

# Disaster Mental Health Government Response



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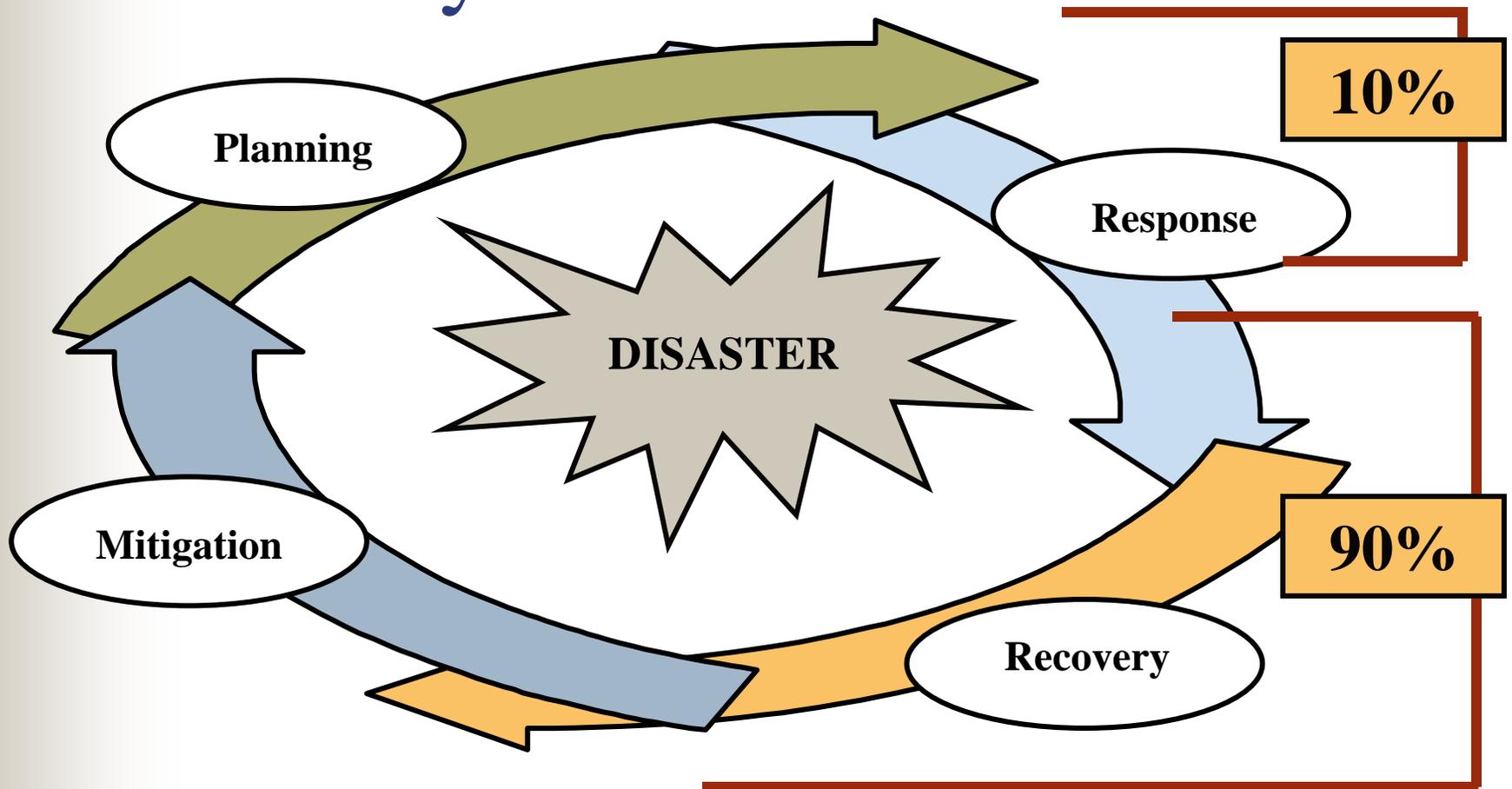
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# Goals for Presentation

