



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