

# Disaster Behavioral Health: Living it and Feeling it: Understanding and Supporting Behavioral Health in Disasters

## What is the purpose of disaster behavioral health?

- To promote adaptive functioning by reducing stress in survivors and responders during a disaster.
- Disaster behavioral health doesn't provide diagnoses or treatments, it assumes individuals are resilient and there are ways to understand and reduce our stress levels.
- Supports people having common reactions to an abnormal situation.

### Resources:

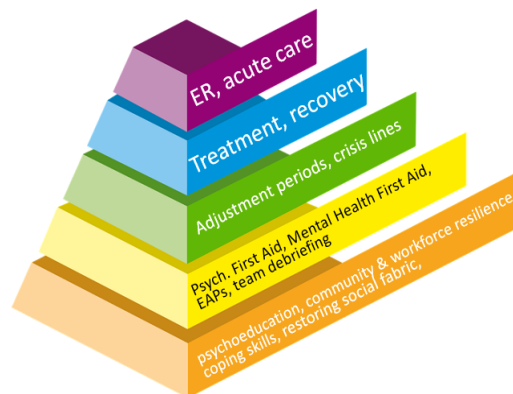
Healthcare Workforce Well-Being Support Line: 303-724-2500

[MyStrength.com](https://www.mystrength.com) - Behavioral Health Support and Tools

[Myresiliencehelp.com](https://www.myresiliencehelp.com) - Self-help website for individuals dealing with COVID-19

## Levels of Behavioral Health

- Disaster Behavioral Health mainly works in the community and public health focused lower levels of the pyramid pictured here and helps refer to higher levels of care when needed. Disaster Behavioral Health Practitioners help individuals think about how a crisis or disaster is affecting them and then what skills, resources or connections they need to adapt to these disruptions.



- Collaboration
- Situational Awareness
- Referral
- Reducing Stigma
- Culture building

### Read More:

[Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: empirical evidence](#)

Research shows that disaster practices that support the following 5 key principles, help people reduce their levels of stress:

- Safety
- Calm
- Connectedness
- Efficacy
- Hope

Disaster Behavioral Health practices, including psychological first aid, generally draw on these five principles.

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## Colorado Crisis Counseling Program (CCP)

The CCP is one of several Individual Assistance Programs funded by FEMA and is designed to help individuals understand the crisis and their reactions; reduce stress and provide emotional support; promote coping strategies; and review disaster recovery options.

Key Principles of the CCP:

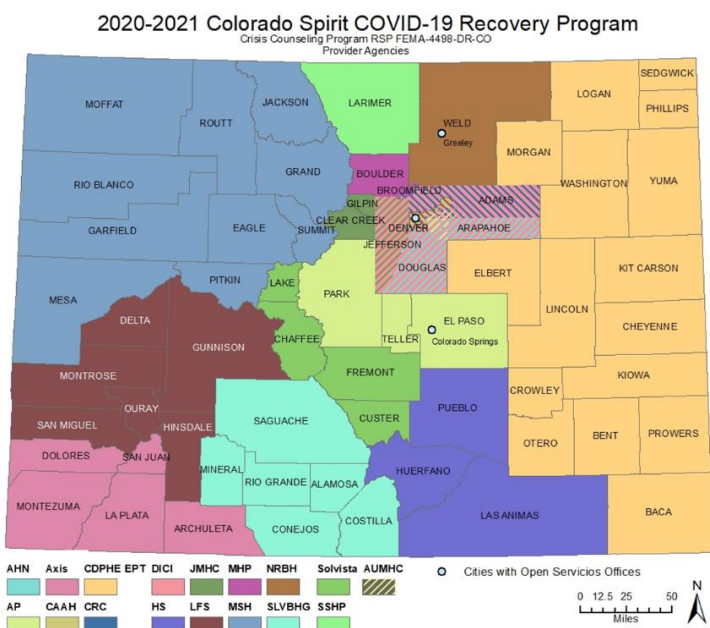
- **Strengths-based:** Not diagnosis-based
- **Anonymous:** The CCP is completely anonymous, reducing the stigma of accessing mental health support
- **Outreach-oriented:** CCP teams go to people, rather than waiting for individuals to come to them
- **Non-traditional settings:** Engagement is mostly virtual due to COVID-19, though some teams will be available in community spaces, such as libraries
- **Strengthen existing community support systems:** Support is embedded in existing providers who have connections with community and these providers make referrals to other community support systems as needed

