

# **GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD of MENTAL HEALTH & RECOVERY SERVICES**

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **TITLE: Behavioral Health Disaster Plan**

#### **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this plan is to outline emergency behavioral health response and actions by the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and cooperating private organizations to reduce the vulnerability of Geauga County residents to any disasters and to provide assistance for recovery in the aftermath of any emergency involving debilitating influence on the typical pattern of life within the community.

1.2 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS's system is one of several responders during a crisis. As such, the Board must coordinate its efforts with the local Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross, and other responders.

#### **2.0 Authority**

2.1 The Geauga County Emergency Management Agency, as the official coordinating agency of Geauga County and the State and Federal Emergency Management Agencies (OEMA & FEMA) in times of county, state, and national emergencies/disasters, assists and supports the county in reducing loss of life and property from all hazards.

2.2 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS's authority and purpose are authorized and enumerated under Sections 122.23, 124.11, 140.03, 140.05, 1739.01 04 05 06, 5705.19, 5705.221 and Chapter 340 of the Ohio Revised Code as passed by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio on October 4, 1989. The duties of the Board are specified in Section 340.03 of the Ohio Revised Code and other applicable sections of the Code.

2.3 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS will collaborate and coordinate with the Geauga County EMA and the Northeast Ohio American Red Cross to address the

behavioral health needs of Geauga County residents during disaster events. The Board will designate a Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator to act as a liaison between the Geauga County EMA and the behavioral health system.

2.4 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS will identify trained individuals in the behavioral health system to act as behavioral health volunteers during disasters; these individuals will comprise the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Readiness Team and will perform duties as assigned by the Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator.

### **3.0 Concepts of Operation**

3.1 Local, state, and federal laws regulate the Geauga County Board of MH & RS.

3.2 The Executive Director of the Geauga County Board of MH & RS, or designee, and the Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator for Geauga County are responsible for assessing the hazard relating to any existing or anticipated behavioral health threats, as well as the psychological and emotional impact of an incident.

3.3 Geauga County could be exposed to many hazards, all of which have the potential to disrupt the community, cause damage, and lead to casualties. Potential hazards include natural disasters (flooding, tornadoes, winter storms, fires, and drought), other disaster situations (house or building fires, power outages, hazardous materials accidents, major transportation accidents, or civil disorder), and war-related incidents, mass shootings or school shootings, and terrorist activities.

3.4 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS works closely with multiple agencies and organizations, including but not limited to:

#### **3.4.1 Local**

A. Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team, Geauga County Crisis Response Team

B. Geauga County Behavioral Health provider agencies

- C. Geauga County EMA and all County departments and agencies
- D. ESC of Northeast Ohio, ESC of the Western Reserve
- E. Geauga County United Way
- F. Northeast Ohio American Red Cross
- G. Geauga County Sheriff's Office and other local law enforcement agencies
- H. University Hospitals; Geauga Medical Center and Tri-Point Medical Center
- I. Geauga Public Health

#### 3.4.2 State

- A. Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- B. Ohio Emergency Management (OEMA) and other state agencies
- C. Ohio EPA

#### 3.4.3 Federal

- A. Federal Health Agencies
- B. Federal Emergency Management Agency
- C. Federal Bureau of Investigation

3.5 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS, in collaboration with the Geauga County Emergency Management Agency and the Northeast Ohio American Red Cross, will determine what level of coordination with the above entities is necessary in responding to a particular county disaster.

#### 3.6 Levels of response may include:

3.6.1 Activation of the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team in collaboration with the Northeast Ohio American Red Cross (Appendix A).

3.6.2 Activation of the Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team, under the authority of the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and in coordination with the Geauga County Emergency Management Agency (Appendix A).

3.7 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS Behavioral Health Disaster Plan

applies primarily to large-scale disasters that would significantly impact the citizens of Geauga County. Such a disaster would require the activation of the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team.

## **4.0 Activation**

4.1 Should a disaster occur which requires the activation of the Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team, the following steps will occur (Appendix A):

4.1.1 The Geauga County Emergency Management Agency will work in conjunction with the Executive Director, or designee, of the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and/or the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator (via telephone, cell phone, and/or email) to determine the need for behavioral health intervention;

4.1.2 The Coordinator will report to the Geauga County Board of MH & RS's Executive Director to coordinate response efforts for behavioral health-related activities, advise decision-makers, and maintain contact with other emergency response agencies;

4.1.3 The Coordinator will activate the Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (Appendix B) via phone tree (telephone, cell phone, and/or email) to assemble at one of the two predetermined locations (Gauga County Board of MH & RS: 13244 Ravenna Rd., Chardon, Ohio or Ravenwood Health: 12557 Ravenna Rd., Chardon, Ohio), or, as necessary, alternate location to be determined by the Coordinator;

4.1.4 The designated Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator will immediately begin to assess resources and needs and will develop strategies while awaiting formal word for a plan of action;

4.1.5 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS will operate within the established communication plan established under the Incident Command Center;

4.1.6 The Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team will be dispersed to appropriate locations (i.e., local hospitals, shelters, etc.) as the Coordinator instructs.

