

Recovery Leadership: Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project

Summary Report

March 2018



"One of the best activities I have been involved in!"
- Participant, Region 4

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Seminar Overview

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Hurricane Harvey made landfall near Rockport, Texas, on August 25, 2017, as a Category 4 hurricane. It then hovered over southeastern Texas for five days as a tropical storm, dropping over four feet of rain and causing unprecedented flooding. Harvey impacted an area 300 miles long and 100 miles wide. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) estimates one million students were impacted by the storm, and 200 of the state's 1,200 school districts had closures.

In an attempt to better understand the impacts of Hurricane Harvey, the Health and Social Services (HSS) Recovery Support Function (RSF) worked alongside state, regional and local partners to conduct a multi-agency landscape assessment across the region. Six teams visited 112 sites in 13 of the most heavily impacted counties. Throughout the visits, the central role that schools play in leading the local recovery effort was a recurring theme.

Leading school districts under normal circumstances can be challenging. Leading school districts during response and recovery efforts can be overwhelming. Evidence supports the value of peer-to-peer engagements in disaster recovery as a critical tool in building capacity and facilitating local recovery momentum to deal with immediate, short-term, and long-term recovery issues. The purpose of the peer-to-peer mentoring project is to partner school district leaders with disaster recovery experience with school district leaders currently engaged in recovery efforts to build upon and share lessons learned from past recovery efforts through mentorship.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the HSS RSF, in partnership with the AASA, the School Superintendents Association, the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA), the U.S. Department of Education, and TEA identified school leaders to serve as mentors and worked with impacted regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) to develop the peer-to-peer mentoring sessions.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Education Service Center, Region 4, held its peer-to-peer seminar on March 6, 2018, in Houston, Texas. The purpose of the event was to share best practices and lessons learned to build capacity across education systems. The seminar served as a platform for sharing ideas and experiences and identifying tools and resources to support recovery efforts from any catastrophic event. A list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

Agenda topics included:

- ◆ Project Background and Introductions

- ◆ Panel of School Experts: *If I had known before what I know now about dealing with a disaster, what would I have done differently?*
- ◆ Identifying Blindspots: Mental Health for Faculty/Staff, Students, and Parents
- ◆ REMS Community of Practice (CoP) Project Overview
- ◆ Leader Care
- ◆ Effective Communication: Keeping Your School Community Engaged
- ◆ School Leaders: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Harvey

The agenda, presentation materials, mentor biographies, and other handouts can be found in Appendix B. A summary of participant feedback can be found in Appendix D.



Summary of Recommendations for School Leaders by School Leaders

Below are recommendations that were identified throughout the course of the peer-to-peer mentoring seminar in ESC Region 4 by participants and mentors. They may assist other leaders with their recovery efforts.

THE BUSINESS OF RECOVERY

- ◆ **Identify processes for vetting individuals offering help.** You will be inundated with calls and overwhelmed with offers, and it can be difficult to parse out who may not be genuine. As a part of your planning process, it is important to think through the relationships and capabilities you may need to support recovery and establish those relationships in advance of any disaster. In addition, the plan should also identify a single point of contact in the school or community who will filter requests for outside support. Spontaneous or ad hoc volunteerism can be a challenge to manage. You need to consider how volunteers can be utilized while maintaining the safety of volunteers as well as students and staff.
- ◆ **Logistics can be difficult.** The damage to your community may be widespread, so the logistics necessary to restore normalcy is complicated and takes time.
- ◆ **It is okay to decline donations.** The volume and variety of donations received after a disaster can be overwhelming for school systems and school leaders. The influx of material can create significant challenges for storage and allocation of resources to manage the donations. It is acceptable to politely decline and/or redirect unneeded donations during the response phase. As the recovery continues, identify materials your schools may need for their classrooms or make a list of generic items you know staff or students will need. Have that list ready to provide to donors as they contact you. As part of emergency preparedness planning, develop a plan and create a system to collect cash donations both in the form of hard currency and on-line donations.
- ◆ **Identify a dedicated liaison to advocate on your behalf.** Trying to manage Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) processes while continuing with regular responsibilities will be difficult. Hiring a “FEMA Coordinator” or a “Disaster Recovery Manager” can be critical to sustain the recovery over the weeks and months that follow. To maintain continuity of operations, having additional personnel to assist with the reimbursement process will allow the district staff to focus on other more pertinent aspects of recovery and to ensure that regular duties are completed. The expenses associated with hiring an individual to serve as the FEMA coordinator are partially reimbursable through FEMA.
- ◆ **Be patient.** During recovery efforts you will see the best and worst of people throughout the process. As people grow tired, emotions may run high. It is important to keep in mind that those emotions will surface unexpectedly from time to time. Expect it and try to build in the capacity to allow *anyone* who needs it to take advantage of on-site resources. This may include setting aside a “quiet room,” establishing on-site child care capabilities for your staff, bringing in outside crisis counselors or pastoral care to offer their assistance, etc.

