Psychological First Aid (PFA)

TARGET AUDIENCE

This program is for children, adolescents, adults, and families who have been affected by a disaster or other traumatic emergency.

SUMMARY

Psychological First Aid (PFA), an evidence-informed, community-based disaster response intervention, is designed to help reduce trauma-related distress and promote short- and long-term coping.

EVIDENCE

No peer-reviewed evaluations of the program could be identified through a public search.

COMPONENTS

PFA is administered immediately following an emergency situation by mental health professionals or disaster relief workers who provide early services in an emergency event. The program includes eight basic components:

- Contact and engagement: Establish a human connection with those being served;
- Safety and comfort: Ensure the immediate safety and comfort of those affected;
- Stabilization: Calm distraught survivors;
- Information gathering: Identify and address survivors' specific needs;
- Practical assistance: Help survivors meet their immediate needs;
- Connections with social supports: Locate and make connections with sources of support, including family members, friends, and community resources;
- Information on coping: Determine ways to help victims with the psychological impact of disasters or emergencies; and
- Linkage with collaborative services: Transition survivors to local services, such as medical or mental health clinics, social support programs, or transportation services.

PREVIOUS USE

PFA has been administered in the United States, Australia, China, Haiti, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Spain, and Taiwan.
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TRAINING

This program is facilitated by volunteer mental health professionals or disaster relief workers, and training is available through a free, 6-hour, interactive online course. Please visit learn.nctsn.org/course/category.php?id=11 for more information on training.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations for implementing PFA include obtaining volunteers to provide services during an emergency event; providing transportation, housing, and on-site support for volunteer service providers; and realizing that the nature of the disaster, the population being served, and the setting in which services are rendered all exert unique influences on implementation.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION

If you are interested in implementing PFA, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

TIME

PFA is administered immediately following an emergency situation. Duration of the program varies.

COST

PFA manuals are available online for free, and print manuals are available for a fee. Please visit www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid for more information. In addition, implementation costs could include transportation, housing, and support of volunteers.

EVALUATION PLAN

To move PFA to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least one evaluation should be performed demonstrating positive effects lasting at least one year from the beginning of the program or at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program. Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Melissa Brymer by email mbrymer@mednet.ucla.edu or contact the National Child Traumatic Stress Network by phone 1-919-682-1552, email info@nctsn.org, or visit www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid

SOURCE

www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid and Brymer et al. (2006).