

Preface: About This Training Manual

Terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other large-scale public health emergencies such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) or pandemic flu can result in a large number of psychological casualties. Large-scale disasters can stress the capacity of hospitals and clinics to deal with the psychological consequences of the events for patients, families, and staff members. These health care facilities usually have general disaster plans for dealing with the medical consequences of public health emergencies. However, most of their disaster plans do not address the psychological consequences of such events. Throughout this training, we refer to the *psychological* consequences of a disaster. By *psychological* we mean the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive reactions that could result from a terrorist or other public health event.

This training manual is designed to fill the gap by providing a curriculum that can be used to train hospital and clinic staff about how to prepare for and respond to the psychological consequences of large-scale disasters. The training has three modules that are intended to be used in combination sequentially so that County participants receive all four hours of training:

1. An overview module designed for administrative and disaster planning and response staff in hospitals and clinics.
2. A module designed for clinical, mental health, and non-clinical staff in hospitals and clinics.
3. A module designed specifically for disaster mental health staff in Los Angeles County.

The materials in this manual are intended to be flexible so that hospital and clinic disaster coordinators can tailor a training session to the needs of local staff. All trainer, participant, and self-study materials as well as various tools described in the manual are downloadable from the accompanying CD or the Los Angeles County Web site: www.ladhs.org/ems/disaster/trainingIndex.htm. To help hospitals and clinics make arrangements to provide continuing education credit for the course, the post-tests for all of the modules are posted on the Web site.

Comments on these materials should be directed to the principal investigator of the RAND team, Lisa Meredith (Lisa_Meredith@rand.org). She may also be reached by mail at the RAND Corporation, 1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138. Comments or questions about the training and accreditation process should be directed to the county project lead, Sandra Shields (sanshields@ladhs.org). She may also be reached by mail at Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Emergency Medical Services Agency, 5555 Ferguson Drive, Suite 220, Commerce, CA 90022-5152.