

# Disaster Resources from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) May 2024

The following list of materials includes those focused on general behavioral health needs after tornadoes, as well as separate sections listing materials related to coping with tornadoes and extreme heat; resources for children, families, and schools; resources for older adults; resources for responders; and additional resources for acute behavioral health needs.

## General Disaster Response and Recovery Information

- **Tips for Survivors: Coping With Grief After a Disaster or Traumatic Event**—In this tip sheet, SAMHSA defines and describes grief, discusses ways of coping with grief, and explains complicated or traumatic grief. The tip sheet also offers relevant resources for additional support.  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Survivors-/SMA17-5035>
- **Coping After Disaster**—The American Psychiatric Association provides online information about common reactions to disasters in adults and children and steps that survivors can take to manage disaster reactions and cope effectively. Also presented are links to resources on recognizing signs of trauma, coping and recovery after specific types of disasters, and mobile apps for stress management.  
<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/coping-after-disaster-trauma>
- **PFA: Tips for Adults**—Part of the *Psychological First Aid (PFA) Field Operations Guide*, this handout identifies common reactions in adults who have experienced a disaster, suggests responses, and offers examples of things to do and say to cope with the reaction. These suggestions and examples include a breathing exercise for relaxation, prioritization of responsibilities that feel overwhelming, and tapping into existing relationships for support.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-tips-adults>

The resource is available in five additional languages:

- Japanese: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-tips-adults-japanese>
- Mandarin: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-tips-adults-mandarin>
- Russian: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-tips-for-adults-ru>
- Spanish: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-consejos-para-adultos>
- Ukrainian: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/pfa-tips-adults-uk>

## Tornado-specific Resources

- **Disaster-specific Resources: Tornadoes**—This part of the SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series resource collection features materials about coping after a tornado. Resources focus on staying safe during cleanup after a tornado, supporting children in coping, and managing stress during deployment as part of response after a tornado.  
[https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/dbhis?rc%5B0%5D=type\\_of\\_disaster%3A20553](https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/dbhis?rc%5B0%5D=type_of_disaster%3A20553)
- **Tornadoes and Severe Storms**—At this web page, the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline describes tornadoes and the effects they can have, lists populations at heightened risk of post-tornado distress, and provides links to related resources. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/disaster-types/tornadoes>
- **Stay Safe After a Tornado**—This Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web page presents recommendations for staying safe after a tornado has affected your area. Links are provided to more information about awareness of hazards in homes in areas impacted by tornadoes, hazards linked to power outages, post-disaster food and water safety, and coping with post-disaster distress.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes/after.html>

This page is available in Spanish at <https://www.cdc.gov/es/disasters/tornadoes/after.html>.

## Extreme Heat-specific Resources

- **Tips for People Who Take Medication: Coping With Hot Weather**—This SAMHSA tip sheet discusses the relationship of climate change and mental health, explores the impacts hot weather can have on people who take some psychotropic medications, and details the signs and symptoms associated with heat-related distress. The tip sheet also provides suggestions for steps individuals and families can take to build resilience.  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/tips-people-who-take-medication-hot-weather/pep23-01-01-001>
- **About Heat and Your Health**—SAMHSA collaborated with the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health to develop new heat health resources for a variety of at-risk populations, as well as [guidance to clinicians regarding specific medications and their effect on people during extreme heat](#). At the About Heat and Your Health web page, you can read tips for everyone in extreme heat, as well as symptoms of overheating. You can also access links to information for people at heightened risk in extreme heat, including people, and especially children, with asthma; people with heart disease; pregnant people, people 65 years and older; and other populations.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/heat-health/about-heat-and-your-health.html>
- **Extreme Heat**—At this part of its website, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers tips for staying safe during periods of extreme heat. The web

page links to suggestions for older adults, infants and children, people with chronic conditions, people without air conditioning, athletes, outdoor workers, and pregnant people. The page also links to tips for preventing heat-related illness, caring for pets during extreme heat, and related resources.

