



# Recovery LA

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## Long Term Recovery

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The Louisiana Family Recovery Corps (LFRC) was founded in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and coordinates humanitarian service delivery in the aftermath of disaster, both natural and manmade. The Recovery Corps is officially tasked by the State of Louisiana to provide for the recovery of its citizens and connect them with the resources they need to get back on their feet, return home and establish a quality of life. Through fill-in-the-gap programs, coordination, research and critical communications, the Recovery Corps is driving human recovery. With the support of a Long Term Recovery grant from United Way Worldwide, the Louisiana Association of United Ways (LAUW) was able to contract services with the Recovery Corps for Long Term Recovery with Dorothy Thomas, General Counsel, as the point of contact.

The Recovery Corps established the Household Establishment funds (HEF), a program which provides supplies to establish a household, such as washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, beds, etc. To date, HEF has disbursed more than \$12 million dollars to nearly 10,000 households across the state of Louisiana. A new HEF program is being developed in Tangipahoa, St. Helena, and Washington parishes and has recently been completed in Acadiana. The LFRC testified before the Louisiana Recovery Authority and was successful in getting \$5 million reallocated for an opportunity to look at housing initiatives. Dorothy Thomas and Charmaine Caccioppi, President of LAUW, met one-on-one with the Louisiana Legislators to seek financial resources to do a more holistic recovery and to provide some transparency of the dollars that were dedicated to long Term Recovery: "Where they are and how much is left that has not been fully utilized."

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For the first time, the Louisiana Family Recovery corps has adopted a state and federal legislative agenda focused on aligning the various systems and resources associated with long-term human recovery efforts. This agenda will create systems and structures designed to increase accountability, transparency, and efficiency. Additionally, the agency is working to get a resolution passed requesting that the Louisiana Legislature urge the administration to develop a system by January 2010, which will contain a list of all human recovery and recovery related assistance funds received by the state since 2005, and in the future, the organization of those funds.

## American Red Cross Hurricane Recovery Program

The American Red Cross Hurricane Recovery program awarded the Louisiana Association of United Ways, in partnership with the LSU Health Sciences Center (LSU/HSC) Department of Psychiatry; a Behavioral Health Grant (BHG) totaling \$744,883 to increase mental health clinical interventions and services in the Southern Louisiana and South Mississippi communities hardest hit by the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita. LAUW, Professors Howard and Joy Osofsky, of the LSU/HSC Department of Psychiatry, and the Louisiana Department of Education partnered on this Family Resiliency Project (FRP), which was formed to address a growing public crisis to enhance mental health services and capacity in Katrina and Rita-affected areas and to better meet mental health needs following future disasters. The FRP provided:

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- 1) Direct services to children and their families in the greater New Orleans area;
- 2) Crisis Intervention in Schools training with an “Introduction to Psychological First Aid”, focusing on trauma and its symptoms, and,
- 3) Continuing education training for mental health professionals with an overview of trauma-focused individual and group therapies. Results from this final project narrative strongly indicate that the FRP was effective in meeting the project goals and overall objective of addressing the mental health needs and concerns of children, and families who were highly affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Mental health needs of children and families who were highly affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were addressed both directly and indirectly through accomplishment of the three FRP goals. Direct services were provided on site at the schools and included: hurricane assessment and mental health screenings; brief and comprehensive evaluations; and individual, group and psychiatric treatment, to children and adolescents throughout the greater New Orleans area. Indirect services were provided through training of school based and mental health professionals in Southern Louisiana where many children displaced due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were received.

The following paragraphs will provide a detailed description of the direct service (project goal 1), training (project goals 2 and 3), and FRP accomplishments:

### **Direct Services: Project Goal 1**

A modified version of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) Hurricane Assessment and Referral Tool, *The LSUHSC Department of Psychiatry and Louisiana Rural Trauma Services Center Hurricanes Katrina/Rita Disaster Interview* (NCTSN, 2005), was used in collaboration with schools to screen 9,142 students impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Screening began in August 2008 and continued through July 2009. The screenings were conducted in 28 schools throughout Orleans, Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes. In collaboration with the Baton Rouge school system, screenings were also conducted with students displaced from Orleans Parish due to the hurricanes. Students in pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade were screened. A total of 3,291, or 36% of the total, students met the cut-off score on the screening and qualified for enhanced services. LSUHSC clinicians were onsite during the screenings to answer questions and provide brief services as needed. A full report on the results from the FRP child and adolescent screenings can be found in Appendix A (p.9).