- ◆ **Keep detailed records.** Unexpected issues are likely to arise during the reimbursement process. It is imperative to maintain detailed records that account for donations received, immediate costs incurred, eligible volunteer hours, and other items that will be used to determine reimbursement. Remember that contractor overhead is NOT reimbursable by federal funding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide a liaison to make the recovery closeout process as smooth as possible, but ultimately the responsibility of verifying FEMA reimbursement claims will be up to the district.

COMMUNICATION

- ◆ **Communication is critical.** Those who are not intimately involved in the disaster or the recovery efforts may not understand the details of the process or the length of time that will be required to return to “normal.” While on the surface everything may appear fine, issues such as behavioral health needs may intensify and require long-term, sustainable solutions. Communicating those types of challenges with staff, holding recovery forums to discuss current and on-going challenges, maintaining open communication with local media, and discussing those challenges in open public forums can help to keep the community aware of the long-term recovery realities. You (and the school district leadership) cannot communicate these updates and realities too much.
- ◆ **Accept help.** Community resources may be available to assist with outreach and communication, as well as responding to requests for information. For example, there may be a local retired or former communications expert with skill sets that could be valuable to support communications and outreach efforts. Be creative and open to engaging others during the response and recovery phases.
- ◆ **Decisions do not have to be made in isolation.** Keep people informed and involve others in the decision-making process. Involving others in the decision-making process brings perspectives, resources and relationships that may not have been considered otherwise.
- ◆ **Share details internally before you share it externally.** Faculty, staff, and administration may be able to assist with sharing information and also identifying and correcting misinformation. Establishing a system of regular, consistent communications with your staff will allow them to help keep the community informed. This will also ensure that a consistent message is being shared to your community.
- ◆ **Social media can be a valuable tool for communicating your recovery.** Sharing information via social media may allow you to reach a broader audience. Be aware of activity on social media, and if issues begin to arise, be proactive in addressing them.

SELF-CARE

- ◆ **Take care of yourself.** Self-care is important. The response and long-term recovery effort can take a physical and emotional toll on those providing for recovery leadership. It is important for leaders to model healthy behaviors for others to follow. If you stay in

the office until late in the evening, those just as committed to the students will follow your lead. Not only will doing this night after night take its toll on you and your family, it will also hurt those helping you. Protect them by protecting yourself.

- ◆ **Build a network to provide assistance and support.** Having a personal support system during challenging times is important. Make sure you have people you can talk to and do not be afraid to ask for help.

MOVING FORWARD

- ◆ **The challenges of a disaster never end.** You will be managing the recovery process while you continue your regular duties and responsibilities. It is important to delegate responsibilities and to make sure you have the right support staff and resources in place to support the long-term recovery effort.
- ◆ **Recognize anniversaries.** Anniversaries may be emotional times for individuals and will put the recovery efforts back in the media spotlight. Be sensitive to the wishes of your community as they relate to those anniversaries and collaborate with them at every opportunity. Think and plan ahead.
- ◆ **Recovery is a community effort.** Be an advocate for your community. It may be helpful to establish a community-driven support committee to assist with recovery.

MENTAL HEALTH

- ◆ **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is pervasive and affects everyone in the community.** Teachers may be “first responders” in some disasters. In many cases staff members may have experienced personal losses themselves. One strategy used by ESC 4 that could be replicated is the creation of a staff survey to determine the extent of staff losses for awareness and support purposes.
- ◆ **People recover at different rates.** Disasters impact people in different ways. Just because someone appears fine today does not mean they will be tomorrow. The mental health impact of a disaster is long lasting. Be conscientious of that as you move forward. Some are ready to move on quickly, while others are not.
- ◆ **Proactive mental health services are vital.** Mental and behavioral health issues are a challenge after every large-scale disaster. You will need to address these issues. Build relationships with your Local Mental Health Authority and plan accordingly.
- ◆ **Funding for mental health services is often temporary.** Funding from mental health grants or fundraising efforts may be available in the short-term, but it is important to recognize some of these needs are more long-term and sustainability plan is necessary to insure those supports continue to be in place. Building that capacity is essential and should be considered in the emergency operations planning process.

