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Resources for Clinicians

Developed by Shared Health
Mental Health & Addictions

Supporting Manitobans in
distress following a disaster;
A guide to mental health and
crisis support services.

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***Thank you to Dr. Jolene Kinley for laying the foundation of this resource guide. Her expertise and thoughtful work shaped the core of this material. We're also grateful to everyone who contributed their time, insights, knowledge and feedback- this guide reflects a true provincial effort dedicated to supporting clinicians and improving patient care.

Principles and Practices for Immediate and On-going Support for Clinicians

This resource is intended for clinicians. Please use sound clinical judgment and practice within your individual professional scope.

Immediate Care During Stressful Events

- **Safety First:** Ensure physical safety for yourself and your clients. Know evacuation routes and emergency contacts.
- **Calm Presence:** Model calmness. Use slow, steady speech and nonjudgmental listening.
- **Address Basic Needs:** Help clients access food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- **Trustworthiness & Transparency:** Be open and honest about processes, services, and expectations.
- **Peer Support:** Encourage the use of lived experience and connection within the community.
- **Collaboration & Mutuality:** Level power differences between staff and clients; engage in shared decision-making.
- **Empowerment, Voice & Choice:** Encourage autonomy, choice, and self-advocacy.
- **Cultural, Historical & Gender Awareness:** Recognize and respond to cultural, historical, and gender-based needs and differences.

Holding Therapeutic Space After Stressful Events

In the aftermath of emergencies or disasters, immediate mental health support must be rooted in safety, presence, and respect for each individual's pace. When working with adults who have recently gone through an emergency or disaster, it can be overwhelming to think about how to support them. It is important to stay grounded in your core therapeutic skills, offering both yourself and the individual patience and grace to figure it out together. You already have all the skills you need to support them. Providing clear, direct information about the options and services available, allowing them to set the pace of conversations, and providing choice will be key. At this stage, they typically do not need trauma-focused treatment. Instead, focus on the following:

1. **Validation and normalization.** Create a safe space to share whatever is showing up for them, without judgment or falling apart. Being with them, accepting their experiences and emotions, whatever they may be, can be incredibly powerful. Acknowledge emotional reactions with statements like, "What you're feeling makes sense given what you've experienced," without minimizing distress or jumping to reassurance.
2. **Grounding** is an important skill that can help people cope in extremely difficult moments, and come back to the present. When distress intensifies, integrate grounding techniques to anchor attention in the present: guide them to notice sensory input ("Name three things you see right now"), breathe with rhythm (e.g., the 4-7-8 technique), or use movement. Grounding activities can help reorient them to the "here and now".

For some easy grounding activities visit: <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-article/grounding-techniques-article>

3. **Supporting meaning making.** Emergencies and disasters can shake our sense of safety, control, and understanding of the world. Individuals may want to talk about the event and their experiences. This is a natural process of integrating this new experience. As individuals begin to share, meaning-making may emerge. Rather than interpreting, challenge nothing—listen reflectively with compassion (“That must have been terrifying”). The important thing to remember is to let them lead. They are in control of if/what/when they share. You do not need to prompt them or direct them in what they share, just listen and reflect back the feelings. We do not want to shut down sharing or give the message that these experiences are too hard or dangerous to talk about. If speech turns to looping thoughts or rumination, redirect gently: “Let’s come back to what’s helping you feel a sense of well-being right now.”
4. **Support distress tolerance by offering coping tools drawn from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT),** such as temperature shifts (cold water, ice packs), healthy distractions (music, puzzles), and self-soothing strategies (soft textures, calming scents, weighted blankets). This DBT resource provides accessible strategies for immediate use: <https://dbtselfhelp.com/dbt-skills-list/distress-tolerance/>. Encourage individuals to notice and share their thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations, as this can help them process the situation and begin to recover. Be mindful, however, that intense focusing on thoughts and feelings—especially with the goal of not accepting or trying to change them—can itself be a form of avoidance and may keep someone stuck. Watch, be curious, and observe how things change or don’t change over a few weeks (Linehan, 2015).

Distress tolerance skills are particularly helpful for getting through the difficult initial period after an emergency, especially if individuals feel overwhelmed or are having difficulty with regular functioning. Offer a range of coping tools so they can experiment and find what’s helpful in different contexts. Consider introducing the DBT IMPROVE skill, which is designed to help individuals manage distressing situations.

