



Bolante.NET

Threat Assessment & Disaster Behavior Health Training and Services

Fundamentals for Disaster Response Volunteers

Bolante.Net has provided a few supportive reminders related to the role as a disaster response volunteer, working with survivors, self-care, and working in a shelter.



What's Your Role?

Role and Responsibilities: Requesting and receiving a job induction includes information about roles, responsibilities, work hours and breaks, location, who to contact for help and guidance such as a supervisor, and how to reach them.

Survivor and Disaster Worker Needs: Don't wait to be asked to help, step up, and offer help to those who seem to need it.

Reassignment: Check with a supervisor to see if there is a different assignment available if one is not working out.

BE FLEXIBLE: Disasters are ever-evolving and volunteers may be asked to do something completely different than originally assigned.

Working With Survivors

Mental/Behavioral Health Support: Be sure to have mental/behavioral health support follow up with survivors who may benefit from additional support.

Calm Demeanor and Validate: Survivors may experience a full range of emotions including anger or becoming withdrawn. These are normal reactions to traumatic events. Present a calm demeanor while actively listening. Validate their feelings and avoid responding with anger.

Vetted Information: NEVER pass on information that has not been vetted. Let the survivor know you are unsure of the answer to their question, but you will see if you can find the answer. Don't give out information that you are not 100% sure of.

Self-care

Find a Buddy: Be aware of signs of stress with both of you. Taking breaks together is an opportunity to debrief, discuss what has been experienced and observed.

Nutrition: Stay hydrated, have regular meals, and pick the most nutritious snacks.

Bring your best self! Tensions can run high with any disaster response; misunderstandings can easily happen. Say “please” and “thank you” - both go a long way. Do both generously with staff, fellow disaster volunteers, and survivors.

Self-awareness: Know when you're nearing a point of mental or physical exhaustion. Listen to your body and avoid working beyond your scheduled shift.

Support for Disaster Response Volunteers: Hearing distressing stories from survivors can take a toll on disaster response volunteers. Reach out to mental/behavioral health support when needed.

Working In Shelters

Privacy and Control: A shelter is the survivor's home and they need privacy and control over their home environment when possible.

Shelter Rules, Schedules, and Procedures: Know them and share them with survivors.

Empower Survivors: Find allowable ways shelter residents may help around the shelter.

Survivors and Shelter Services: Some survivors may congregate outside a shelter setting to access services - don't forget to check-in with them.

Patience, Grace, and Consideration: Practice generously with staff, disaster response volunteers, and survivors.