

Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care (DESC) NJ Resource Model for Long Term Recovery

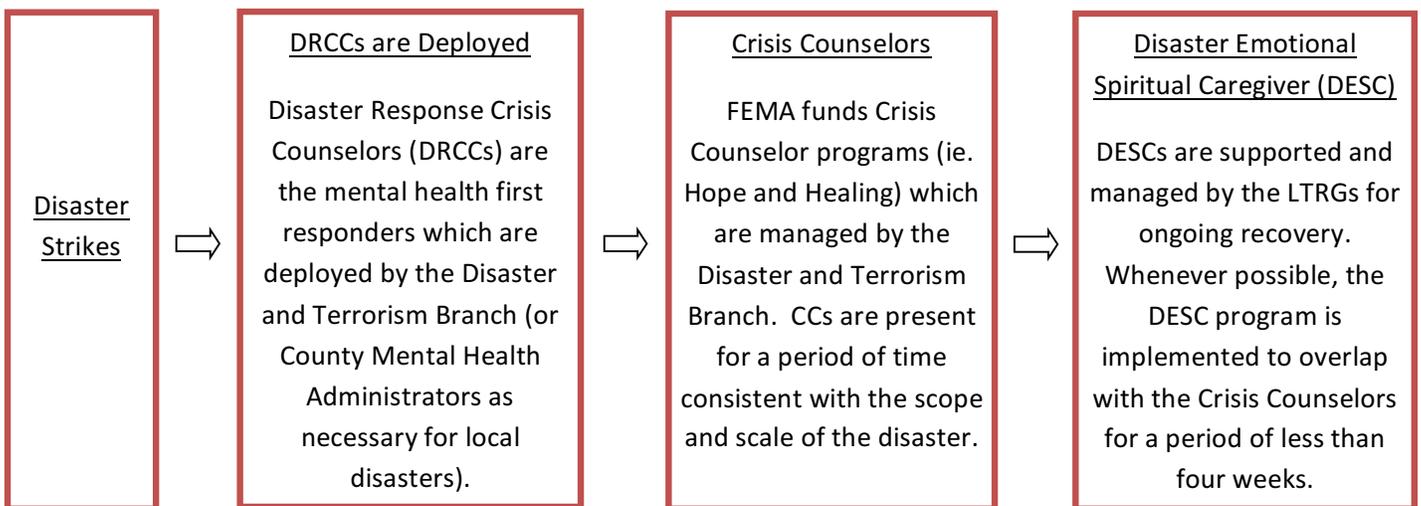
This guide was developed by a task force of the NJ Interfaith Disaster Network (NJIDN) in partnership with SuperStorm Sandy Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs), governmental partners, statewide agencies and faith-based organizations to deliver ongoing Emotional and Spiritual Care (ESC) to disaster survivors. This document does not constitute legal advice or a single solution to providing ESC to disaster survivors, it merely provides resources and possible practices for ESC solutions. Pulling from established practices and bright minds, the NJIDN proposes the following framework, resources, ideas and considerations:

Purpose:

Develop a low- to no-cost model to provide ongoing ESC to community members during the long-term recovery phase through the use of community volunteers. The role of these community volunteers is to be present, actively listen, guide conversations if needed, provide non-judgmental support, focus on the survivor's needs, help survivors take ownership of their recovery, and remain theologically neutral.

This model is not in any way intended to replace the disaster response model which is currently in place. In response to SuperStorm Sandy and any future disasters with an extended recovery period, we propose this model to address the ongoing recovery period after the formal governmental responses have been exhausted.

With the implementation of this proposed ESC Long Term Recovery Model, the flow of mental health / emotional and spiritual response will be as follows:



Assess Community Need:

Each community has different services, strengths and gaps. Understanding the needs of the community and assessing the current gaps in meeting those needs will help your LTRG to build an ESC plan which makes sense for your community. This assessment can be done informally or through use of a tool such as the Church World Service (CWS) Community Spiritual Assessment (found on page 4-35 of Emotional Spiritual Care Instructor Guide

- <http://communityarise.com/CMemoandSpirit.htm>). National VOAD recently issued Disaster Spiritual Care Guidelines which include a wealth of information and guidance. An assessment tool is located on page 52 - http://www.nvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2014/04/national_voad_disaster_spiritual_care_guidelines_final.pdf. You don't have to start from scratch in looking at community resources - www.nj211.org offers search options which allow you to drill down by service, specialty, county, zip code, etc.