It is important to recognize that negative interpretations are a common response to stress and can often lead to self-blame or other unhelpful thought patterns. There is no need to intervene or restructure these thoughts in the moment. Instead, focus on listening, validating, and empathizing. Simply acknowledging that these are stress-induced thoughts can help diminish their impact.

Intervention Considerations

It is normal to be affected, to different degrees, by emergencies and disasters such as wildfires or floods. Whether we learn about them through the news, social media, friends or family, or experience them personally, they can have a range of impacts on our functioning. Individuals may feel upset or angry, fearful, anxiety, helpless, confused, grief, or sadness. These events can also bring up feelings or memories of previous traumatic events, intensifying distress. Any emotions or thoughts that arise are valid. It is important to remember that people are strong and resilient, and generally have the skills they need to cope with the challenges they will face.

The ways children and communities cope and respond to a stressor will be influenced by how they see their parents, caregivers, and community leaders cope and react. It is important to provide opportunities to talk about concerns, have access to accurate information, and know that there are others available they can count on.

Helpful Practices for Connecting Individuals to Resources

- **Facilitate warm handoffs:** If possible, offer to make the call or introduction to a new provider together. If you can, stay with the individual during the first contact—this simple act can lower barriers and anxiety.
- **Normalize and empower:** Remind individuals that seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness. “It’s brave to reach out for help, especially after something this hard.”
- **Use Motivational Interviewing:** Approach conversations about resources and next steps collaboratively. Ask open questions (“What do you feel ready for right now?”), express empathy, and help them weigh their own reasons for accepting additional support.
- **Ensure continuity:** If you’re handing over care, let the next clinician or staff member know what’s been discussed, what’s helped, and any ongoing concerns. Continuity helps individuals feel supported, not abandoned.
- **Honor cultural identity:** Provide culturally relevant referrals whenever possible. For First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or other communities, offer resources that respect and align with their traditions and preferences.
- **Provide Resources and Crisis Lines:** Resources such as the Shared Health “Coping with Stressful Events” document may be provided.

Helpful Resources and Links

- **Motivational Interviewing Overview:** [SAMHSA - Motivational Interviewing](#)
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network:** [Wildfire Resources](#)
- **Trauma-informed Care Principles and Practical Strategies:** [Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation](#)
- **Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide (NCTSN & National Center for PTSD):** <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-field-operations-guide-2nd-edition>
- **SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach:** https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf
- **World Health Organization: Psychological First Aid Guide:** <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241548205>

Resilience and Self-Care for Providers

Caring for individuals during high-stress events can take a significant emotional toll. Prioritizing your own well-being is not just important for you—it ensures you can provide the best possible care to others. Evidence-based guidelines recommend the following self-care practices for clinicians:

- **Monitor Your Own Well-Being:** Regularly check in with yourself about your stress, emotions, and fatigue levels. Notice early signs of burnout or compassion fatigue.
- **Set Boundaries:** Maintain healthy limits between work and personal life. It's okay to say no or delegate when you're overwhelmed.
- **Debrief and Seek Support:** Use peer consultation, supervision, or supportive colleagues to process difficult cases or emotional reactions.
- **Engage in Restorative Activities:** Prioritize sleep, nutrition, movement, and activities that bring you relaxation or joy such as spending time with pets, friends and loved ones.
- **Practice Grounding and Mindfulness:** Use the same coping strategies you recommend to clients—such as grounding exercises or mindful breathing—to manage your own stress in the moment.
- **Take Breaks:** Step away when you need to, even if it's just a few minutes to decompress and reset.
- **Seek Professional Help if Needed or Contact Support Resources** (listed in this document for additional assistance).

Immediate Crisis Support Lines

24/7 Crisis Lines

- Manitoba Mental Health Crisis Line: 1-888-662-4357
- Winnipeg Crisis Response Centre (Adults): 1- (204)-940-1781 | 1-877-499-8770
- Klinik Crisis Line: 204-786-8686 | 1-888-322-3019
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 | Youth - Text CONNECT to 686868 | Adult – Text 741741
- The Link Youth Crisis Service: 1- (204)-949-4777 | 1-888-383-2776
- Addictions Helpline: 1-855-662-6605
- Farm, Rural & Northern Support: 204-571-4182 | 1-866-367-3276
- Worker’s Compensation Board Distress Line | 1- (204) 786-8175
- People with Disabilities TTY deaf access counselling Phone: 204-784-4097