- Gain familiarity with:
  - The government levels involved in a disaster mental health response
    - County, State, Federal Government roles
  - What a disaster mental health response entails

# Disaster Cycle



**Disaster mental health: includes response, but mainly recovery**



# Mental Health Disaster Response Infrastructure

- County Level (Operational Area):
  - County Mental Health Department
- State Level:
  - California Department of Mental Health (CDMH)
- Federal Level:
  - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
  - Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS)



# What Prompts a Combined Federal, State and County Disaster Mental Health Response?

- State of Emergency: county mental health and CA Department of Mental Health (CDMH)
- Presidential declaration of disaster: county mental health, CDMH, FEMA and CMHS



# FEMA Crisis Counseling Program

- Established 1974
- Requires a Presidential declaration
- Used following natural disasters and acts of terrorism
- Federal, state and county government partnership
  - County contract provider organizations (CBO's) who ultimately deliver services



# FEMA CCP Grants

- Immediate Services Program: Application due within 14 days of Presidential disaster declaration. Funds 60 – 120 days of services
  
- Regular Services Program: Application due within 60 days of Presidential declaration. Funds nine (9-11) months of services
  - Typically lasts through first anniversary of disaster

# CDMH Response

- Report to OES & FEMA DFO
- Provide consultation & TA to counties
  - Plan a mental health response
  - Prepare application for federal funds
- Assist in arranging mutual aid
- **Prepare FEMA ISP grant application (14 days)**
- **Prepare FEMA RSP grant application (60 days)**
- Administer FEMA CCP for following year



# County Mental Health Response

- Participate in Op. Area Emergency Operations
- Assess need; develop response strategies
- Coordinate with other response agencies (ARC)
- Mobilize and deploy crisis response personnel
- Prepare federal grant application(s)
- Organize and oversee mutual aid response
- Get out onto the streets, into the shelters, neighborhoods, morgue facility, family assistance centers, hospitals, schools and other gathering places
- Plan for and administer recovery services (grants)
- Launch FEMA CCP overnight



# County Mental Health Deployment

- Emergency Operations Center
- Extrication and morgue sites
- Care and shelter sites
- Community gathering places
- Neighborhoods, homes, businesses
- Town hall meetings
- Medical/triage centers
- County/city administrative offices
- Family assistance centers
- Schools
- DRC/LAC



# Disaster Mental Health Goals

- Assist people in returning to a pre-disaster functioning level
- Providing crisis intervention and stress management services
- Listen and educate
- Normalize: typical reactions and emotions
- Teach/reinforce positive, adaptive coping skills
- Assess needs and refer to resources
- Facilitate community recovery

## **A Disaster Mental Health Outreach Team**



**Team members include: clinicians, para  
professionals, indigenous personnel**

6/22/2005



# FEMA CCP Activities

- Outreach
- Screening and assessment
- Individual, family, group counseling
- Information and referral
- Public education
- Stress management

**Provided by: mental health professionals  
paraprofessionals, indigenous people in the  
community**



## Response: first 60 days

- Goal: assessing needs and stabilizing affected victims (to the degree possible under a crisis situation)
- Activities:
  - Conduct an assessment of need
  - Provide immediate crisis response services: outreach, counseling, education, diffusing/debriefing, referral to other services



**Door to door outreach:  
leaving resource materials**

## Portable On-site Services





## Recovery: 9 – 11 Months

- Assisting disaster survivors to return to pre-disaster functioning
- Promote resiliency
- Connect disaster survivors to long-term recovery services and programs
- Build community capacity for recovery from effects of disaster



# FEMA CCP

- Less traditional than typical psychotherapy
- Home, neighborhood, community based
- Assesses strengths, adaptation and coping skills
- Seeks to restore pre-disaster functioning
- Validates appropriateness of reactions
- Normalizes experience: loss, fear, anxiety, anger, despair, depression, grief
- Educational focus

# Special Populations

- Children, elderly
- Ethnicity & language
- Disabled
- Homeless
- Seriously mentally ill
- Varying socioeconomic status
- Medically fragile
- Disaster responders