ENGAGE YOUR TEAM

- ◆ **Be visible in your buildings and with your staff and students.** Following a disaster, students and staff will need to see more of you, not less. It is easy to become overwhelmed by paperwork and the demands of recovery, but be present, listen and engage with your staff and students throughout the process.
- ◆ **Remember that faculty and staff also need support.** Your faculty and staff need to be a primary focus through the recovery effort. They will be focused on the children they serve. The school community needs to make sure the needs of faculty and staff are being met while they take care of the children.



Panel: School Experts

If I had known before what I know now about dealing with a disaster, what would I have done differently?



"Before [this disaster], we were neighbors, now, we're family. Schools are not brick and mortar, it's the people who are there – that's what the schools, the communities are all about." – Phil Cook

JANET ROBINSON, SUPERINTENDENT, STRATFORD (CT) SCHOOLS

Janet Robinson is the Superintendent of Schools in Stratford, Connecticut. She was formally the Superintendent of Schools in Newtown, Connecticut, which included Sandy Hook Elementary where over 20 students and six staff members were shot and killed during a mass shooting in 2012. Robinson explains that she learned from her mistakes the hard way. For Sandy Hook, it was a struggle for Robinson to take care of the emotional needs of students and staff members, especially when their school had become a crime scene.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Accept help. Many different problems come from many different directions and in the rush of recovery, it can be easy to lose track of everything.
- ◆ PTSD will manifest itself throughout the community in concentric circles. Be aware of this impact and ensure that everyone gets help, not just those who were directly impacted.
- ◆ Take advantage of mental health resources that exist around you, but make sure that you are able to filter them and find the truly qualified.
- ◆ It is okay to decline donations. While they come with the best intentions, sometimes it is more helpful to redirect the donations to another cause.

KIM VANN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, JOPLIN (MO) SCHOOLS

Kim Vann is familiar with the cyclical nature of the news and media. For Vann and Joplin Schools, new stories came up whenever donations were made or major breakthroughs in the recovery happened. Many administrators do a great job of internal communication in the immediate aftermath of a disaster but may slowly forget to communicate with their internal audience (staff, school board, parents, students) as time wears on.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Give donors an alternative way to contribute, that way they still feel that they have made a difference without adding to your “to-do” list.
- ◆ Communicate internally before you share externally.
- ◆ Share details with your staff. It helps them feel valued and lets them know that you are present throughout the recovery process.
- ◆ You cannot over-communicate with your school board. They need guidance from you on what to share with the public.

FRANK DEANGELIS, FORMER PRINCIPAL, COLUMBINE (CO) HIGH SCHOOL

Frank DeAngelis was in his third year as principal, when a mass shooting took place at Columbine High School DeAngelis said he never would have believed that a mass shooting could have happened at his school, until it did. In the case of Columbine, DeAngelis felt that the aftermath never really ended, and that the students and the community had to define a new "normal." Often, people outside the community feel that the emotional trauma will go away after a while, but DeAngelis has seen first-hand that PTSD has followed students from Columbine.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Self-care is critical. If you do not take care of yourself, you cannot take care of others. Use faith, exercise, family, or anything that allows you to find peace outside of the disaster.
- ◆ There will be events that retrigger the emotional response for the whole community, such as the recent shooting in Parkland, Florida.
- ◆ Hire separate personnel to handle logistics and publicity, in order to be more visible to the community, rather than overwhelmed.