During this webinar we heard from [CCP Providers](#) from the following Local Health Networks:

- **AllHealth Network** (Adams and Arapahoe counties, except for the city of Aurora)
- **Center for African American Health** (Black, African American, and African communities in the Denver Metro area)
- **Axis Health System** (Archuleta, La Plata, Dolores, Montezuma, and San Juan Counties)
- **Health Solutions** (Pueblo, Huerfano, Las Animas Counties)

The following map shows the regional locations of CCP Providers

(Locate yours, and more information here: <https://covid19.colorado.gov/get-help/coping-with-covid-19/crisis-counseling-program>. You can also contact Reed Floarea at [reed.floarea@state.co.us](mailto:reed.floarea@state.co.us) to connect with your local CCP provider or providers.)



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## What are people feeling on the ground?

- There are heightened stress levels related to:
  - Financial Situation - rent/mortgage, food, health insurance, utilities
  - Job Loss
  - Childcare
  - Changes in work
  - Changes in education
  - Substance abuse
- There is an increase in people experiencing homelessness, leading to hardships such as a lack of access to shelter, clean water and bathrooms.
- There is an increase in domestic abuse cases.
- Individuals have concerns directly related to COVID - They are worried about not receiving testing or testing results, or just higher levels of concern that they may be at risk of catching the disease.

## GRIT Program at National Institute for Human Resilience

The Greater Resilience Information Toolkit (GRIT) Program aims to increase capacity for Disaster Behavioral Health by training people in the community to support one another. The free, fully-automated, online training equips community members to become Resilience Support Coaches by promoting support, strength, and resources. (See the [GRIT Website](#) to sign up and learn more).

Additionally, the National Institute for Human Resilience created a number of complementary GRIT programs for COVID-19 response

- GRIT 4 ED - for schools, families and kids
- GRIT 4 Leaders - Focus on Social and Economic resilience for Nonprofits and Small Businesses
- GRIT 4 Health - Support for frontline healthcare workers.

The program currently has over 900 people signed up in 36 States, Canada, UK, and Australia. The GRIT program is being combined in El Paso County with the Crisis Counseling Program through a collaboration with the El Paso County Public Health Department, AspenPointe, National Institute for Human Resilience and NAMI. This will create a stronger community outreach system that includes GRIT ambassadors and GRIT coaches to interact with the Crisis Counselors.

*This webinar (and others) are available at:*

<https://www.coresiliency.com/adaptations-and-futures-webinar-series>



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## Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC)

[CBHC's](#) mission is to support community resilience, guide behavioral health innovation, and partner to enhance individual wellbeing throughout Colorado.

CBHC is a limited membership association that is dues-funded and member-led.

There are 23 members including:

- 17 Community Mental Health Centers
- 4 Managed Service Organizations
- 2 Specialty Clinics

CBHC has a history of responding to community need at major disasters (e.g., 1999 Columbine Shooting, 2013 Front Range Flood, etc.).

## Colorado Crisis Education and Response Network (CoCERN)

Developed in 2006, [CoCERN](#) is a multiagency organized collaborative network for disaster behavioral health response in all crisis situations. As a network, CoCERN has developed [protocols](#) to support coordination, communication and mechanisms for response focused on:

- Mental health
- Substance abuse referral
- Victim assistance
- Spiritual or pastoral interventions

CoCERN's membership includes providers who are involved in the CCP, but whereas the CCP is a grant-funded, federal recovery program, CoCERN is an ongoing state network for disaster preparedness and collaboration.

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