will:

- A. Assist the campuses to get homeless students registered
- B. Collect, distribute supplies, uniforms, and other essential items

- C. Match families with volunteers who wish to help or house families
- D. Keep track of enrollment numbers and assist Dr. Morris with monitoring campus counts, teacher ratios and class counts.
- E. Compile and update a list of community resources (this list is being double checked right now and you should be receiving as an attachment by Tuesday)

III. COUNSELING AND SUPPORT SERVICES - We are in the process of finding a location to have evening counseling sessions and support groups for our families. Our plan is to:

- A. Bus our families and students to a central location
- B. Provide a light dinner
- C. Conduct focus and support groups for our families. We will be needing volunteers for childcare to help us during the evening sessions. We will communicate more information on this initiative next week.

>>From Fort Bend Independent School District – “Most of the school districts in the Houston Area have been through some version of NOVA (National Organization for Victims Assistance) critical incident response training. Our psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, etc. have all done some training for general crisis response. Each district has mobilized to deal with the students who are coming to us from the affected areas. ...The Texas Psychological Association has called for volunteers to help at the Astrodome... [and] other resources and agencies are handling different components. [list available].”

>>”We are located in the Ft. Hood, Killeen area in Texas and are receiving students from the affected areas. Our school counselors have received NOVA training from our Region XII ESC and some have received training from the National Institute for Trauma and Loss for Children by Dr. William Steele. We are welcoming the students and families to our schools with open arms. We are doing what we always do with our military families that transition in and out of system. We have processes already in order. Our governor has cut to the chase with doing away with much of the paperwork required and we are making the students homeless to cover meals etc. There is such an outpouring of help from this community from many agencies and schools. The officials have met and are giving us direction. Many of the refugees are family members of our military families. Ft. Hood is offering assistance too.”

>>”Most schools in Texas have crisis teams that know how to help in situations like this. I know that our district (Richardson ISD) has already sent e-mails to all of the counselors, school psychologists, etc... with tons of information on how to help the children and families with the mental health issues that come with witnessing such a horrible event. We have also set up stations at every campus to collect school supplies and clothing for the families who might be enrolling in our district.”

>>”We are beginning to enroll the children of Katrina's refugees. We are just enrolling them, but also do not have a real plan in place. We anticipate having to hire additional teachers to accommodate these students and are using our Title 1 homeless money to provide some limited services.”

>>”We enrolled our first family yesterday. They had lost everything and are staying with a brother. We have a plan (the state’s) to get them into school and are following the “homeless” guidelines provided by the state. I do not know about testing issues yet. For example, the young man we have is a senior, but to graduate from a Texas school he must pass the TAKS test. Will he be exempted? Who will exempt him? We will eventually “adopt” a school from that area to help provide “stuff”. I have not heard anything about mental health issues.”

**>>From the Houston public school website**

How to Help HISD Assist Those Displaced by Hurricane Katrina (September 1, 2005)

>Be a Teacher

Thousands of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama families are seeking refuge in Houston from the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, and HISD schools are opening their doors to evacuated children to enable them to continue their education. HISD will need additional teachers to meet the needs of the students displaced by the disaster.

>Certified teachers who wish to be hired by HISD should call the Human Resources Department at 713-892-7373.

>Certified teachers who want to volunteer their services should contact Shonda Tindall (stindall@houstonisd.org; 713-892-7353).

>Donate School Supplies, School Uniforms – The public can help HISD to keep displaced students' educational progress on track by donating school supplies and new or gently used school uniforms. For details on how to do this contact Jennifer Yould (jyould@houstonisd.org) or Gwendolyn Samples (gsamples@houstonisd.org) in HISD's Office of Strategic Partnerships at 713-892-6384.

>Provide Funds for HISD to Purchase Supplies and Uniforms -- You may also contribute money to HISD for the purchase of school supplies and uniforms. Checks for this purpose should be made out to HISD Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief Assistance and mailed or brought to HISD's Office of Strategic Partnerships, 3830 Richmond Avenue, Houston, TX 77027-5838. Contribute to HISD's SOS Campaign

>You can help those displaced by Hurricane Katrina by contributing to HISD's Schools Offering Support (SOS) fundraising campaign on behalf of the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief Fund. Personal checks, cashier checks, and money orders must be made out to ARC Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief Fund and mailed or brought to HISD's Office of Strategic Partnerships, 3830 Richmond Avenue, Houston, TX 77027-5838. The office will also accept in-person cash donations.

>Information on how HISD employees, parents, and students can participate in the district's SOS Campaign, will be available soon.

