

## GUIDANCE FOR POST-EMERGENCY RECOVERY

Following an emergency, it is important for youth programs to consider potential ongoing impacts of the emergency on both their youth participants and their staff. Helping return a sense of normalcy and routine can be an important safeguard for youth following the disturbance and potential trauma of an emergency.

### BUILDING YOUTH RESILIENCE AFTER AN EMERGENCY<sup>1</sup>

Programs can implement simple steps to build resilience among their participants and help youth cope with their emotional and physical needs.

FACTORS FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE	WAYS TO HELP YOUTH COPE
Connectedness	Assist youth in returning to normal activities as soon as possible to connect them with peers and caregivers.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposely incorporate recovery activities into your programming.</li> <li>• Include youth in discussions and planning.</li> <li>• Structure activities to allow youth time to connect with each other.</li> </ul>
Structure, roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain structure and responsibilities previously assigned to youth.</li> <li>• Educate youth about their roles during a disaster.</li> <li>• Provide consistency in their routines.</li> </ul>
Support and nurturance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassure youth with firmness and compassion.</li> <li>• Be patient and understanding. Give youth extra time and attention.</li> <li>• Check in with families and caregivers and offer programmatic support to them, to the extent able.</li> <li>• Communicate your program's strategies and actions for responding to and recovering from the emergency.</li> </ul>
Critical reflection and skill building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage youth to describe what they're feeling and allow them to speak freely about what scares or puzzles them.</li> <li>• Provide creative play opportunities.</li> </ul>
Resources	Watch for changes in youth's behavior, and seek help from a mental health specialist or other trusted community resource if youth don't respond to other suggestions and supports.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calmly and firmly explain the situation and what will happen next.</li> <li>• Use positive behavior and language around youth.</li> <li>• Encourage youth to ask questions and listen when they talk.</li> <li>• Try to answer questions and address concerns with concrete, easy-to-follow information.</li> <li>• Give constructive information about how they can be prepared to protect themselves.</li> <li>• Limit exposure to the media (e.g., TV, radio, computers, reporters who want to interview youth).</li> </ul>

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Youth.gov's Recovery and Reunification](#)
- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide](#)
- [SAMHSA's Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)
- [FEMA and the American Red Cross: "Helping Children Cope with Disaster"](#)
- Curricula
  - [Save the Children's "Journey of Hope" and "Shelter from the Storm" programs](#)
  - Mercy Corps' ["What Happened to MY World?"](#) (natural disaster focus)

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from FEMA. (2016). IS-0366.a Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters. Available from <https://emilms.fema.gov/IS0366a/lesson8/PNCD01summary.html>.