

SPECIAL ENEWS

From: Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA

Re: TODAY'S UPDATE (9/12/05) – Hurricane Aftermath

MORE RESOURCES

>>Crisis Hotline Available for Victims of Hurricane Katrina – “The Department of Health and Human Services today announced the availability of a toll-free hotline for people in crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. By dialing 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), callers will be connected to a network of local crisis centers across the country that are committed to crisis counseling. Callers to the hotline will receive counseling from trained staff at the closest certified crisis center in the network. The network is run by HHS' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and involves more than 110 certified crisis centers. People who are in emotional distress or suicidal can call at any time from anywhere in the nation to talk to a trained worker who will listen to and assist callers in getting the mental health help they need. People will be provided with immediate access to local resources, referrals and expertise.”

>>From Charles Curie Administrator of SAMHSA – “We have already approved \$500,000 for SAMHSA Emergency Response Grants (SERG) for clinical services, including pharmaceuticals, for four States initially impacted by Katrina as follows: \$200,000 for Louisiana, \$150,000 for Mississippi, \$75,000 for Alabama, and \$75,000 for Texas. Texas was included because of the immediate influx of people evacuated from their homes. We are working with state officials to deploy these funds and the other resources needed as swiftly as possible. We expect to expand our financial and technical assistance to additional states as evacuees are located across the country.

We are also working with Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to implement their FEMA Crisis Counseling Program for funds for up to 60 days of services. In addition to supporting initial FEMA efforts, SAMHSA has deployed staff and mobilized its Disaster Technical Assistance Center to support state officials in their efforts to conduct needs assessments, provide services, support ongoing administrative operations, access financial assistance and plan for long-term recovery. An interagency triage team from the Administration on Aging (AoA), the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and SAMHSA is assisting at Federal Medical Shelters to provide staffing recommendations and service delivery. We are working with the Texas Department of Health Methadone Authority to establish a triage arrangement in conjunction with people evacuated to the state.

We are working with our constituent groups to identify deployable assets to meet requests from the states particularly for clinicians who can provide mental health services. ... The Department has established a website (<<http://volunteer.hhs.gov>>) and toll-free number (1-866-KAT-MEDI) to help identify non-federal health care professionals and relief personnel to assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

In addition, many of you have inquired about the best way to provide assistance to those affected by Hurricane Katrina. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has developed a list (<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=18473>), which is being continually updated, and gives instructions on how to provide immediate cash donations to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina.”

>>Other sites with Katrina Resource Links

>>>National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention
<http://www.promoteprevent.org/hurricane.htm>

>>>American Psychiatric Association's Katrina Resource Page is at
<http://www.psych.org/disasterpsych/links/weblinks.cfm>

>>>American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry links
<http://www.aacap.org/publications/DisasterResponse/index.htm> (information for care givers)
<http://www.aacap.org/publications/DisasterResponse/Katrina/clinicians.htm> (for clinicians)

>>>American School Counselor Association Link to Resources
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=420>

>>>National Association of Social Workers
<http://www.naswdc.org/pressroom/events/katrina05/default.asp>

>>National Mental Health Association
<http://www.nmha.org/>

>>The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress
<http://www.aets.org/index.html>

>>>From the NYU Child Study Center – Katrina’s Aftermath: Articles and Resources Related to Child Mental Health –
http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/katrina_main.html

VOLUNTEERS

>> “As a member of the American Red Cross (ARC) Partners for Effective Emergency Response, the American Counseling Association is working to recruit professional counselors to help with the emotional aftermath caused by Hurricane Katrina. The Red Cross anticipates setting up 300 shelters in the Gulf Coast region. Because of the wide devastation caused by Katrina, each shelter is anticipated to serve 1,000 people and will be in operation for 90 days. Each of the 300 shelters will need 10 mental health volunteers, each of whom will serve for two to three weeks before returning home. As such, up to 15,000 mental health volunteers will be needed. ACA has been able to obtain a waiver that allows any state certified/licensed school counselor to volunteer for disaster mental health work for Hurricane Katrina. Professional counselors who (1) hold an LPC (or equivalent) license, or (2) are certified as a National Certified Counselor (NCC), or (3) are currently certified/licensed as a school counselor and are able to travel to the Gulf Coast region for a minimum of 14 days are being recruited. To volunteer or for more information, visit <http://www.counseling.org/hurricane>.

NEWS BRIEFS

>>From PEN Weekly NewsBlast" (newsblast@lyris.publiceducation.org) an online resources from the Public Education Network" (PEN@PublicEducation.org)

>>> “ACROSS NATION, STORM VICTIMS CROWD SCHOOLS – School districts from Maine to Washington State are enrolling thousands of students from New Orleans and other devastated Gulf Coast districts in what experts said could become the largest student resettlement in the nation's history. Schools welcoming the displaced students must not only provide classrooms, teachers and textbooks, reports Sam Dillon, but under the terms of President Bush's education law must also almost immediately begin to raise their scholastic achievement unless some provisions of that law are waived. Historians said that those twin challenges surpassed anything that public education had experienced since its creation after the Civil War, including disasters that devastated whole school districts, like the San Francisco earthquake and the Chicago fire.” – <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/07/national/nationalspecial/07child.html>

>>> “LOUISIANA SCHOOLS CHIEF SEEKS \$2.8 BILLION IN K-12 AID – Louisiana school districts decimated by Hurricane Katrina will need \$2.8 billion in federal aid this school year to recover from the devastating storm, Louisiana's top education official said,

adding that as many as 100,000 of the public school students displaced in the New Orleans area may return to their home schools by January. That would leave about 55,000 students from New Orleans and one of its neighboring parishes without a home school to return to during the current school year. The \$2.8 billion in federal aid would provide districts with enough money to replace state and local revenue for schools lost in the aftermath of the hurricane that ravaged southeastern Louisiana, effectively erasing the tax base of the area for the short-term and crippling it for

several years to come, reports David J. Hoff.”