### **\*\*\*TENNESSEE**

>>“Since there are currently about 10,000 evacuees from the hurricane areas and more are expected to arrive in Memphis over the next weeks, our department is working to establish a network of students and alumni in counseling and counseling psychology to provide crisis counseling services to those individuals currently in our metropolitan area. Once specific housing locations have been identified (the city is still trying to identify adequate housing facilities) we hope to be able to work with the displaced individuals to address the impact of this traumatic event. We are fortunate to have one of the national leaders in crisis counseling in our department and offer courses in crisis intervention, so we hope this expertise will be of benefit to those in need during this stressful time. Please feel free to contact me at tvsayger@memphis.edu if you would like more information or have individuals in the area who may wish to be involved in this project.” Tom Sayger, Univ of Memphis, Counseling Psychology

### **\*\*\*OTHER OFFERS AND IDEAS THAT HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED SO FAR**

>>Consider the following suggestion: take schools or blocks of schools and appoint individuals or groups of individuals to be consultants/providers for urgent care or sustained care for students. For instance, we have three mental health providers in the Adolescent Clinic at Texas Children's Hospital and 4 Adolescent Medicine Physicians. We are already trying to coordinate efforts

locally in Houston and are seeing youth from LA in the hospital and in shelters. However, if there were a couple of schools in particular that need consultation, they can contact me at TCH 832-824-2099.” Al Hergenroeder

>>Some are circulating the following from the APA  
<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=107>

### **“How do I take care of children's special needs?”**

The intense anxiety and fear that often follow a disaster can be especially troubling for surviving children, especially if children were victims of the disaster or were separated from their families. Some may regress and demonstrate younger behaviors such as thumb sucking or bed wetting. Children may be more prone to nightmares and fear of sleeping alone. Performance in school may suffer. Other changes in behavior patterns may include throwing tantrums more frequently, or withdrawing and becoming more solitary.

There are several things parents and others who care for children can do to help alleviate the emotional consequences of trauma, including the following:

- Spend more time with children and let them be more dependent on you during the months following the trauma - for example, allowing your child to cling to you more often than usual. Physical affection is very comforting to children who have experienced trauma.
- Provide play experiences to help relieve tension. Younger children in particular may find it easier to share their ideas and feelings about the event through non-verbal activities such as drawing.
- Be available and encourage older children to ask questions they may have, as well as sharing their thoughts and feelings with you and with one another. This helps reduce their confusion and anxiety related to the trauma. Respond to questions in terms they can comprehend. Reassure them repeatedly that you care about them and that you understand their fears and concerns.
- Keep regular schedules for activities such as eating, playing and going to bed to help restore a sense of security and normalcy, even if your family has been relocated to a shelter or other temporary housing.
- **Reduce the number of times children see the trauma on the news. Repeatedly watching broadcasts of the disaster can re-traumatize children.”**

>>A counselor in TX also shared the following:

“Information from Scott Poland's workshop on Monday that pertains:

1. Provide opportunities for elementary age students to draw and/or write about their experiences and talk about them too if/as they are able.
2. Remember these children will have significant internal/emotional injuries even though they may appear to be fine on the outside.
3. Provide opportunities for students to talk. LISTEN. Don't talk about any similar experiences you may have had; just listen.
4. Stay calm and positive. Model hope and optimism.
5. Recognize that religion is ALWAYS a part of dealing with a crisis. You may find the student's or parent's beliefs easy to discern or difficult but honor them.
6. Tell kids the truth.
7. Be visible and available.
8. Don't be afraid to show emotion (The counselor adds: And remember how contagious emotions are. You cannot allow the family's feelings of despair to overwhelm YOU. Remember #4.)
9. Don't minimize their losses or give advice that hasn't been asked for. (You can certainly offer words of comfort.)

10. Processing questions you might ask at some point:
  - a. "What thoughts or reactions have you been having since the hurricane?"
  - b. "What is your biggest concern or worry about the immediate future?"
  - c. "What has helped you cope when you have had to deal with difficult things or losses in your life before? What can you do to help yourself now?"
11. Factors increasing the likelihood of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder include: a) younger in age, b) prior trauma exposure, c) the degree of personal physical exposure d) media exposure (\*\*The APA website points out that children should not watch TV news coverage for hours on end - it re-traumatizes them. It's not a good idea for adult victims either.)
12. Answer questions kids ask but don't overwhelm them with too much information.
13. Adults need to model calmness and reassure children of their safety.
14. Adults should establish routines as quickly as possible.
15. Primary Resiliency Factors are: a) caring and support of others, b) positive view of self, c) skills in communication, planning, and problem solving, d) capacity to manage strong emotions.