JOAN COLVIN, FORMER ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, EAST ROCKWAY (NY) SCHOOLS

Joan Colvin was already retired when Superstorm Sandy hit her district in 2012, but she came back to help the district as a "FEMA Coordinator" for the district. In this role, Colvin oversaw the district's logistical and financial recuperation from the storm. During her ongoing tenure as FEMA Coordinator, Colvin has worked with over 25 FEMA teams, and

struggled with re-advocating for her district with each new team. In addition, Colvin has had to overcome the tedious process of FEMA's project worksheets, often resubmitting the same request due to moving targets and expectations from FEMA. Reconstruction and reimbursements aside, Colvin says that her community is still feeling the emotional toll of Sandy after 6 years.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Be tenacious. Do not take "no" for an answer, just find someone else to ask until you get what your district needs.
- ◆ Advocate for your community, FEMA may not be familiar with your community's version of "normal," and you need to be the one to make sure they understand. For example, in Colvin's district, walking to school was the most common transportation method, therefore they did not have the bus infrastructure to transport students to the temporary schools after Sandy.
- ◆ Keep detailed records of every email, transaction, and donation you receive; they will be needed at some point, even if it is five years later.
- ◆ Appoint someone in your district who you anticipate will be available over several years to serve in this coordination role. They will be in charge of all the project worksheets, reimbursement appeals, contractors, etc., and the position is reimbursable by FEMA.

LISA RUIZ, SUPERINTENDENT, EAST ROCKAWAY (NY) SCHOOLS

Lisa Ruiz became superintendent one month after Superstorm Sandy caused over \$12 million of damage to the district. While, Ruiz did not have responsibility for the immediate aftermath of the disaster, she learned a lot by being the person managing the recovery process. In particular, she managed the frustrating "ins and outs" of the FEMA reimbursement process and how to keep her frustration with the agency from showing. Ruiz also learned the importance of face-time with teachers and principals to help them as they deal with their personal recovery.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ You cannot do it all alone, and it will soon feel as if you have two jobs – your regular job and disaster recovery. Find someone to help you, especially with FEMA paperwork.
- ◆ Talk to your teachers and provide them with opportunities to address their recovery needs. Staff members need to be strong for the children and can become easily overwhelmed.
- ◆ Be aware of the impact an anniversary can have, especially on younger children.
- ◆ Utilize your parent-teacher association (PTA) as a communication vehicle, but make sure you moderate what they say in order to convey an accurate message. Social media can also be useful, just proceed with caution.

JAMES ROBINSON, FORMER ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR FINANCE AND OPERATIONS, EAST ROCKAWAY (NY) SCHOOLS

Initially working with Freeport School District, once they completed their 21-day rebuild, James Robinson moved to East Rockaway to address the district's financial issues. For Robinson, there was a drastic difference between the two districts he helped during the recovery process, which he largely attributes to the preparation and communication efficiency in Freeport.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Never underestimate the impact of the messages you share with the public and how that information will be received by your audience. Communication is truly critical.
- ◆ Manage your community's expectations. Politicians will come in and make huge promises but rarely deliver.
- ◆ Think about how you can prepare for the next disaster. Do not become complacent.

PHIL COOK, SUPERINTENDENT, CARL JUNCTION (MO) SCHOOLS

In 2003, the Carl Junction community was hit by an EF3 tornado, causing \$6.5 million worth of damage. In the aftermath of the disaster, Phil Cook saw the long-term impact disasters have on the mental health of staff and students. Cook also shared his experience with a staff member who committed suicide immediately after being laid off. Cook says he learned from this experience and now cares even more deeply about showing support for his staff and students during difficult times.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Let people help you. Do not get caught up in the commotion and try to take everything on yourself. Everyone has a role, and you need to delegate.
- ◆ Staff often experience "secondary trauma," as they help their students cope with the disaster. Be prepared for this and the mental health repercussions that come with it.

JANET EARL, INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES, JOPLIN (MO) SCHOOLS

As Director of Special Service, Janet Earl became deeply involved in the mental health recovery of her district. For Joplin, help came flooding in immediately following the disaster, but it was up to the school to determine how best to use that help. Many children in Earl's district were already dealing with day-to-day traumas, and the additional burden of the tornado compounded their needs.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Morph your 'reactive' mental health services into 'proactive' services that become a normal part of your system.

- ◆ Do not expect all children to deal with the trauma quickly. The whole process will take time and may never go away completely for some.