<https://www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/about/>

- **Extreme Heat**—At this web page, [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) defines extreme heat and offers tips to prepare for extreme heat, stay as safe as possible during extreme heat, and identify and respond to signs of heat-related illnesses. The page also suggests ways to keep children safe during summer break. Links to related resources are provided.  
<https://www.ready.gov/heat>
- **Heat.gov**—This website is the official online portal for the National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS), a collaboration of federal partners including SAMHSA as well as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The [Learn](#) section of the website provides information about extreme heat and its health effects, as well as [steps to increase safety for at-risk populations](#). The website also features [tools](#) for risk assessment, monitoring, and mitigation; [planning and preparedness tips](#); and [funding opportunities](#).  
<https://www.heat.gov>

### Resources for Children, Youth, Parents and Other Caregivers, and Schools

- **Children and Disasters**—Part of the Survivors of Disasters Resource Portal (<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/disaster-survivors>) at the SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center website, this web page describes how children and teenagers may experience disasters differently from adults, offers tips for disaster planning for families, identifies common reactions to disasters in children and teenagers, and provides suggestions for adults for helping children and teenagers cope after disaster. Links to related resources are also provided.  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/disaster-survivors/children-and-disaster>
- ***Creating Supportive Environments When Scary Things Happen***—This fact sheet explains how parents and other caregivers can create home environments that offer children and adolescents the stability and reliability they need to cope effectively with adversity, including disaster. The fact sheet zeroes in on routines, rhythm, and ritual as ways to foster security and resilience.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/creating-supportive-environments-when-scary-things-happen>
- **Extreme Heat Resources**—In this online resource, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) explains what constitutes extreme heat and describes what families with children should expect before, during, and after extreme heat. It also provides links to resources to help children and families cope with extreme heat.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/disasters/extreme-heat-resources>

- ***Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) Field Operations Guide, 2nd Edition***—Developed by NCTSN and the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, this guide defines PFA-S, a model school communities can use to support students, their families, and staff immediately after a natural or human-caused disaster. Appendix C of the guide includes handouts for responders, parents and families, and students after a disaster.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-schools-pfa-s-field-operations-guide>
- **Tornado Resources**—At this part of its website, NCTSN describes tornadoes and the effects they commonly have on children, teenagers, and families. The “After” part of this website section includes information about how professionals can guide parents in helping their children to cope, engaging in self-care, and seeking additional assistance as needed.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/disasters/tornado-resources>
- ***Trinka and Sam and the Swirling Twirling Wind***—This children’s book from NCTSN tells the story of Trinka and Sam, two young mice who are friends and neighbors who survive a tornado. The story covers experiences and reactions children may have during and after a tornado. At the end is a guide for parents and caregivers to help them use the book as a tool for supporting their children in coping after a tornado.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/trinka-and-sam-and-swirling-twirling-wind>

The booklet is also available in Spanish at <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/trinka-y-juan-el-viento-que-giraba-y-giraba>.

### Resources Focused on Older Adults

- ***Helping Older Adults After Disasters: A Guide to Providing Support***—Designed for anyone supporting older adults after a disaster, this SAMHSA guide highlights reactions to disasters that are common among survivors of all ages, as well as unique challenges older adults may face after disasters and how response workers can help. The guide also identifies resources available to help in connecting older adults with services and supports.  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/helping-older-adults-after-disasters-a-guide-to-providing-support/PEP19-01-01-001>
- **Older Adults**—These parts of the SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series resource collection feature materials about how disasters may affect older adults differently from people of other ages, as well as ways that family members, mental health and substance misuse professionals, and other healthcare practitioners can help older adults in coping after a disaster. Following are SAMHSA DBHIS collections related to older adults:
- Resources for older adults:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/dbhis?rc%5B0%5D=audience%3A20218>

