



Rushing In: A Social Work Educational Opportunity to Enhance Disaster Management and Response

Randy Basham Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Arlington (U.S.A.)

I. Introduction:

- A brief personal history of involvement with multiple disasters in differing capacities
- The characteristics of disasters
- Disaster planning, management and response

Disaster Types

Identified by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

- **Hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons**
- **Drought**
- **Earthquakes**
- **Epidemics**
- **Famine/food insecurity**
- **Floods**
- **Man-made disasters**
- **Population movement**
- **Volcanic eruption**
- **Technological**

Disaster Characteristics or Phases

During The Disaster (Encountered by first responders & SW, ers)

- Warning of impending disaster - warning messages must be clear as denial, confusion and delayed response are common
- Period of Threat - perception of immediate, severe danger, with sense of panic, and period of poor communication
- Impact - people try to stay alive and protect immediate associates, behavior situationally determined and may become violent
- Inventory - begin to form a preliminary picture of individual conditions, vulnerability and risk of mortality assessed
- Rescue - activity focused upon immediate help for survivors, rapid recovery from emotional shock is the norm, an exception has been described as the "disaster syndrome", the individual appears dazed, stunned, apathetic or "dead while alive". disorganized; extreme suggestibility may be seen
- Remedy - more deliberate and formal rescue and recovery activities are undertaken, anticipation of the long-term consequences of the disaster, feelings of grief, anger and inadequacy usually appear, stress is felt within the families and shows itself particularly in the behavior of children.
- Recovery - community and individuals attempt to recover former stability or achieve new forms of stability

Disaster Characteristics or Phases

Following the Disaster

(Encountered frequently by Social Workers working with evacuees or refugees)

- Heroic Phase – at the time of impact and short period after (altruism and mutual aid is prevalent)
- Honeymoon Phase – 1 week to 3 to 6 months after disaster (expectation of hope and support)
- Disillusionment Phase - last 2 months to 1 or 2 years (realization of limits of help and support)
- Reconstruction Phase - realization of need to solve the problems of rebuilding their own homes, businesses and lives largely by themselves and gradually assume the responsibility for doing so (several years).

II. Traditional and historical relief responses; agencies and governments

- **Preplanning and positioning of emergency supplies and rations**
- **Search, rescue and logistics; transportation, hydration, nutrition, shelter, and medical care**
- **The above are often handled by government agencies, rescue organizations, and military or uniformed first responders.**

The University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work Experience

- **Nearly 3 and ½ million evacuees from the gulf coast due to Katrina**
- **More than ½ of a million evacuees from New Orleans sought refuge in Texas**
- **Approximately ½ arrived via their own resources, but ran out of resources**
- **About 13 thousand entered Tarrant County officially, likely twice as many (Up to 26 thousand)**
- **About 10 to 20 % seen in Arlington Texas of these**
- **New EOC, and no public transportation available**
- **UTA _SSW trained staff and faculty (About 90 responders) in Emergency Management and Shelter Operations and Mass Care and deployed in Fort Worth and Arlington, Texas**
- **Students and faculty responders remained involved with families for months**
- **Emergency services poorly prepared for assisting individuals and families after evacuation and initial triage**
- **Social Work responders facilitated longer term recovery through traditional social work skills and knowledge**

III. The emerging role of Social Workers

- **Identification training and rapid deployment of case work responders**
- **Linking, referral and communications, and familiarization with technologies (Ham, ITC, etc.)**
- **Volunteer manpower recruitment (including employer paid leave), training and deployment**
- **Case management, integration of evacuees into host communities, and reunification**
- **Providing safety and opportunity, training, connectedness, and permanence (i.e. WPA and CCC)**

IV. Preparing Social Workers to respond to the disaster needs of vulnerable populations and communities

- **Education: Experience in simulations of disaster problems, case management focused**
- **Research: Decision-support technologies and linking technologies training, and databases**
- **Practice: Interfacing with emergency operations and responders, disaster training and cross-training, scope of practice and certifications**

V. Integration into the social work curriculum (Some suggestions)

- **HBSE: Disaster Mental Health, and Phases of Disasters, populations at risk**
- **Policy: Understanding the mechanisms of world, national, local and private relief agencies and services, and the historical policy and emergent policy themes relative to response**
- **Research: Development of funding mechanisms to partner with large database and information organizations to build an information architecture, to respond to rapid and large scale displacement of children, families, pets, loved ones, etc. and to identify best practices and resource allocation methods (VA, IRS, SSA models)**
- **Practice: Training in models of care for disaster victims and the related linking technologies needed to secure resources across phases of disasters of differing type and scope**

VI. Development of curriculum modules for social work education programs

- **Developing program level funding mechanisms and determining educational interest, or need**
- **Identification of key schools, or programs and proximity to likely areas of identifiable need**
- **Identification of educator's best suited to develop curricula, and programs (CSWE)**
- **Development of placement experiences and opportunities for students at all levels of training**
 - **in both large scale and small scale disaster response organizations (NASW)**
- **Developing economic incentives to facilitate training and experiential opportunities**

Why the title of "Rushing In"

- **First Responders, or even Secondary Responders "rush in" to aid victims in emergency situations while those affected rush away from the affected area.**
- **The profession of social work with specialization in resource allocation and maintenance of the functioning of individuals, families, organizations and communities is, is well positioned to facilitate both disaster phase services and is likely best positioned to respond to post disaster aftermath and recovery for forced migration populations.**
- **CSWE is well positioned to develop the curriculum for training these highly needed professional Social Work disaster and post disaster responders**

Discussion: Where should we go from here?



ARGENTINE