PANEL: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- ◆ Should we really hire a "FEMA Coordinator?"
 - Colvin: Yes, and preferably someone with executive authority or reports directly to the school board. Many neighboring districts did not hire a coordinator, and Colvin had to help them manage their funds and navigate the FEMA process. New complications can pop-up months or years into the recovery process, and if there is not someone designated to help with the process, it could delay your district's reimbursements.
- ◆ For Frank and Janet Robinson, what types of drills were you doing in your schools before the shootings, and how did that change after?
 - DeAngelis: Columbine was one of the first mass school shootings. Before the incident, the school was only running monthly fire drills. At the time, the active shooter protocol was to evacuate the building and wait for law enforcement to surround the perimeter. Now, law enforcement suggests that the resource officer and/or law enforcement official engage the shooter immediately. DeAngelis suggests running drills during unusual times, such as between classes or during lunch, to familiarize staff and students with alternative plans for differing situations.
 - Robinson: Robinson's district studied what happened in Columbine to inform their drill protocol and applied for national security grants to help increase security at the middle and high schools in her district prior to the shooting at Sandy Hook. At the time, such an event seemed unlikely to occur in an elementary school. Robinson emphasized the importance of security staff knowing the children in the school, so they recognize any unusual activity.

Mental Health “Blindspots”

Led by Julie Wayman (Texas Education Agency) and Teagan Henke (Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute)

ABOUT THE MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (Meadows) is a research institute that aims to provide independent, non-partisan, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective, efficient behavioral healthcare when and where they need it.

A “blindspot” is an area where a leader may lack awareness or understanding that could impact the desired outcome.

HURRICANE HARVEY MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

TEA, in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), is spearheading the *Hurricane Harvey Mental Health Task Force* to support mental health needs in Texas schools. Meadows is providing the Task Force with administrative, operational, and subject matter support to identify needs and spur federal, state, and local coordination to link schools with resources to address mental and behavioral health needs. Two additional groups are supporting the task force. *Hurricane Harvey Task Force on School Mental Health Supports Leadership Advisory Committee* consists of key decision makers who are currently leading initiatives to support mental health. Their purpose is to guide the Task Force as it develops its structure and manage various components. The ESC Response Group includes leadership from affected ESCs to discuss mental and behavioral health needs identified in their schools and to share resources. The group serves as a pivotal link between the Task Force’s efforts and the affected communities.

Task Force deliverables include:

- ◆ Leveraging existing networks, resources, and supports and linking to affected schools and communities.
- ◆ Surveying and assessing needs of affected schools and communities and linking them to resources.
- ◆ Developing a comprehensive list of statewide and regional resources.
- ◆ Linking responders to school communities in need of service and available supports.
- ◆ Engaging ESCs to convene coordinated and triaged responses and supports.
- ◆ Supporting the development of regional and individualized community responses that reflect needs of each community.

The discussion focused on mental health blindspots and their accompanying challenges. Blindspots are characterized as unexpected aspects of disaster recovery and may present as a barrier or obstacle to a successful recovery effort. However, these blindspots can be

used to make a positive impact. In the immediate aftermath, they create a sense of unexpected urgency and demand focus to achieve a solution. Overcoming them and making accommodations to deal with acknowledged blindspots can increase resilience and capacity for future recovery efforts. Hurricane Harvey presented several such blindspots that school administrators did not expect to need to address, including the mental health of their students, parents of students, and their faculty and staff.

POST-DISASTER IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

Trauma is any event that threatens physical well-being or fear of injury, causing extreme fear and helplessness. Texas schools need a coordinated mental health plan for its students, staff, and caregivers (parents) to deal with the short- and long-term impacts that Hurricane Harvey will have on the community. Importantly, chronic stress on developing brains can impact the development of neural pathways, permanently disrupting emotional regulation and how children react to stress throughout their lifetime. Other shorter-term impacts can include behavior changes, lower grades, increased suspensions, increased absences, dropping out entirely, and decreased concentration or memory.

It is important to remember that trauma manifests itself differently in everyone, especially among different age groups or backgrounds. While younger kids may suffer from shortened attention spans and benefit from shorter lessons, older students may exhibit more risk-taking behavior- such as experimentation with drugs or alcohol, where early intervention is the best solution.

School staff can expect a rise in mental health needs in the months following the disaster, often peaking between 12 and 18 months. It is important to remember that trauma manifests itself differently in everyone, especially among different age groups or backgrounds. While younger children may suffer from shortened attention spans and benefit from shorter lessons, older students may exhibit more risk-taking behavior (such as experimentation with drugs or alcohol), where early intervention is the best solution. Henke reminded the group that students who have experienced other stressors, such as domestic violence or substance abuse in their families, are more likely to display the acute effects of trauma. Additionally, these symptoms may manifest themselves in ways which look similar to other behavioral or mental disorders, such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or bipolar disorder.