LSUHSC clinicians conducted 3,166 brief evaluations. Brief evaluations last between 15-30 minutes and were conducted for all children and adolescents whose symptoms met the cut-off score on the screening, who requested clinical services, and/or who are referred by the school or parent. LSUHSC clinicians also conducted 456 comprehensive evaluations. Comprehensive evaluations were conducted when indicated by the brief evaluations and by parent or school referral. Comprehensive evaluations required between 1-2 hours and parental consent and participation were obtained.

A total of 246 students ranging from 4 to 18 years old received Individual therapeutic services using trauma-focused, evidence, based treatments. Treatment models included modified versions of Trauma- Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT); Child-Parent Psychotherapy and Strength After Trauma (StArT). A total of 72 children ages 9-18 received group therapeutic treatment. Group treatment models included Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS); Healing After Trauma (HATS), group modified StArT, Esteem Builders, and Equipped for Life. Psychiatric services including, medication evaluation and management, were provided to 168 individual students ranging in age from 9 to 16 years. All individual, group and psychiatric treatment were provided on site in schools throughout Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes.

Evidence based group treatments, Esteem Builders and Equipped for Life, were provided for 568 students that attended the Cops for Kids eight week summer camp program in 2008 and 2009. FRP provided mental health interventions aimed at reducing trauma symptoms and improving coping skills through resilience building. LSUHSC clinicians held 8 groups weekly that were based on the following age and gender categories: 7-8 year old girls; 7-8 year old boys; 9-10 year old girls; 9-10 year old boys; 11-12 year old girls; 11-12 year old boys; 13-14 year old girls; and 13-14 year old boys. Group sessions lasted approximately 50 minutes with an additional one hour per day designated for program feedback and individual services as needed. Outcome measures, taken at the beginning and end of the 2008 Cops for Kids camp, revealed a decrease in overall trauma symptoms and in the negative coping method of *blaming others* after participation in the camp. Screenings were also conducted for 229 children and youth attending the camp; each year over 30% met the cut-off for enhanced services. A full report on the results from the FRP Cops for Kids group intervention program can be found in Appendix C (p.14).

### **Trainings: Project Goals 2 and 3**

The Family Resiliency Project conducted a series of Crisis Intervention in Schools Trainings throughout southern Louisiana. The goals of these trainings were to assist both school and mental health professionals in identifying and helping children and adolescents affected by trauma and specifically to assist schools that received a great number of students displaced due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The first series of mental health and school administration trainings were delayed due to hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Eight trainings were held during the fall of 2008; the trainings were entitled Psychological First Aid/Crisis Intervention in Schools. Separate trainings were held for mental health professionals and school based personnel in Baton Rouge (October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>), Lake Charles (October 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>), Lafayette (November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>), and Covington (November 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>). A total of 176 individuals participated. Training curriculum was presented by four mental health professionals from the LSU/HSC Department of Psychiatry. The curriculum included overviews of: trauma symptoms; self care; Pediatric Psychopharmacology; and Psychological First Aid.

Eight trainings were held during the winter and spring of 2009; the trainings were entitled Psychological First Aid/Crisis Intervention in Schools. Dates for the second series of trainings were as follows: Baton Rouge (January 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>), Covington (February 11<sup>th</sup>); Lafayette (February 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>); Lake Charles (February 18<sup>th</sup>) and Lafourche (May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>). A total of 437 individuals participated. Curriculum was the same for the school based personnel but different for mental health professionals. The new mental health curriculum included: a brief review of trauma and Psychological First Aid; the phases of traumatic response; overview of trauma specific models and interventions; presentation of transition/recovery and posttraumatic growth models; and motivational interviewing.

At the close of each training, attendees were given the option to complete evaluations of the trainings which assessed learning objectives, satisfaction and areas for improvement. Results from the evaluations suggested that participants were satisfied overall with their training experience; agreeing that the learning objectives were met and their skills were enhanced.

## American Red Cross Hurricane Recovery Program (continued)

### Impact:

Over 10,000 children, adolescents and families in the greater New Orleans, Louisiana area received direct services through the FRP. A total of 9,142 students were screened for trauma symptoms, 3,622 comprehensive and brief evaluations were conducted, and 1,054 received individual, group, or psychiatric interventions. These services greatly impacted the mental health and well-being—as demonstrated by the statistically significant decreases in post traumatic stress symptoms—for the children and adolescents served. The FRP also provided training throughout southern Louisiana, over 400 school based personnel and mental health professionals were trained to identify and help children and adolescents affected by disaster and other traumas. Individuals trained stated/agreed that their skills were enhanced.