# Comparisons

## Traditional Counseling Services

- Primarily office-based
- Focus on diagnosis and treatment
- Attempt to impact personality & functioning
- Examines content
- Encourages insight into past experiences & influence on current problems

## FEMA CCP

- Home and community based
- Assessment of strengths, adaptation and coping skills
- Seeks to restore pre-disaster functioning
- Accepts content at face value
- Validates appropriateness of reactions and normalizes experience
- Psycho-educational focus



# Program Limitations

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- Medications
- Hospitalization
- Formalized treatment or long-term therapy
- Providing childcare or transportation
- Fundraising activities
- Advocacy
- Case management

## Children's Group



**Children love to be listened to, if given the opportunity.**



# Example: 2003 CA Wildfires

- Five counties declared; three applied for funds
- FEMA Immediate Services Program:
  - 10/26/03 – 3/22/04 (5 months)
- Regular Services Program:
  - 3/23/04 – 12/22/04 (9 months)
- Three Wildfire Recovery Projects: San Bernardino Co., San Diego Co., Tri-City area of LA Co.



# Successful Project Activities

- Widespread community outreach, education
- Linking sponsors to affected communities:
  - 1991 East Bay fire survivors offer support
  - Adopt a school program; school pen pals
- Community events: health fairs, rebuilding seminars, picnics, fundraisers, sharing groups, memorials, anniversary events, community art projects and memorial efforts
- Facilitating the building of consortiums



# West End Family Counseling Services

*Serving Our Communities Since 1955*

[www.wefcs.org](http://www.wefcs.org)

### The Agency Mission

*"West End Family Counseling Services provides high-quality, affordable, innovative programs for the diverse communities the Agency serves"*



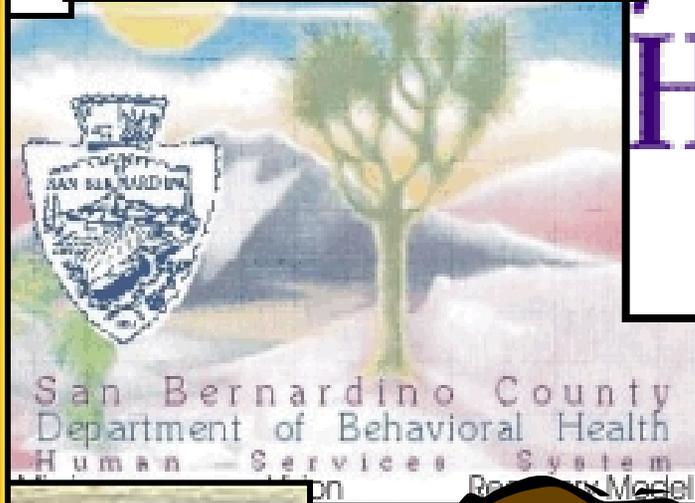
Serving The Following Southern California Communities With Distinction

## Bilingual Family Counseling Services

## Rebuilding Mountain



## Hearts & Lives



San Bernardino County  
Department of Behavioral Health  
Human Services System  
on Recovery Model