Staff themselves are likely to feel the emotional impact of Harvey as well, especially since they are likely dealing with personal loss in addition to the emotional burden of helping their students through this difficult time. Helping staff deal with emotional stress can be a unique burden, as they often feel that they have to “keep it together” and provide a sense of normalcy for their students. Henke shared a quote from Kim Vann earlier, “If we aren’t healthy, then we can’t take care of our kiddos.” Henke says this is key in helping leaders

and their staff dealt with mental health. It is especially important for adults to show positive coping strategies, as they are a model for their students. During this time, it is important to give your staff space to take care of their mental health. This can mean not rushing into reopening or having a flexible absence policy, as it is common to see burnout after a disaster.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Individual Reflections

Participants were asked to identify what they see as some of the greatest mental health challenges in their district that may be connected with the storm and recovery. Common themes included:

- ◆ **Exhaustion.** Staff are feeling guilty about taking time to deal with their personal problems or letting the emotional trauma affect their performance.
- ◆ **Lack of effective resources.** The community does not have the proper resources to refer parents to and that will accept Medicaid.
- ◆ **Learning is not the same as it was before the disaster.** DeAngelis shared that he asked for standardized test waivers after the Columbine shooting, which relieved a lot of pressure on his teachers and students.
- ◆ **Nothing new.** Many communities already struggle with poverty and other issues, and Harvey has only compounded these issues.
- ◆ **Indirect impact.** Students who were not directly affected by the storm may be experiencing mental health impacts due to the changes around them or because they are hosting refugee families.

Small Group Discussion Key Points

Participants were asked to consider their districts' ability to address signs of trauma in students, and if they had the capacity to identify and respond to trauma manifested in students. Discussion points included:

- ◆ Everyone needs to be trained in the right questions to ask. Often students are sent to administrators rather than counselors if they are acting out, and these administrators need to know and understand warning signs.
- ◆ Police officers and responders are required to receive mental health counseling after a tragedy, but teachers return to the classroom after a disaster without any additional training. Support teachers by providing frequently asked questions or surveys to help them work with students. Teachers should not be left with a role they are not qualified for.
- ◆ Many of the school leaders were unfamiliar with existing resources, such as the Crisis Counseling Program, Local Mental Health Authorities, and grant opportunities through Rebuild Texas.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND MAKING CONNECTIONS

Meadows and TEA are currently trying to understand what support systems exist through the Supportive School Framework. A survey was conducted in November to find out which school districts felt that they needed help. They received 203 responses from 89 Independent School Districts (ISDs), and housing and mental health were identified as the highest needs. The most noted resource needs include: information on what to expect regarding mental health needs post-disaster; training for staff on how to support students in the immediate situation; classroom handouts and/or activities for teachers to use with students; partnerships with community agencies and health systems; and a school mental/behavioral health liaison. TEA and Meadows have prioritized 15 schools who reported high, immediate needs. Those who were unable to participate at the time or unaware of the survey expressed a desire to complete the survey to provide additional data to support the recovery effort.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Julie Wayman shared some potential resources as school leaders deal with mental or behavioral health challenges generally and specific to Harvey recovery. (Updated resources and additional information can be found at: [https://tea.texas.gov/Harvey Recovery MH.](https://tea.texas.gov/Harvey_Recovery_MH.))

- ◆ Hurricane Harvey Mental Health Task Force – will be able to connect schools to resources and work with communities to strengthen their mental health infrastructure.
- ◆ Regular Service Program (RSP) Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) – offers crisis counseling, brief interventions, stress management education, and referrals to disaster recovery resources as well as community-based service. For more information: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/mhsa/pride/brochures.shtm>.
- ◆ Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) – can provide psychiatric crisis response through 24-hour hotlines and mobile outreach teams, in addition to regular services. A list of local mental health authorities and their crisis hotlines is available at: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa-crisishotline>.
- ◆ Foundation Support
 - The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) Rebuild Texas Fund: <https://www.rebuildtx.org/areas-of-work>.
 - Educate Texas at Communities Foundation of Texas has information about the Harvey KIDS Education Fund, Harvey HELP Education Fund: <https://www.edtx.org/get-involved/hurricane-harvey-relief>.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION KEY POINTS

Participants were asked to identify the top behavioral health challenges currently facing their districts and how the Task Force can assist.