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/09/08/02katrinaupdate_web.h25.html

>>From ECS e-Clips [eclips@ecs.org]

>>>NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE – "Urgent Cash Sought To Sustain Schools – In an emotional appeal for immediate federal help, the superintendent of Jefferson Parish public schools said Thursday she feared the longer it takes to reopen schools, the fewer people will come back from their far-flung shelters and temporary housing. Superintendent Diane Roussel broke into tears as she spoke before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. She said her district is trying to rebuild from Hurricane Katrina with its cash reserves nearly gone and its residents largely out of work and unable to pay the sales and property taxes that finance schools. And the community ‘more than ever’ needs the stability schools provide.”

>>>SACRAMENTO BEE – “State's Community Colleges Have Room for Katrina Evacuees – California community college officials have the will and their facilities have the capacity to enroll students displaced by Hurricane Katrina, state leaders said. Californians who temporarily left the state for the Gulf Coast area are still eligible for resident tuition, so are those who attended a California high school for at least three years and graduated. A bill working its way through the Legislature also would waive nonresident tuition at community colleges for displaced Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama students. Those students, under the bill, also could apply for a waiver of in-state fees.”

>>Excerpt from an article in the New York Times by Susan Saulny, September 10, 2005
“But I Just Want to Know, Where's My Baby? – ‘I keep telling myself it's going to be all right,’ said Ms. Boyd, breathing deeply to control frayed nerves and turning her face away from her room, where 11 people are sharing two beds. ‘I can't start crying because of the other children. I can't break down. I'm all they've got right now. But I just want to know, where's my baby?’ Ms. Boyd, 23, is certainly not alone in her sorrowful quest. Officials said there was no way at this point to estimate how many children have been severed from families, but early figures suggest the tally could be in the thousands.

Scores of children have been found wandering alone in search of lost adults. On Thursday and Friday alone, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received 500 new cases of parents looking for children or vice versa, bringing the number of reports in its Hurricane Katrina database to 1,500. Of the center's cases, 258 have been successfully resolved.

Some of the parents have told the group that when they were evacuating the city, they placed their children on earlier buses in the mistaken belief that when they got seats on a later bus, the whole family would end up in the same place.

Louisiana officials urged the dozens of impromptu shelters that have popped up across the country to register with the state so that officials could begin to compile a database of all the people in them. There are some 54,000 people in 240 shelters that are already registered, said Terri Ricks, undersecretary of the Louisiana Department of Social Services, but the state still does not have a list of who is in those shelters.”

>>EXCERPT FROM THE LETTER FROM REG WEAVER (PRES. OF THE NAT. EDUC. ASSOC.) TO SECRETARY OF EDUCATION SPELLING

“I believe it would be prudent if, in these extraordinary times, the Department of Education also considers how this situation will impact the many teachers and school employees in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida where the hurricane hit, as well as the schools in Texas and other areas where the new students will be attending. In addition to the personal impact of the hurricane on them and their families, our members are concerned about the

implications of No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements on their students and schools. Until these children, their teachers, districts and families gain their footing under these extremely difficult circumstances, I encourage you to implement the provisions in NCLB that deal with the impact of natural disasters on testing and AYP.

We would also ask that states such as Texas and others who are not physically affected by Hurricane Katrina, yet are receiving these children, be granted the same levels of flexibility and not be adversely affected or otherwise penalized for accepting these children and students into their school systems.

And finally, educators in these affected areas have been preparing to meet the provisions of NCLB associated with highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals. Many of these talented and committed individuals will now be unable to fulfill their requirements due to this natural disaster. I would implore you to please extend the circle of flexibility to include these provisions.”

PERSONAL COMMENTS

“Here in Calloway County we are also helping with the families. We have approximately 175 of which 39 are school aged children. The community has been great in coordinating services especially mental health services here in Murray Kentucky.”

[Editor: The following illustrates one of the complexities confronting districts trying to respond to the crisis. It also illustrates the complexities involved in choosing terms to describe the folks who have been displaced from their communities.]

“I am wondering if opening the previously closed elementary school in Houston for refugee children is considered segregation?” [Note: The federal legislation for the homeless requires that students served under the law not be housed in separate facilities.]

From the listserv of the Society for Community Research & Action, the question is raised about what kind of federal policy would be helpful related to mental health/stress/coping in the disaster aftermath. Jon Miles a Congressional Fellow for Sen. Tom Harkins states: “I feel fortunate to be in a position where I can have some [policy] input. ... I would love input from [those] who understand the importance of strength-based approaches, intervening at multiple levels, and incorporating cultural sensitivity. ... Right now in the Senate we are generating a priority list of challenges in people’s lives.”