First Nations Crisis Support

- MKO Mobile Crisis: 1-844-927-5433 | crisisresponse@mkonorth.com
- SCO Mobile Crisis Response Team: 1-877-726-2880 | CrisisResponse@scoinc.mb.ca
- Hope for Wellness Helpline: 1-855-242-3310 | hopeforwellness.ca

Métis Crisis Support

- MMF Mental Health Support: 1-833-390-1041 (Ext. 1) | 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Muslim Crisis Support

- Muslim Mental Health Line: 1-866-627-3342 | <https://naseeha.org/>

Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Crisis Line: Call/Text 988 (videophone available for ASL)
- Klinik Suicide Line: 1-877-435-7170
- Reason to Live (24/7): 204-786-8686 | 1-866-435-7170
- Manitoba Suicide Line: 1-877-435-7170

Non-Crisis Mental Health Support

- **Seneca Warm Line (Peer Support):** 204-942-9276 (24/7)
A peer-led, non-crisis support line offering respectful, compassionate assistance.

Regional Crisis Services

Interlake-Eastern

- Mobile Crisis: 204-482-5376 | 1-877-499-8770
- Huddle Selkirk: 204-482-9813
- CMHA Interlake-Eastern: 204-482-9723 | cmhaacrossmb.ca/interlake-eastern/
- Peer Connections MB (Selkirk): 204-223-3328
- IERHA Crisis Lines: 204-482-5419 | 1-866-427-8628
- Red Cross MHPSS team in hotels with CMHA and Sara Riel

Prairie Mountain Health

- Mobile Crisis Unit: 204-725-4411
- Crisis Stabilization Unit: 204-727-2555 | Fax 204-726-4665
- Community Trauma Team: (204) 725-4411 (Critical Incident and Stress Debriefing)

Northern Health

- Mobile Crisis Team/ Youth Services Intake (Youth 17 & Under)
 - Phone: 1-866-242-1571
 - Email: youthmentalhealth@nrha.ca
 - Fax (for referrals): 204-778-1766

Southern Health

- Mental Health Services: 1-888-310-4593
- Crisis Support: 204-326-9276 or (toll free) 1-888-617-7715

First Nations Crisis Response

- MKO Crisis Response | 1-844-927-LIFE (5433)
- Four Arrows Crisis Response Team (Island Lake)
 - Email: You can reach out to otathskamakek@fourarrowsrha.org for support or information.
 - Phone or Text: Support is often accessed directly by contacting the following team members:
 - Lionel Mason: (204) 451-5620
 - Nelson Manoakesick: (204) 980-0055
 - Darren Witzaney: (204) 291-4272
- SCO Mobile Crisis Response Team | 1-877-726-2880 (24/7) | CrisisResponse@scoinc.mb.ca

Supports for First Responders

24/7 Crisis Lines for First Responders

- Project Resilience 911: 204-573-8227
- CF Member Assistance Program: 1-800-268-7708
- Military Family Information Line: 1-800-866-4546

Peer-Led Virtual Support

- Remote Peer Meetings (Badge of Life Canada):
 - Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM (CT) via Zoom
 - Zoom ID: 647 369 8379 | Password: spring
 - Anonymous, solution-focused support for all public safety personnel
- Badge of Life Canada Peer Groups:
 - Mondays (Public Safety Personnel), Wednesdays (Families)
 - badgeoflifecanada.org/peer-support/

Dedicated First Responder Mental Health Resources:

- **Public Safety Mental Health Service:** 204-944-7075; psp@umanitoba.ca
 - Manitoba-based mental health service aimed at fostering skill building and recovery for public safety personnel by providing compassionate, trauma-informed, and evidence-based services. Offering classes, groups, brief individual treatment, and navigation support for all public safety personnel.
- **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with Mindfulness (CBTm) for Public Safety:** www.cbtm.ca
 - Class-based mental health program tailored for public safety personnel – programs are online self-directed or led by a facilitator.
- **Manitoba Critical Incident Stress Management Network:** 1-888-389-1500
 - Peer-led support for emergency services personnel involved in critical incidents
- **PSPNET – iCBT for First Responders:** pspnet.ca
 - Internet-based CBT (self-guided or therapist-assisted)
- **OSI-CAN Manitoba:** Provides peer support to first responders, as well as their family members, to assist with well-being and recovery. Phone: 204-940-1781 or Hotline: 1-877-435-7170
Website: <https://www.osicanmb.ca/>
- **Wounded Warriors** offers fee-for-service resources to frontline service workers. This includes resources on Trauma Resiliency, Couples Resiliency, Surviving Spouses, Kids Camp, PTSD service dogs as well as other individual services. More information is available at <https://woundedwarriors.ca/our-programs/trauma-resiliency-program/>