## Rim Family Services

A United Way Member Agency

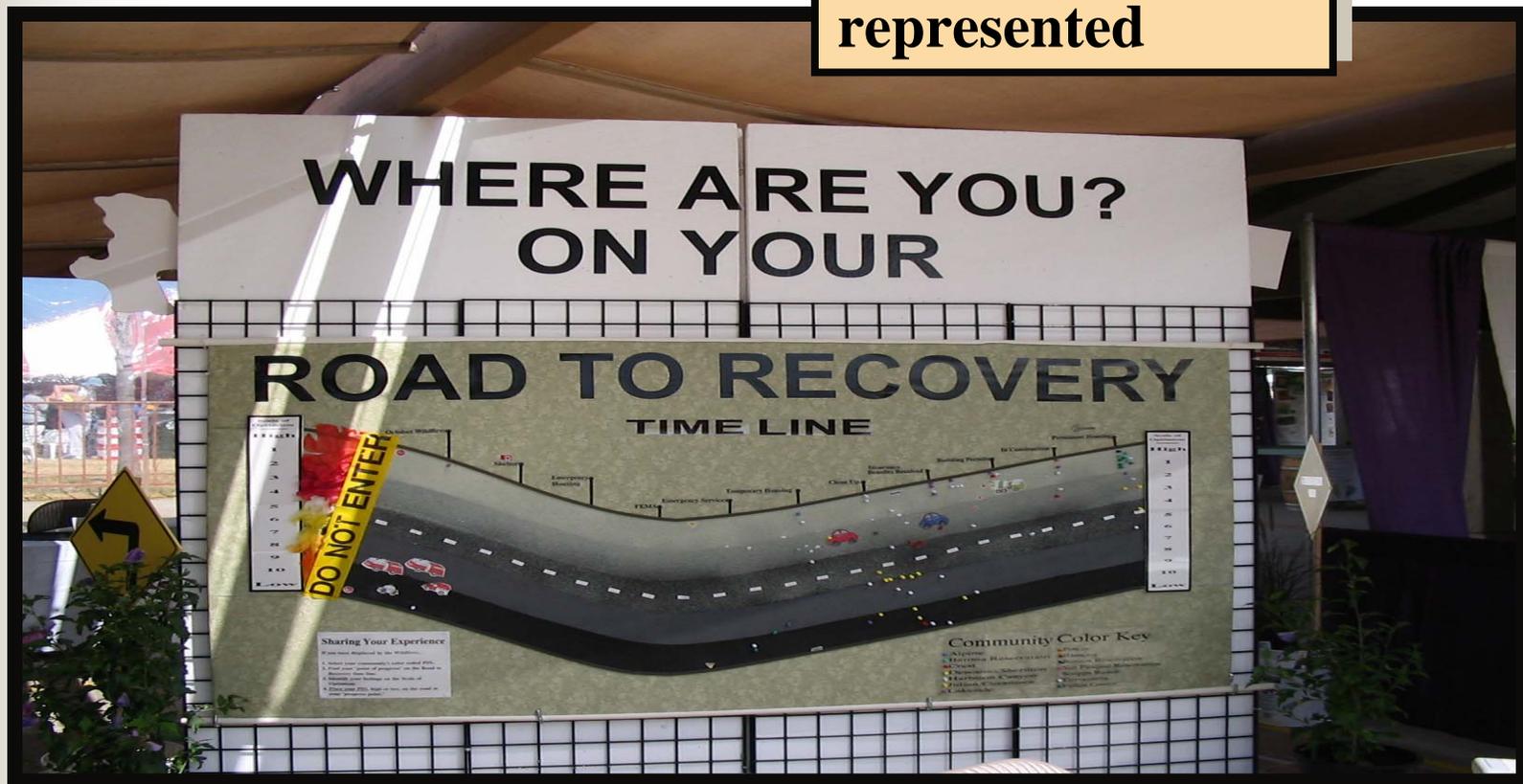


## Big Bear Family Counseling

# County Fair Outreach

22 days and 1.2 million visitors

16 communities represented



01/22/2005

# Community “Story Boards”



6/22/2005



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## Partnering for Community Education and Preparedness



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# Benefits of the FEMA CCP

- The Wildfire Recovery Project provided a safe way to engage in services:
  - No cost for services
  - No insurance claim/report for services
  - No employer involvement (Employee Assistance Program)
  - No diagnosis, less stigma than “formalized” mental health services



# Wildfire Recovery Project Accomplishments

- 14 months of services (two months, past anniversary date)
- Written resource materials handed out: 112,000
- Educational contacts; 63,000
- Crisis counseling contacts: 24,000
- Crisis counseling group participants: 9,200



## No Federal Funding?

- County Mental Health attempts to deliver services based on available resources
- Response may be limited or none at all
- 800 Access line exists in every county
- In-person participation versus leaving resource materials at Disaster Recovery Centers/Local Assistance Centers