



## DISASTER – Integrating Mental/Behavioral Health into local disaster planning.



### ISSUE BRIEF

Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and traumatic events is essential to the behavioral health (mental health and substance use) of individuals and communities. Mental health interventions can help facilitate recovery and prevent long-term mental illness (such as depression, anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder).

#### Prepare for Disaster

To assess your local level of Disaster Response Preparedness, ask your mental/behavioral health director these questions:

1. How is Mental/Behavioral Health integrated, staffed, funded and supported in your County?
2. Does your county have a Disaster MH/BH Subject Matter Expert?
3. Current, written, integrated disaster plans?
4. Disaster Department Operations Center?
5. Staff identified for National Incident Management System (NIMS) Roles? Trained?
6. What are the Disaster BH Intervention Standards for those who are least impacted to most impacted?
7. What is your BH Department's Disaster Mission?
8. What is the working relationship between the American Red Cross and Disaster Mental Health Services in your County?
9. What are the BH plans for County staff disaster mental health? (Employee Health and Well Being Unit Leader selected and trained?)
10. Do you have back-up for every mental health position? (Staff may be evacuees.)

See: [calbhbc.com/disaster-recoveryreadiness.html](http://calbhbc.com/disaster-recoveryreadiness.html)

#### Children's Disaster Mental Health

Research shows that children are at particular risk for disaster-related mental illness. It is critical to provide best practice and evidence-based care immediately following disaster. The National Children's Disaster Mental Health Concept of Operations (NCDMH CONOPS) outlines a triage-enhanced children's disaster mental health incident response strategy for "seamless" preparedness, response and recovery operations. More info: [CONOPS Handout](#) and [www.calbhbc.com/disaster-recoveryreadiness.html](http://www.calbhbc.com/disaster-recoveryreadiness.html)



#### Psychiatric Advance Directives (PAD)

PADs are legal documents, drafted when a person is well enough to consider preferences for future mental health treatment. PADs allow appointment of a health proxy to interpret preferences in a crisis, and the PAD is used when a person becomes unable to make decisions during a mental health crisis. PAD forms, information & Mental Health America's video links at:

[www.calbhbc.com/disaster-recoveryreadiness.html](http://www.calbhbc.com/disaster-recoveryreadiness.html)