### Geographic Reach:

Direct services were provided to children and adolescents in the greater New Orleans area, including Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. Specifically LSUHSC clinicians provided services in the following Louisiana cities: New Orleans, St. Bernard, Belle Chasse, Boothville and Port Sulfur. Trainings were conducted throughout southern Louisiana and open to residents in the surrounding parishes. Specifically the trainings were held in the following Louisiana cities: Lafayette (Lafayette parish), Covington (St. Tammany parish), Baton Rouge (East Baton Rouge parish), Lake Charles (Calcasieu parish) and Raceland (Lafourche parish).

### Lessons Learned:

The grant allowed mental health professionals working with trauma from LSUHSC Department of Psychiatry to outreach to many more children and families in school settings than could have been done without the funding. The grant allowed the LSUHSC mental health professionals to form collaborative partnerships with schools so that delivery of mental health services went “hand-in-hand” with education. School personnel recognized the need for trauma-focused training and services following the impact of the devastating hurricanes, and the funding allowed the FRP to outreach to many schools in the highly impacted parishes. Further, through the screenings done collaboratively with the schools, children and adolescents who were impacted were identified earlier so that preventive services could be implemented. Lastly, the grant allowed LSUHSC clinicians to outreach to rural and underserved areas that were very heavily impacted by the storms and otherwise would have had very limited services available to support children and families. Because of the increased openness of school personnel to mental health interventions, LSUHSC clinicians were able to deliver a broad array of consultation, evaluation and treatment services with little stigma attached to receiving such services.

An LSUHSC clinician assigned to the FRP reported great success conducting one of the school based group treatments for students that either lost a parent due to death or incarceration after the storm. The students had a history of behavior problems in the classroom and had not received prior treatment for their losses. The clinician stated that, “not only were the students eager to attend the weekly group, but they were also willing to open up about their issues.” The clinician continued to state, “on numerous occasions I would walk through the halls of the school and teachers would stop to tell me about how much better the students’ behavior had improved.” Another clinician working with a younger student in Head Start was able to reach out to the entire family and provide, not only therapeutic services to the young child, but also to improve parenting skills and refer the parents into an adult program. The clinician working with the family stated that the outcome was, “...successful, the parents became empowered, resulting not only in improvement for the child’s behavior, parenting and family cohesion, but also in the parents moving out of violent community that they had been placed in due to Hurricane Katrina.” Another similar story to support the success of the FRP was with an adolescent male that was angry due to multiple losses exacerbated by additional losses he incurred due to the hurricanes. The clinician stated that, “over the course of treatment, the young man was allowed back into the high

## American Red Cross Hurricane Recovery Program *(continued)*

school (he was previously placed in the alternative school due to angry outbursts) and successfully graduated with a high school diploma in the spring.

Some of the barriers to the FRP occurred due to school delays concerning Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in September of 2008. The delay in the school calendar also resulted in some delays to the onset of the direct services and the trainings. Because of the impact of the hurricanes and delay in school openings, the first trainings in Lake Charles received fewer than expected participants; however schools had just started back the week prior to the trainings. Expectations for increased numbers in the winter/spring trainings and for school services were met. In attempts to increase the number of attendants for the winter and spring trainings, modifications to the original second series of trainings were proposed and approved. Changes included combining the Covington with Baton Rouge and the Lake Charles with Lafayette school based personnel trainings. Combining four trainings into two allowed for two additional trainings in Lafourche Parish, an area not only hit by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, but also by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

While some of the direct services and trainings were delayed and interrupted due to evacuation from Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, an unexpected result was that LSUHSC faculty members were able to extend experiences learned from working with survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to the response efforts to these storms. Further, LSUHSC faculty members were available to provide Psychological First Aid and assist returning residents of the greater New Orleans area at the Welcome Home Center. With funding available from the American Red Cross Hurricane Recovery Program, FRP was ready with immediate services for child survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who were retraumatized by the successive storms. Based on many of the lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the FRP was also able to serve as a resource to the areas hit by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. This assistance helped to foster many of the successful collaborations strengthened or resulting from this grant.

### **Collaborations:**

Successful collaborations with outside organizations include: collaboration with Family Services Inc. of Greater New Orleans and with the Louisiana Department of Education. Collaboration with Family Service Inc. of Greater New Orleans has increased participation in school screenings and provided discourse on services provided to schools served by both agencies to better ensure that duplication of services is not occurring. Collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Education has played a critical role in organizing and providing the trainings.

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