

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

Emotional and Spiritual Care Offerings

A disaster, no matter the magnitude, impacts the lives of those involved on many levels. Those who faithfully respond are also impacted in significant ways. Faith community caregivers see the adverse impacts, work tirelessly to address the many needs, and absorb the stories of survivors. Caregivers feel the physical, emotional and spiritual fatigue that follows. Through the years PDA has sought to offer resilience support to disaster responders within our Presbyterian family and in their communities.

When a Presbytery sees a need for assistance in emotional and spiritual care, the EF/GP or equivalent writes a request for that assistance to the *Associate for U.S. Disaster Response at pda.help@pcusa.org*. If the Associate is able to respond favorably, he/she sends the request to PDA's Emotional and Spiritual Care Coordinator, who contacts the EF/GP or designee to learn more about the need and begin planning.

Because no one program addresses all the possible needs, PDA offers a variety of programs based on a set of guiding principles and content. These guide planning for the unique situation of each disaster and each community.

Principles

- (1) The Emotional and Spiritual Care programs are designed for those who support others post disaster, including but not limited to faith leaders, social service organization workers, first responders, case managers, long term recovery committee members, government responders. If the responders are supported, the survivors will be supported. Within this principle is the understanding that at times the responders are also survivors.
- (2) The programs are flexible and adaptable depending on the unique needs of each group. It is possible to structure an event(s) as a two-hour program, a full day program, or a multi-day retreat program.
- (3) Programs are need driven. If there is a need within the Presbyterian community or the broader community and PDA is invited to help PDA will respond if possible.
- (4) Whenever possible the programs are offered at no cost to the Presbyteries for program leaders' expenses. If possible, local hosts are asked to furnish refreshments and a simple lunch.

- (5) Programs are designed with the understanding that both learning and respite are necessary.
- (6) All programs are facilitated by knowledgeable, experienced and compassionate PDA National Response Team members and/or National Volunteers.
- (7) All programs are based on current research in adult learning.
- (8) PDA realizes that as the response and recovery evolves, the needs evolve. Different programs can be offered at different phases of preparation, response, and recovery.

Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care Training

Although faith community leaders and others are trained to provide quality emotional and spiritual care, the disaster environment presents distinct challenges. PDA offers training in **'How To Offer'** appropriate and respectful disaster emotional and spiritual care (ESC).

The training is based on the most current research. The training covers the following topic...

- (a) The uniqueness of the disaster environment
- (b) The phases of disaster response and recovery
- (c) Providing disaster ESC within one's faith community and to those beyond one's faith community
- (d) Doing disaster ESC within a broader relief operation
- (e) Principles of appropriate and respectful disaster ESC
- (f) Tending to personal resilience skills

Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care Training can happen prior to a disaster as disaster preparation or shortly after a disaster in an abbreviated format.

Programs to Promote Responder Resilience

No one is immune to the stress and fatigue associated with responding to a disaster. This is true for responders as well as survivors. PDA has developed programs that will support and encourage caregivers in maintaining and building the resilience necessary to remain faithful in one's call to serve.

The programs are designed to include opportunities for participants to enter safe space to find respite, reflection, and rejuvenation, as well as to develop tools to immediately incorporate into their personal resilience plans.

The programs are based on current learnings of responder stress and resilience. Areas explored are...

- (a) The ways in which caregiver stress adversely impacts the responder
- (b) The importance of meaningful connections
- (c) The importance of reflecting, integrating and sharing one's personal experience as a caregiver
- (d) The importance of safe, sacred space to relax, reenergize and find grounding
- (e) The facets of a personal resilience plan
- (f) The necessity of putting into practice an intentional plan to build and maintain resilience

Programs to Promote Responder Resilience can take place prior to a disaster as disaster preparation or shortly after a disaster to over one year after a disaster.

Pastoral Trauma Support

Pastors who serve after natural or human caused disasters often need special support in a safe environment away from their congregations. PDA offers retreats for pastors, each designed with the unique needs of the disaster and the pastors. The retreats offer the same kinds of support as PDA's other resilience programs with special applications for pastors.

In addition, PDA offers on-line support.

Camps for Children

PDA collaborated with Camp Ferncliff in the Presbytery of Arkansas to develop a camp for children impacted by human-caused disasters such as school shootings. If you have a need for such a camp, PDA will connect you with the appropriate person to explore the possibility.

The following grid presents an overview the programs offered by PDA that promote responder resilience.

| Considerations | Compassion Fatigue | Resilience & Renewal | Tools for Building Resilience |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Size of Group | 15-100+ | 12-60 | 15-200 |
| Timing of event(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works well pre-disaster to build responder resilience. 6-12 months after the event a shortened version (2 hrs) can be offered for immediate support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When responders are feeling the impacts of stressors 3-24 months after the event. | In the early weeks after a disaster to teach tools for preventing potential impacts of stressors. |
| Location | One large room with tables for 6-7 and audio/visual capability. Can be offered in theater-style seating, if necessary. | One room with tables for 6-7 and audio/visual capability | One room with tables for 6-7 and audio-visual capability. Can be offered in theater-style seating. |
| Learning Style | Primarily presentation with some group interaction | Primarily experiential with some interactive didactic | Interactive didactic and experiential |
| Presentation Style | 2-3 facilitators using a PowerPoint presentation throughout the day with participants using a workbook | 2-3 presenters facilitating individual reflection, opportunities to share, small- and large-group discussion. | 2 presenters facilitating individual reflection, opportunities to share, small and large group discussion, and interactive didactic presentations. |
| Length of program | 7 hours including lunch typically 8:30-4:00 PM or an overnight experience | 7 hours including lunch typically 8:30-4:00 PM or an overnight experience | 3 hours plus hospitality time before and, if morning, lunch following |
| Cost to participants | All three programs are offered free of charge as a gift from the Presbyterian Church to those on the front line who make long term recovery possible | | |
| For information and scheduling | Contact Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Associate for U.S. Disaster Response at pda.help@pcusa.org | | |