Define Role of Disaster Emotional Spiritual Caregiver (DESC):

After your LTRG has identified the needs of the community, you should have a clear picture of the existing gaps in meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of survivors. Some examples of how volunteer ESC providers or Disaster Emotional Spiritual Caregivers (DESC) can be utilized include:

- Providing emotional and spiritual support to survivors when requested by the LTRG (ie. case management intake meetings, when hearing about a service denial)
- Being present during town hall style meetings or mobile cabinets
- Representing the LTRG at community events
- Assisting staff with self-care
- Connecting survivors to additional resources as needed (ie. mental health, faith leader)

When defining the role of the DESC, it is equally important to understand what the role **does not** encompass. The DESC should not be providing therapy, attempting to “fix things” for the survivor, providing false hope or reassurances, preaching, or defending / explaining God’s role in the disaster or ongoing recovery.

Recruitment

National best practices for providing emotional and spiritual care call for volunteers to be affiliated with a reputable organization and credentialed by a trustworthy source. New Jersey has a rich network of emergency response services which may provide resources for LTRGs to find possible candidates with a good skill set for this volunteer role including:

- The NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services – Disaster and Terrorism Branch – Disaster Response Crisis Counselor (DRCC) (For more information about your county DRCC program contact your County Mental Health Administrator; contact information can be found at: <http://nj.gov/humanservices/dmhs/services/admin/>)
- Citizen Emergency Response Teams (CERT)
- Medical Response Corp (MRCs)
- Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster: American Red Cross; Salvation Army; United Way, Catholic Charities, etc.
- Houses of worship (try reaching out to local faith leaders to see if there are interfaith or clergy groups in your area);
- Mental health partner agencies (staff, consultants or interns may be willing to volunteer or the organization may encourage and support volunteerism)
- Colleges and universities (target students and professors of psychology, social work, theology, etc.)
- Hospital Chaplaincy programs

Selection, Screening and Background Check

Establishing an Emotional and Spiritual Care model carries a level of responsibility and liability. In order to determine if volunteers have the skills, training and ability to perform this critical role, screening and selection tools should be employed to identify ideal candidates. In order to ensure that we “do no harm”, the following steps are considered to be minimum screening necessary for a quality program:

- Candidate Application:
 - A tool to collect key contact information and identify skills and training related to emotional and spiritual care
 - See Appendix A for a sample which can be modified to meet your group’s needs
- Reference Check:
 - Collecting feedback from professionals who have observed the candidate’s interactions in a professional or volunteer setting provides excellent insight into the likelihood for success as a DESC
 - See Appendix B for a sample which can be modified to meet your group’s needs
- Criminal History Check:
 - In order to protect our clients, we need to ensure there is no criminal history which would interfere with the trust required to allow the candidate to provide emotional and spiritual support to disaster survivors
 - Proof of recent criminal history screening may be able to be obtained for volunteers affiliated with certain organizations which require this screening for employees and volunteers

Training

In order for DESCs to have a similar base of knowledge and experience, consistent training is critical for all DESCs. Each volunteer will bring certain knowledge, skills, strengths and experiences with them (ie. DRCCs may have completed training specifically related to disaster response and mental health professionals have likely completed training in mental health or psychological first aid). All volunteers should receive training specific to the LTRG, ongoing recovery needs and available community resources.

This model does not endorse any particular training model or resources, but provides several options for consideration. This is merely an introduction to resources available and is not intended to be an exhaustive offering of trainings on the topic of emotional and spiritual care in disaster response and recovery.

The State of New Jersey offers training and credentialing for Disaster Response Crisis Counselors. Information regarding NJDRCC Certification is available at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhs/disaster/credentialing/>

Mental Health First Aid is a national program which provides a core base of knowledge ideal for disaster response and recovery work. This free training is typically offered over two days and can be requested and scheduled through the Mental Health Association of NJ.

Church World Service and other faith-based partners developed some excellent resources for emotional and spiritual training on the Community Arise site. While these documents are copyrighted, we have obtained permission to utilize the slides, facilitator and participant guides for purposes of training DESCs. These resources can be found at: <http://communityarise.com/CMEmoandSpirit.htm>.

The Salvation Army, American Red Cross and Police Chaplain Program are additional resources for potential courses in emotional and spiritual care. Some may have prerequisites or fees associated with the courses for individuals who are not employees or volunteers with these organizations. For more information, please search the respective websites:

- Salvation Army: <http://disaster.salvationarmyusa.org/training/>
- American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/disaster-training-registration>
- Police Chaplain: <http://www.the-police-chaplain-program.org/police-chaplain-training/index.html>

Supervision

An ideal supervisor of the DESC program is a faith leader or trained mental health professional. The Supervisor responsibilities should include assessing DESC candidates to ensure they are equipped to appropriately respond to the needs of community members. In order to ensure a quality program and the proper care of DESCs and community members, the following steps are considered to be minimum supervisory components for a quality program:

- Routine group meetings with DESCs to debrief and look for signs of stress
- Regular communication regarding additional resources and identified trends
- Ongoing training

In order to have an organized and streamlined program, one person should coordinate the requests for emotional and spiritual care and coordinate the scheduling needs with the DESCs. This may fall under the role of the Supervisor or be a function of another role within the LTRG.