Provincial Healthcare Workforce

EAP and Provincial Wellbeing Hub [Wellbeing Hub - Shared Health - Health Providers](#)

CBTm for Healthcare <https://cbtm.ca/cbtm-programs/healthcare-workers/>

Manitoba Blue Cross Employee Support

- Manitoba Blue Cross Employee Assistance Program: 204-786-8880
 - Confidential counselling and mental health services tailored for employees and their families. Available in-person, by phone, or virtually.
- Critical Incident Debriefing:
 - workplacewellbeing@mb.bluecross.ca
 - 204-786-8880 or 1-800-590-5553 (24/7)

Counselling and Mental Health Support for Individuals

Short-Term Mental Health Counselling (NIHB Program)

Overview

This program offers short-term mental health counselling for individuals eligible under the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program.

Eligibility

- First Nations peoples who are registered under the Indian Act and have a Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) number.
- Inuit who are recognized by an Inuit land claim organization.

If you're unsure about a person's eligibility or need help, you can connect with a community health representative or reach out to the program directly for support

Coverage Includes:

- Up to 20 one-hour sessions per 12-month period.
- Additional sessions may be requested by your therapist for approval.
- Services are intended for use when no other mental health supports are available or currently in use.

Manitoba Blue Cross Counselling Sessions for Individuals Evacuated due to Wildfires

Who It's For

Free counselling support is available for individuals evacuated due to wildfires in Manitoba.

Available Services

- Counselling Sessions:
 - Up to 3 free sessions with licensed clinicians, available in-person or virtually through the Manitoba Blue Cross Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).
- 24/7 Immediate Support Line:
 - Confidential, around-the-clock access to mental health professionals — no appointment needed.
 - Call: 204-786-8880 or 1-800-590-5553

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Mindfulness (CBTm) | www.cbtm.ca

Overview:

CBTm is a brief educational program that combines CBT principles with mindfulness practices to help you build healthy coping skills and improve mental wellness. CBTm may be useful for people who are:

- Struggling with anxiety and/or mood symptoms
- Experiencing a negative impact to their life due to their mental health
- Wanting to learn new skills to help manage their own well-being
- Parents or caregivers wanting to build skills to better support their children's mental health and wellbeing

This program is *free* and accessible to anyone 12 years of age and older living in Manitoba. No referral or diagnosis needed. After completion of CBTm, individuals may be eligible for CBT-based small group psychotherapy

Trauma-Specific Counselling Services – Winnipeg

- **Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre:** (204) 477-1123 | Counselling for women
- **Klinic Community Health Centre:** (204) 784-4059 | Trauma counselling is for individuals 18+ who have experienced a traumatic event(s) in their life (email counsellingintake@klinik.mb.ca).
- **Klinic Drop-In Counselling** - Starts at noon Monday to Saturday (first-come, first served)
- **Immigrant Women's Counselling Services (NorWest Co-op):** (204) 940-2172 | Support for immigrant/refugee women facing violence, trauma, adjustment
- **Heartwood Healing Centre** (204) 783-5460 | Counselling for women with histories of sexual abuse & addiction
- **Mount Carmel Clinic – Multicultural Wellness Program:** (204) 582-2311 | Culturally appropriate counselling for immigrants/refugees in crisis
- **Rainbow Resource Centre:** (204)-474-0212 | Provides free, short-term counselling and single sessions to 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Manitoba. Intake takes place in early October, February, and June.

Virtual Mental Health Tools

Calm Harm App | calmharm.stem4.org.uk

Supports management of self-harm urges using DBT principles.

Mindfulness Coach App | mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach

Mindfulness training for ages 12+, developed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

I-CBT via MindBeacon | kiihealth.ca

Self-guided online therapy for anxiety, stress, and more.

Strongest Families Institute | strongestfamilies.com

Offers virtual mental health coaching and skill-building programs for children, youth, and families.