

Health Bulletin



Mental Health Help For Hurricane Survivors

(NAPSA)—A new campaign may help hurricane survivors deal with the trauma of living through a natural disaster.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), research on the consequences of major floods and hurricanes suggests that for some, the psychological impact of the recent hurricanes will be pervasive and severe.

In fact, SAMHSA estimates that in those areas that have been significantly impacted by the hurricanes, 25 to 30 percent of the population may experience clinically significant mental health needs and an additional 10 to 20 percent may show sub-clinical but not trivial needs. In total, based on early estimates, up to 500,000 people may be in need of mental health services.

To help, SAMHSA partnered with the Ad Council to create a public service advertising (PSA) campaign meant to encourage those hurricane survivors who are experiencing mental health problems to consider seeking help.

"People who were displaced by the storms have lost their homes, schools, communities, places of worship, daily routines, social support, personal possessions and much more. This was coupled in many cases with losing loved ones and witnessing death, destruction and criminal violence," says HHS secretary Mike Leavitt.

Most hurricane survivors demonstrate remarkable resiliency and will rebuild their lives without significant mental or substance abuse issues. However, many will have difficulty achieving recovery without professional assistance. Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—including depression, grief and



A new campaign encourages hurricane survivors to pay mind to their mental health.

anger—are to be expected. They may also develop physical and behavior problems, such as substance abuse disorders among adults and conduct problems among children. Some of these problems may not surface for months or years.

The PSA campaign includes television and radio spots, which are available in English and Spanish, and address the fears, thoughts, concerns and questions faced by the victims. The PSAs aim to reach adult survivors and first responders directly, as well as parents and caregivers who can assess their children's emotional well-being. Viewers and listeners are encouraged to take time to check in on how they and their families are doing and call a confidential toll-free number (1-800-789-2647 for adults/parents and 1-800-273-TALK for first responders), to speak to a trained professional who can assist with information and referrals to local services, or visit www.samhsa.gov.

The campaign was created pro bono by Grey Advertising. The PSAs are being distributed by the FastChannel Network and will air in advertising time donated by the media.