Introduction to Mental Health and Disaster Preparedness

Cindy L. Parker MD, MPH
Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health Preparedness
Part 2 of 2

Public Health and the Disaster Mental Health Framework
Basic Crisis Intervention = Psychological First Aid

- Goals of Psych First Aid similar to Physical First Aid
  - Stabilize
  - Mitigate dysfunction/distress
  - Return of acute adaptive function OR
  - Facilitate access to next level of care
Psych First Aid

- Stabilize and Mitigate Dysfunction/Distress
  - Assess and Triage
  - Meet basic needs
    - Food, water, shelter
    - Alleviation of pain
    - Reunification with family
    - Safety and Security
Return of acute adaptive function OR Facilitate access to next level of care

- Recognize normal from dysfunction
- Refer to mental health professional
First-Priority Goals of Disaster Mental Health

- Assess and triage.
- Meet basic needs.
- Recognize normal from dysfunction.
- Refer, when appropriate, to mental health professionals.
Effective crisis communication can:
- Provide useful information about what people can do
- Help victims receive the services they need
- Alleviate or lessen further anxiety about the situation
- Halt the spread of rumors, fear, terror
Because more psychological injuries than physical injuries can be expected resulting from a disaster, mental health services will be needed in great profusion.

Priority goals of disaster mental health are assess and triage, meet basic needs, if normal functioning is not restored, refer.

Good crisis communication plays an integral role providing disaster mental health services

Public health is ideally suited to help provide some of these services via Psych First Aid