

ESF 6 Mental Health Awareness Checklist

- Is the scene safe? Respond in pairs if possible. Be aware of fellow responders.
- Look for signs of a possible unstable situation.
- If a person is in severe emotional distress, confused or disoriented, seek out further assistance immediately.
- Respect personal space.
- Explain why you're there and what you do calmly and respectfully. Don't use an "I am in charge tone".
- Identify wants and feelings, validate them to build trust.
- Be concise, focus on the positive, demonstrate concern.
- Ask specific questions such as "Do you feel safe?". Let them answer.
- Offer safe solutions that can be obtained immediately or in the very near future.
- Don't make promises that can't be fulfilled.

Additional Tips for offering Disaster Mental Health support:

- **Avoid stigma:** If concerned about stigma, refer to Disaster Mental Health workers as "disaster counselors" or "stress counselors."
- **Keep things simple:** Simply ask the client if he/she would like to talk to someone who can help with coping strategies.
- **Don't judge:** A client may benefit from having someone to talk to after experiencing a traumatic or highly stressful event.
- **Ask about others:** Sometimes people are more comfortable requesting help for a loved one they are concerned about than for themselves.
- **Focus on Children:** Offer Disaster Mental Health services to parents who are concerned about whether their child is coping and adjusting well after a disaster.

This list is designed to assist responders during disaster situations such as evacuations or sheltering. This list does not constitute providing health care, medical, or attempting to diagnose, treat, prevent, or cure any physical, mental, or emotional issue, disease, or condition.

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Additional Resources and Training:

- Psychological First Aid
[PowerPoint: Psychological First Aid: Module 2 – Basic PFA - Psychosocial Support IFRC \(pscentre.org\)](https://www.pscentre.org)
- PFA: National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
<https://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=11>
- Brene Brown Ted Talk video “Empathy vs. Sympathy” [Brené Brown on Empathy vs Sympathy - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5k1jovUwL4)
- SAMSHA Disaster Mental Health resources [SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/disaster)
- Tips for Adults National Child Traumatic Stress Network
https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//pfa_tips_for_adults.pdf
- By The GoodTherapy Team: ASSIST Model
<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/how-to-give-psychological-first-aid-0831197>
- SAMHSA: Disaster Distress Helpline Brochure
https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Digital_Download/PEP12-DDHBRO.pdf
- Show Me: A Communication Tool for Emergency Shelters
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/show-me-a-communication-tool-for-emergency-shelters/download>

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