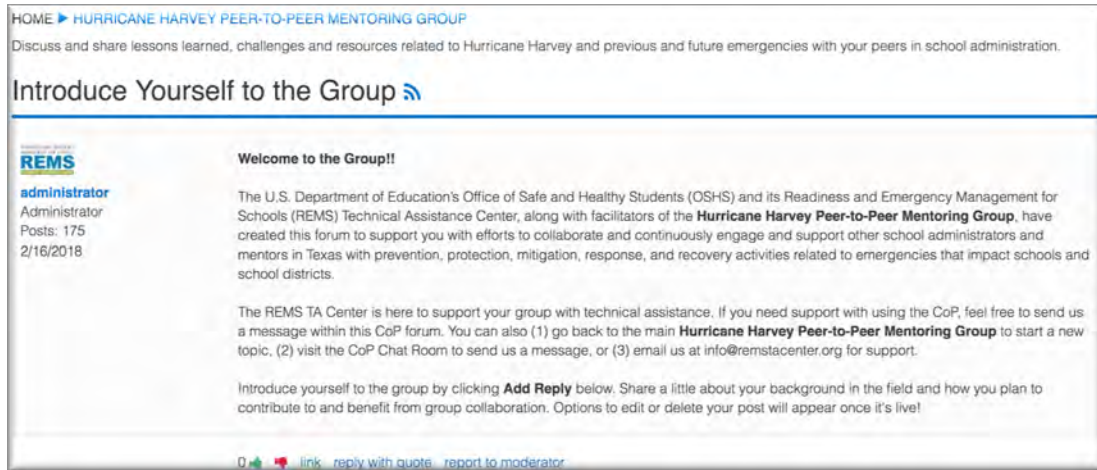
- ◆ Challenges
 - Limited Resources. There is limited availability of affordable and effective resources.

- Widespread Trauma. Trauma is impacting the whole community, including staff, students, teachers, and parents.
 - Conflicting Expectations. The dual demand to ensure student academic performance and support the recovery process is putting a lot of pressure on teachers.
 - Overburdened Educators. When it comes to handling behavioral or mental health issues, there are high expectations for teachers who may not be equipped to effectively meet them.
 - Stigma of Mental Health. The stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance is keeping some families from reaching out for services.
 - Media Challenges. The media coverage is compounding the effects of trauma. The recovery is in the news daily, and survivors have to relive Harvey every day. It is always in print media or on the news.
- ◆ Resources
- LMHAs, Employee Assistance Program, Child and Youth Services
 - Crisis counselors
 - Regional coordination to connect districts to existing resources
 - Additional staff training on recognizing and supporting mental health needs
 - Engaging businesses and faith-based partners to provide support.

Mental Health Challenges	Resources
Lack of resources for children	• Additional teacher/staff training on recognizing / supporting mental health services
Lack of resources for parents/staff.	
Role of media in compounding effects of trauma	• Area businesses churches could be available to support.

REMS Communities of Practices

The presentation of Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Community of Practice (CoP) was presented by Janelle Hughes.



The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center, established in 2004 by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Healthy Students, supports the development of high-quality emergency operations plans (EOPs) and emergency management planning efforts. They specifically serve schools, higher learning institutions, state education agencies, community partners, school districts, and local education agencies.

The system utilizes universal strategies to first disseminate information and resources to a broad audience via email, newsletter, and online forums. Secondary information dissemination occurs on a platform which allows direct feedback. REMS tertiary messaging allows a more extensive exchange between staff and trainees during direct trainings.

Janelle Hughes demonstrated how to access the Community of Practice (CoP), a forum which allows school leaders to come together to share ideas, lessons learned, and support for their peers. An account must be created in order to access CoP, which also gives users access to virtual trainings and newsletters. Once an account has been created, users can engage in CoP-wide message boards, or boards specifically created for school leaders affected by Harvey.

Hughes demonstrated how to create a post and encouraged all participants to sign up for CoP and introduce themselves, and participants had the option to follow along with her using computers made available from the ESC.

