



Deployment Guidelines

Deployment Guidelines

As you prepare to deploy, it is important that you review the Deployment Guidelines so you are familiar with the the expectations of you as a Vibrant Cadre member.

Operations

1. **Know your assignment.** Remember that you are representing the Vibrant Emotional Health cadre—you are not there on your own. If you're unsure what to do or where to go, check in with your response lead.
2. **Note the chain of command.** You need to know your cadre leader as well as who the Incident Commander is when you are deployed.
3. **Stay out of danger/hot zones.** Don't go into marked off areas or give permission to others to do so. If you are not sure if an area is a danger/hot zone, assume it is until a lead tells you otherwise.
4. **Be flexible.** Things can change on a dime in a disaster. Be ready to adapt and help survivors and team members adapt as well.
5. **Be respectful of cultural differences.** There will be a mix of religions, ethnicities, and backgrounds; be aware of and sensitive to these differences and shift your responses appropriately. And when you are unsure of the best response, ask respectfully.
6. **Remember you're not alone.** You have a whole team around to help if you don't know something or need a break. Utilize these resources—it's not all on you.
7. **Plan times to call home.** Disaster response can be an extremely busy, exhausting time. Make plans to call friends and family once a day to catch up and relax.

Clinical

1. **Do No Harm!** If you don't know what the right thing to do is, then refrain from any engagement and seek the cadre leader.
2. **Only practice within the scope of your training.** There are others around you with other expertise—ask them for help as appropriate.
3. **Normalize reactions.** Stress reaction can look like serious mental health conditions, so help people to understand that even severe distress responses are considered common and will tend reduce over time.
4. **Promote recovery and resilience.** Remember people are often more resilient than they think, with natural coping strategies (e.g. breathing, walking, being with social supports) - try to promote those as much as possible.

5. **Be aware of comorbidities.** Physical conditions, substance abuse, and pre-existing mental health conditions can mimic or mask disaster-related stress responses. Monitor for unusual behaviors that may be more indicative of physical illness or substance misuse and refer for an assessment when unsure.
6. **Promote community.** In a disaster, people can easily get separated from their family, friends, and neighbors. As a priority, when safety has been ensured, help people reconnect with their loved ones or fellow community members.
7. **Act with, not for.** A person's sense of control and agency can be disturbed by disasters. When possible, engage survivors in appropriate activities that will give them a sense of control and purpose.
8. **Work with available agencies.** It is important that survivors are connected to local support services including health care, behavioral health and case management. Ensure you can provide appropriate resources and referrals.

Self-Care

1. **Meet your own needs first.** Disaster areas can be disorienting. Make sure you're getting enough rest, food, water, and taking any medications regularly before you focus on others.
2. **Respond to your work assignment only.** Be on time for your assigned shift, communicate with your lead if you'll be late, and leave the scene when your shift is done.
3. **Rest, eat, drink water, and take medications.** When you are not on shift, be sure to rest, eat healthy and take care of yourself. Try to avoid or limit exposure to additional stressful or energy draining situations.
4. **Be self aware.** Disaster situations can bring up all kinds of responses. Know what might activate your own distress, avoid overexposure to trauma and prepare to use good coping skills if you find yourself in distress.
5. **Know when it's time to end fieldwork.** Disaster work can be exhausting physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When you hit your limit, don't be afraid to walk away. If you've been doing this work for months or years, you may need to consider ending your fieldwork assignments.
6. **Be careful with "instant intimacy".** People experiencing or working in disasters can form quick, close bonds they might not normally. Understand this may happen, and that it's okay if those bonds don't remain post-disaster.
7. **Value your day-to-day.** Going back to your usual life after working in a disaster can seem to lack meaning or stimulation. This is a normal response, and usually dissipates with time.
8. **Stay away from alcohol and drugs.** It can be tempting to have a drink or take substances to relax at the end of the day after being in the field. The adrenaline from working in a disaster zone can cause abnormal reactions to mood-altering substances, though; try to stick to light meals, lots of water. Anything else can wait.