## **5.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

5.1 Once the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and Disaster Behavioral Health Response Coordinator have consulted and coordinated with the Geauga County EMA, the role of the Board, the Coordinator, and the Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team in response to the disaster includes the following components:

### **5.1.1 Consultation**

- A. Consultation, collaboration, and planning among all behavioral health resources whose skills and services would be needed in the event of a disaster (local, state, federal, government, private, and nonprofit) to ensure adequate and appropriate behavioral health response.
- B. Consultation with disaster response planners about the nature and number of emotional & psychological casualties to be expected.
- C. Advice to planners, managers, administrators, incident commanders, and others in positions of power and decision-making regarding the emotional & psychological impact of disaster events and response activities (e.g., the need for debriefing, anticipated emotional & psychological reactions, etc.). The reactions will vary depending on the response activities required due to the disaster (e.g., evacuation, emergency shelter, body recovery, identification, death notification, quarantine, decontamination, etc.).
- D. Consultation and collaboration with public health and medical authorities on issues of physical, emotional & psychological symptoms, as well as appropriate interventions and treatment.
- E. Consultation and collaboration with spiritual care professionals to ensure that the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of citizens and responders are addressed.
- F. Situation evaluation and consultation with decision-makers, managers, supervisors, and line workers regarding traumatic stress and stress management for responders during incident response and recovery.

G. Consult with leaders and the media regarding public information and risk communication to prevent widespread anxiety and fear.

#### 5.1.2 Outreach/Crisis Counseling

A. Providing appropriate behavioral health resources and services to victims and their families, responders, disaster managers, and community leaders at all stages of the event and its aftermath.

B. Providing services that are sensitive and appropriate to the needs of various cultural groups and, to the extent possible, in community-based settings.

C. Crisis intervention, information and referral, assessment, individual and group counseling services to citizens and responders to assess and treat the immediate and long-term emotional & psychological effects of the event.

#### 5.1.3 Debriefing and Defusing

A. Providing a comprehensive array of support and education to assist citizens and responders to cope with traumatic stress and the emotional & psychological impact of the event, aimed at reducing long-term, severe post-traumatic stress reactions and unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol or substance abuse.

#### 5.1.4 Education

A. Providing training to responders and to community agencies, organizations, institutions, and caregivers on the emotional and psychological aspects of the event and the behavioral health resources available.

B. Developing public information and education strategies and materials (using print and electronic media, public speaking, etc.) on the emotional and psychological aspects of recovery, coping with traumatic stress, and available behavioral health resources.

C. The Geauga County Board of MH & RS's Executive Director will coordinate all public information, education, and materials to be utilized by the Board in response to a disaster.

#### 5.1.5 At-Risk Populations

A. The Geauga County Board of MH & RS shall develop a list of facilities supported and/or funded by the Board's network where at-risk populations reside (Appendix E). This information shall be kept at the Board and off-site to ensure accessibility during a disaster. The Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator shall have knowledge and access to the list. The information will be utilized in cooperation with other disaster workers to help meet the needs of these special populations. A copy of the plan shall also be maintained at the Geauga County EMA.

B. The Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator and Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team, in cooperation and with direction from the Geauga County EMA and the Northeast Ohio American Red Cross, shall assist in the evacuation, monitoring, or provision of needed services for this population.

## **6.0 Administration**

6.1 the Geauga County Board of MH & RS will utilize all local resources during an emergency. If additional assistance is required, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services will be contacted.

6.2 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS maintains a resource directory (Appendix C) that includes a listing of all local behavioral health resources, a contact list, and county maps (Appendix D).

6.3 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS will protect all behavioral health records and comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

6.4 Assigned response personnel will receive annual training regarding emergency responsibilities.

6.5 The Executive Director of the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator are responsible for reviewing the disaster policy and ensuring necessary changes are prepared and coordinated with the Geauga County Emergency Management Agency. The Geauga County Board of MH & RS will publish and forward all revisions to all applicable organizations.

6.6 The Executive Director of the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator will coordinate follow-up reports and/or evaluations following a disaster event and distribute reports to all applicable organizations.

## **7.0 Evaluation and Modification**

7.1 The Geauga County Board of MH & RS and the Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team Coordinator will formally audit the entire plan at least once a year. Some issues to be considered include:

7.1.1 Are any identified problem areas and resource shortfalls being sufficiently addressed?

7.1.2 Do members of the response team understand their responsibilities? Are new members adequately trained?

7.1.3 Are the plan's names, titles, and telephone numbers current?

7.1.4 Have community agencies been briefed on the plan? Are they involved in the evaluation of the plan?

7.2 In addition to the yearly audit, the Geauga County Board of MH & RS and Disaster Behavioral Health Readiness Team will evaluate and modify the plan at the following times:

7.2.1 After each training drill or exercise

7.2.2 After each emergency

7.2.3 When personnel or their responsibilities change

7.2.4 When policies or procedures change



## **Appendix A**

### **Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team**

#### **Mission**

*The Geauga County Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team, a consortium of Geauga County Behavioral Health agencies, is committed to helping the residents of Geauga County during critical events that affect organizations or groups of people by providing coordination, consultation, education, support, and referral.*

#### **Objectives**

To disseminate the phone number for the Geauga County Board of MH & Rs's Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team throughout the community, especially organizations working with groups.

To connect with organizations for crisis management protocols to ensure prompt and effective responses to critical events.

To complement existing internal crisis management protocols to ensure prompt and effective response to critical events.

To connect an individual with services during the event to ensure linkages are confirmed.

To encourage early identification of problems, intervene at an early stage, and prevent further crises.

To promote consistency of services among professionals through a common language and training.

Coordinate needed services in an atmosphere that promotes collaboration and cooperation to provide support to those in crisis and their caregivers.