>>Other thoughts from the counselor sharing this:

1. Do what you can to support the family. Talk with the parents if they are present as soon as possible. LISTEN. Find out what they need. Hook them up with the Red Cross, Salvation Army or other community supports if/as needed. Gauge how well the parent/guardian is able to support the child. Sometimes their own trauma is so overwhelming they just want to think the kids are fine or don't understand what's going on. Assure the parent/s you and the school will do everything possible to support the child in school.
2. Plan to see the child/ren individually or as a family group at least weekly (with parent permission, of course). Don't force the child to talk but offer art supplies, projects, activities that allow them to express their feelings. Offer a listening ear and a quiet place to be.
3. Keep in regular contact with the parent/guardian.
4. Be sure the classroom teacher is able to deal sensitively with the new student. The student must not be put on display or overwhelmed with questions and sympathy. Do not put the child in the position of giving a report to the class about his/her experiences or situation. It would be great if this could be covered with the class prior to the child's arrival.
5. The teacher should listen if the child wants to tell her story (to her in private).
6. Be sensitive to confidentiality issues. The family may not wish to be subjected to the desire of the school community to take care of their needs with regard to food, money, clothing. Or they may. Get their permission before you do anything like that."

>>>One response raises a significant concern about special education students:

"Students who are IDEA-eligible will be arriving and needing services without any records whatsoever. Typically, we would start serving those students after a transition multi-disciplinary team meeting, and when we got no records after 30 days or so, we would initiate a re-evaluation. For certain students ... conducting a re-evaluation will be a total waste of time, money, resources, and services. These students are likely to be traumatized by the events surrounding the hurricane, safety issues, loss, grief, etc. and any evaluation will reflect that trauma, rather than their actual disability. ... [Someone needs] to petition the federal government to relax IDEA timeline requirements for mandatory re-evaluations for these students. Some of these students will take a much longer time to recover from their trauma than others. I would rather serve them than conduct formal evaluations."

### **\*\*\*ABOUT VOLUNTEERS AND TRAINING NEEDS RELATED TO THE MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF**

>>>>"Volunteers Mental Health professionals (Master's Level and Ph.D's) are being sought to do crisis counseling for Katrina refugees in Houston. Call Nicole at 281-703-8030 or Dr. Lawrence 281-772-5442 or go to the Astrodome (bring a copy of your license). Use the Kirby/McKnee intersection entrance and tell officials you are with the Harris County Citizen

Corps; once inside go to the Astro Arena-Annex D and look for the Counseling Center. Watch the news for other Texas cities where they will be taking refugees if you live in Dallas, San Antonio, etc.”

>>From Baton Rouge – “We have many of the evacuees here in BR and am requesting training for many of the education and all of the school health staff in Baton Rouge.... Please know that we believe we can organize this effort for Baton Rouge and would be glad to work with you all to organize on a larger scale. I am specifically requesting training for staff in how to deal with anxiety and stress--both in recognition in children and the people who are working with them. Please let me know how we can connect and organize. Also, please respond to the following e-mail address– sue.catchings@hccs.brcoxmail.com ”

>>“Dr. Annette LaGreca at the University of Miami is the author of several publications to assist parents and educators help children to cope with the aftermath of disasters. Her work is based on experience with children and families during the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Dr. LaGreca can be contacted through the UM Department of Psychology at <http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca/> ”

>>Debra Wentz indicates: “I believe that three of our board members, Robert L. Parker of New Bridge Services (973-839-2520), Jim Lape of Trintas Hospital (908-994-7060) or Bill Sette of Preferred Behavioral Health of New Jersey (732-364-4590) can coordinate this type of training. If you need additional referrals or resources, please contact me. (Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, New Jersey Association of Mental Health Agencies, Inc. and Executive Director, The New Jersey Mental Health Institute, Mercerville, New Jersey 08619 phone: 609-838-5488, ext. 292, Fax: 609-8385489 E-mail: [dwentz@njamha.org](mailto:dwentz@njamha.org) )

>>”Our agency, Intervention Services, is willing to provide training and support to schools in Louisiana and Texas. We currently provide school based mental health and crisis intervention services to 30 schools in the Central Texas area. Please let us know if we can be of assistance.” Annie Burwell, LSW, Executive Director, Intervention Services, email: [aburwell@mac.com](mailto:aburwell@mac.com) voice: 512-763-0478 fax: 512-868-6812 Georgetown, Tx. 78626

>>”...I have done training and process groups for staff on grief events.... Please feel free to pass my name along if I can support, share, give to those who need help in this area.” Cynthia Schiebel Austin Texas 512-445-0153 [cschiebel@austin.rr.com](mailto:cschiebel@austin.rr.com)

>> Tara Hill at the U.S. Department of Education indicates that the Department is continuing to talk to partnering agencies and school partners to learn about the needs of schools in the effected areas.

>>Ted Feinberg at the National Association of School Psychologists is gathering names of qualified mental health responders at 301-657-0270.

>>SAMHSA has a Disaster Technical Assistance Center <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

>>Centers such as ours can provide a range of resources and technical assistance.

If you can't find something you need, contact us directly:

By email — [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)

Toll free phone – (866) 846-4843



The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA is co-directed by Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor. Support comes in part from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health, with co-funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Mental Health Services.