- Resources about older adults and disasters:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/dbhis?rc%5B0%5D=populations%3A20172>
- **Eldercare Locator**—This service of the Administration on Aging, part of the U.S. Administration for Community Living, features an online database users can search by ZIP code and city and state to find local services for older adults, which may be particularly useful following a disaster. The service can also be reached by toll-free phone at 1-800-677-1116. The Eldercare Locator website includes links to consumer publications and websites of organizations that serve older adults.  
<https://eldercare.acl.gov>
- **Hot Weather Safety for Older Adults**—This resource from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) explains why older adults may be at increased risk of health problems during periods of extreme heat; describes heat-related illnesses; and suggests steps to take for greater safety as an older adult during hot weather.  
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/safety/hot-weather-safety-older-adults>

### Resources for Disaster Responders and First Responders

- ***A Guide to Managing Stress for Disaster Responders and First Responders***—This SAMHSA guide is designed for first responders, public health workers, construction workers, transportation workers, utility workers, crisis counselors, and volunteers who respond to disasters and other crises. The guide provides information on how people experience stress; signs of extreme stress; and ways for organizations and individuals to manage and mitigate stress before, during, and after disaster response.  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/managing-stress-responders/pep22-01-01-003>
- **Heat Illness Prevention**—This web page features resources from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Heat Illness Prevention campaign to help outdoor workers stay safe in extreme heat. It provides information on how employers can create a plan to prevent heat illness, workers’ rights, signs of heat illness and ways to respond, and monitoring and promoting worker health in hot weather.  
<https://www.osha.gov/heat>
- **Responder Safety and Health**—In this topical resource collection, the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) provides a wealth of items for health care, public health, and emergency management professionals pertaining to safety, including mental health-related safety for responders. Part of the ASPR Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange resource, the collection features three sections about responder behavioral health and resilience.  
<https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/technical-resources/72/responder-safety-and-health/0>
- ***Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide, 2nd Edition***—Developed by the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and NCTSN, PFA is an evidence-informed approach that disaster response workers can use to assist people in the immediate aftermath of disaster.

[https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/psych\\_firstaid\\_manual.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/psych_firstaid_manual.asp) and <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-field-operations-guide-2nd-edition>

NCTSN also provides a Spanish-language version of the guide at <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/primeros-auxilios-psicologicos-guia-de-operaciones-practicas-2da-edicion>.

- **Psychological First Aid Online**—NCTSN offers this online course to train new disaster responders in PFA, as well as to provide a refresher training for responders who want to review this approach to disaster response. The course describes the core actions of PFA and how they can be applied after a disaster, as well as discussing provider well-being. <https://learn.nctsn.org/course/view.php?id=596>

A version of this course is available in Spanish at <https://learn.nctsn.org/enrol/index.php?id=539>. Both courses are available free of charge; however, to complete a course, you must create an account at <https://learn.nctsn.org/login/signup.php>.

### **Additional Resources for Acute Needs**

- **SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline**—The SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) provides free, confidential crisis counseling and support to people in distress due to natural and human-caused disasters. The DDH is available 24/7, on all days of the year, via talk or text to 1–800–985–5990. The line also offers support in Spanish (people who call or text should press 2 for this option) and more than 100 additional languages. People who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have other speech or hearing disabilities can use the texting option or, if they would like support in American Sign Language (ASL), they can call the DDH’s toll-free number via videophone-enabled device or click the “ASL Now” link at the DDH website. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

This website is available in Spanish at <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>. [Other DDH information is available in 30 commonly spoken languages.](#)

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**—The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a source of support available 24/7 to people in crisis, including people experiencing challenging reactions to disasters. Call 988 for support in English or Spanish. <https://988lifeline.org>

The website is available in Spanish at <https://988lifeline.org/es/home>.

A disaster event such as this is unexpected and often brings out strong emotions. People can call or text the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline’s toll-free number **(1–800–985–5990)** and receive immediate counseling. This free, confidential, multilingual crisis support service is available to anyone experiencing distress as a result of a natural or human-caused disaster. People who call and text are connected to trained, caring professionals from crisis counseling centers in the network. Helpline staff provide confidential counseling, referrals, and other needed support services.