

2010-006

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**Issuer**      **Disaster Mental Health, National Headquarters**

**Audience**    **Chapter, Regional, and National Headquarters Staff**

**Topic**        **Updated Guidance on Disaster Mental Health (DMH) Eligibility  
Criteria and the Chapter Role in Determining Worker Eligibility**

## Purpose

This *Connection*

- provides updated and clarified guidance on Disaster Mental Health (DMH) eligibility criteria
- outlines the chapter process for ensuring that all DMH workers maintain the appropriate licensing credentials to participate in the DMH activity.

## Background

In an effort to mitigate the emotional and psychological effects experienced by survivors, their families, and relief workers in the aftermath of a disaster, the American Red Cross has provided crucial DMH services since 1992. Red Cross DMH assistance relies on chapter recruitment, training, and retention of mental health professionals to provide services across the continuum of preparedness, response, and recovery.

DMH workers must possess professional skills that enable them to

- work with diverse populations
- assess and triage an individual's emotional, behavioral and psychological reactions
- provide appropriate level of support and intervention as described in the *Foundations of Disaster Mental Health* (ARC 3077-4A) course

DMH interventions include the following activities:

<b>Psychological Triage</b>	<b>Crisis Intervention</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Behavioral Health Surveillance</b>	<b>Education</b>
<b>Public Mental Health Messages</b>	<b>Casualty Support</b>	<b>Problem Solving</b>	<b>Advocacy</b>	<b>Referrals to other levels of care</b>

DMH workers also

- provide supervision and support to Red Cross employees and volunteers
- provide psychological first aid training
- monitor and alleviate organizational stress.

## Chapter Role in Determining Worker Eligibility

Chapters should use the assistance of local disaster mental health professionals or local consultants to identify and recruit mental health professionals for their chapter's DMH activity.

Chapters should use this *Connection* to

- determine the eligibility of mental health professionals for the DMH activity
- provide ongoing reviews to ensure that all DMH volunteers are maintaining their professional license so as not to compromise the Red Cross mission and the delivery of high quality DMH services. New expiration dates should be entered in the DSHR system regularly.

## Eligibility Criteria for Disaster Mental Health

To be eligible as a Disaster Mental Health volunteer for either local or national relief operations, an individual must have an active, unencumbered, and unrestricted state license issued by a state or U.S. territory licensing board.

**NOTE:** A state certification is allowable as noted in criteria *b* shown below.

In addition to the requirements above, the individual must:

- a. Have an independent license (license to practice without supervision) and master's degree as a clinical social worker, psychologist, professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, psychiatric nurse, or psychiatrist **OR**
- b. Have a state license or state certification and master's degree as a school psychologist or school counselor issued by a state board of education (*this is an expansion to the DMH eligibility requirements cited in 2008*) **OR**
- c. Have a state license and a bachelor's degree (BSN) as a registered nurse **and** [American Nurses Credentialing Center \(ANCC\)](#) certification for psychiatric and mental health nursing to include RN-BC or PMHNP-BC or PMHCNS-BC.

**Exception:** An individual enrolled in the DMH program in DSHR prior to the issuance of this *Connection* who does not meet these new educational requirements and clarified eligibility criteria (independent licensure or nurse certification) can continue to work in the DMH activity given good standing with his/her chapter and a positive performance history while working on local and/or national relief.

DMH professionals are expected to work within their areas of competence when serving the American Red Cross. The licensing of mental health professionals is determined by individual states or U.S. territories whose regulations must be followed by the Red Cross. Chapters are encouraged to solicit the assistance of a DMH

volunteer or mental health consultant to help interpret those regulations. For further assistance in determining the eligibility of a prospective DMH worker, contact the DMH national leadership team at [DMHtemp@usa.redcross.org](mailto:DMHtemp@usa.redcross.org).

### **Graduate Student Teams.**

Graduate students are eligible to work in DMH

1. when currently enrolled in a graduate program leading to a master's or doctoral degree in a DMH-eligible field of study (e.g., clinical social work, psychology, professional counseling, school counseling, school psychology, marriage and family therapy, psychiatric nursing, or psychiatry) **AND**
2. when supervised on-site by a faculty or field supervisor. Prior to deployment, the graduate student team and supervisor must complete the Red Cross course *Foundations of Disaster Mental Health* (ARC 3077-4A).

The faculty or field supervisor **must**

1. be DMH-eligible and enrolled as a chapter DMH volunteer **AND**
2. assume responsibility for the graduate student to work under his or her professional license **AND**
3. be able to provide on-site direct supervision of the graduate student when both individuals are deployed on a chapter, multi-chapter or national relief operation **AND**
4. be able to review work and provide consultation of the student's work at least several times a day **AND**
5. supervise no more than five graduate students at any time

For those with additional questions about this *Connection*, please contact the DMH national leadership team at [DMHTemp@usa.redcross.org](mailto:DMHTemp@usa.redcross.org)