Reporting

Identify what information your LTRG wants to collect on the activities of the ESC program. For obvious reasons regarding privacy, personal information cannot be collected. However, the following types of information are good measures to determine the use and success of your ESC program:

- number of survivors receiving DESC services
- number of contacts (for multiple visits to the same survivor)
- number of events attended
- number of referrals made for additional services
- number of DESC volunteer hours (be sure to report this to Annette McCabe for statewide reporting of volunteer hours)

Tools and Referrals

DESCs should be equipped with tools to provide information and referrals to individuals who are in need of more support than they can offer. As a result of the community assessment, your LTRG should have a strong

sense of mental health services available in your area (several mental health organizations have also received funding specifically to work with Sandy survivors). In addition to county-specific resources, the following statewide resources are available for referral:

- NJ Disaster Mental Health Helpline – 1-877-294-HELP (4357)
- The Disaster Distress Helpline – 1-800-985-5990
- The Domestic Violence Hotline – 1-800-572-SAFE (7233)
- The Addictions Hotline – 1-800-238-2333
- The Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-8255
- NJ Hopeline – 1-855-654-6735 / <http://www.njhopeline.com/>
- 2-1-1

Liability

The (Federal) Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 provides protections for an individual volunteer when acting within the scope of his/her responsibilities. In addition, NJ Statute 2A:53A-7 provides a level of “charitable immunity” to non-profits and associations and offers exemption from liability for damages caused by the negligence of volunteers when the person suffering damage is a beneficiary of services provided by the organization (with exceptions). Your LTRG may want to consider including language regarding the DESC in existing liability waivers being signed by survivors. Affiliated volunteers (supported by a recognized and insured organization) should be able to produce proof of insurance through the organization which is sponsoring their work as a volunteer. If working with unaffiliated volunteers, it is prudent to obtain additional liability insurance to cover their activities or identify a partner organization in your community which can sponsor the volunteer under their existing liability insurance.

In addition to legal considerations, there are certain protocols which should be considered to protect the DESC, the LTRG and the survivor. DESCs should not work alone. For health and safety reasons, it may not be prudent for DESCs to meet a survivor in their home, unless they are accompanying a DCM. Identify some possible locations which offer the opportunity for private or semi-private conversation in a neutral and safe environment.

Evaluation and Exit

At least every three months, your LTRG should review the effectiveness of your program and make appropriate adjustments. As DESCs exit, ask for honest feedback about their volunteer experience to strengthen the program for future DESCs.

Review the data being collected regarding usage of the program and talk with DESCs to determine an appropriate time frame to phase out the program. Provide ample time to notify survivors receiving services and provide referrals if needed for ongoing support.

Lastly, conduct a debriefing for all involved to review lessons learned. Make recommendations to improve the model so that it will be stronger for future disasters.

“There are no greater treasures than the highest human qualities such as compassion, courage and hope. Not even tragic accident or disaster can destroy such treasures of the heart.”

-Daisaku Ikeda

Disaster Emotional Spiritual Caregiver (DESC) Volunteer Application

First Name:		Last Name:	
Street Address:			
City, State, Zip:			
Primary Phone #:		Secondary Phone #:	
E-mail Address:			
Emergency Contact Name:		Emergency Contact Phone #:	

<p>Why are you interested in volunteering to provide emotional and spiritual care to disaster survivors?</p>
<p>Please list all formal education and training you have received which has prepared you for this role:</p>
<p>Have you ever been convicted of a crime? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

By my signature below, I attest that the information contained in this application is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Appendix B

Disaster Emotional Spiritual Caregiver (DESC) Volunteer Reference

Candidate Information:			
First Name:		Last Name:	
Professional Reference Information:			
First Name:		Last Name:	
Primary Phone #:		Secondary Phone #:	
E-mail Address:			
Relationship to Candidate:		# of Years Known:	

By my signature below, I authorize the Long Term Recovery Group to contact the above named professional to obtain confidential information regarding my suitability to be a Volunteer Disaster Emotional Spiritual Caregiver. I release both parties from any liability resulting from the outcome of conducting this reference.

Candidate Signature

Printed Name

Date

What are the candidate's greatest strengths?
How has the candidate demonstrated reliability and the ability to be trusted?
Do you have any concerns about the candidate's ability to provide objective emotional and spiritual care to disaster survivors?
Is there any additional information you would like to provide?