



## PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA) INFORMATION SHEET

*Everyone should become familiar with the basics of providing PFA*

### Why is PFA important?

- Accidents, emergencies and disasters can occur any time, anywhere, and can affect anyone
- First aid techniques can be applied to emotional as well as physical injuries
- PFA is a practical acute phase, disaster-site, mental health response aimed at alleviating acute stress resulting from accident, injury or other traumatic events
- Like medical first aid, PFA is best delivered by those immediately available on-site
- It is easy to learn and apply
- Its application does not require a medical degree or special mental health training
- It may prevent adverse long term mental health outcomes in those affected
- It can support the overall effectiveness of a disaster response

### What is Psychological First Aid?

- Early assistance ideally provided by those first on site
- Initial assessment of the psychological impact of the event
- Stabilization of the psychological injuries
- Prevention of further psychological injuries
- Maintenance of psychological status until professional mental health care is available if required
- Facilitation of transition and referrals to trained mental health professional when necessary
- Promotion of faster and better psychological healing

### What Psychological First Aid is *NOT*?

- NOT Debriefing
- NOT Counseling
- NOT Treatment

### Who Should Receive PFA Training?

- Everyone should become familiar with the basics of providing PFA
- All first responders including fire, police and crisis response teams
- Health care professionals and paraprofessionals
- All employees of health care organizations and agencies that may respond to disasters including any ancillary personnel



## PROVIDING PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)

Psychological First Aid (PFA) should be applied during and in the immediate aftermath of disasters to promote safety, calm, connectedness, hope and self-efficacy.

### Promote SAFETY

- Help people meet their basic needs for food and shelter and emergency medical attention if needed
- Provide simple and accurate information on how to obtain assistance to meet their basic needs
- Stress may alter the individuals' ability to process information, repeat information as often as necessary

### Promote CALM

- Listen to people who wish to share their stories and emotions
- Remember people react differently to disasters and there is no right or wrong way to feel
- Be friendly and compassionate even if people are being difficult
- Obtain and offer accurate information about the disaster or trauma, and the relief efforts, to help victims better understand the situation

### Promote CONNECTEDNESS

- Help people to contact their friends or loved ones
- Keep families together
- Keep children with parents or other close relatives

### Promote HOPE

- Find out the types and locations of government and non-government services that are available and direct people to these services
- If you have the correct information available tell people that help is on its way

### Promote SELF-EFFICACY

- Give practical suggestions on how people can help themselves
- Help people regain their sense of control by engaging them in activities to meet their own needs

### PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID Don'ts

- Don't force people to share their stories
- Don't give simple reassurance such as "everything will be all right" or "at least you survived" or "I know how you feel"
- Don't tell people what they should be feeling, thinking or doing
- Don't tell people how they should have acted earlier
- Don't make promises that cannot be kept
- Don't criticize existing services or relief activities in front of people in need of these services