Follow-up: Explore the CoP tool from your computer.

Leader Care

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

CJ Huff presented on the importance of leader care. Leaders define the current reality, create the recovery vision, and set the tempo everyone else will follow. Their leadership behavior can have a significant impact on the overall health of the people they lead, both professionally and personally.

The degree of success is dependent on the pace you set. If you overwork yourself in order to get faster results, the people you work with will take that example and follow it. Not only does that set a blistering pace for everyone involved, but it can have detrimental effects (potentially higher levels of burnout or exhaustion).

While people will be looking up to you for leadership (both the people you work with and the rest of the community), you have to give yourself permission to take care of yourself. People will follow the example you set, which can be either good or bad depending on how you manage the pace of recovery. Those who follow you will see the expectations you have for yourself and will follow suit. If you let things spiral out of control, you will forget what the pace of what work used to be like before disaster hit. Give yourselves permission to take a step back, take a breath, and set an example for the rest of your community. Modeling good self-care behaviors can also trickle down through the organization and your community. You are showing people that life is going to continue, and that the disaster won't disrupt your quality of life.

The three areas of leader care that were highlighted include:



1. **Physical Care.** This includes nutrition/dietary behaviors, exercise (or keeping exercise), and sleep. Sleep is particularly important; there is a wealth of research around sleep and the impact it has on people's decisions.

2. **Family Care.** This is protected, personal quality time with your family that you should not ignore for anything; it should be incorporated into your daily routine. When you do schedule time off, make sure your school board knows that it is “sacred” time off and you will not be interrupted.
3. **Spiritual Care.** This involves your connectedness to yourself, others, and a higher power. Are you connected with other people not involved in the recovery?

Healthy habits you had before the disaster should be maintained during the recovery. There are two important things to know. First, achieving your recovery vision is a marathon, not a sprint. Recovery starts off at a sprint pace, but the sooner you establish a healthy rhythm to get to the other side, the better. Second, if you do not take care of yourself, you cannot take care of others.

LEADERS ASSISTING EACH OTHER

At the end of Huff’s discussion, Mentor Phil Cook requested a moment to speak to the group. He spoke about the importance of leaders reaching out to each other. He was superintendent of a community neighboring Joplin when the F5 tornado hit and reached out immediately. He regrets not providing more support throughout Joplin’s recovery. He stressed the importance of helping neighboring leaders when the opportunity was there, and that checking on neighboring school leaders is important to help them in their recoveries as well. “Be the community, not the individual.”

Pam Hedgpeth reaffirmed this sentiment, pointing out that “reaching out and supporting each other is sometimes all we have,” and it is important to remember that. She then requested that participants take a moment to personally reflect on elements of leader care that they could adapt into their lives and write them down in their journals.



Effective Communication

The session began with a definition of internal stakeholders as teachers, staff, students, parents, and members of the school board. They are the ambassadors to the community, and the community will look to them as experts as to what's happening in the school. Thus, it is critical to keep internal stakeholders informed and aware of any developing scenarios. External stakeholders are members of the general public, as well as religious and government-based groups observing the recovery.

A panel of three experts shared the lessons they learned about keeping their school communities engaged throughout the recovery process.

FRANK DEANGELIS, FORMER PRINCIPAL, COLUMBINE (CO) HIGH SCHOOL

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ **Do not argue with the media.**
- ◆ **Develop relationships with your local media.** They are important. Local media is different than national media because they still have to live in the community they report on after the national media leaves. That working relationship can make it easier to correct misinformation. With the right relationship, you can call upon the local media and use them to help you shape the story and change existing perceptions.
- ◆ **Media will reach out to your staff.** Staff members need to be aware that they are speaking for themselves, not as spokespeople for the school or district.
- ◆ **Consistency is key.** "I was assigned an attorney right away, and they wanted to make sure my story was straight," he said.
- ◆ **Develop relationships with the police and other officials.** If they knew they were going to release something, I could share with my community that something was coming out. That sense of cooperation helped the recovery along.
- ◆ **Over-communicate.** You cannot share enough information.
- ◆ **Be prepared for both the good and the bad.** You will see the best of people, but you will also see the worst of people.
- ◆ **Take care of your team.** You need to check in with the people in your building that have been traumatized and keep checking on them. Parkland has brought up a lot of issues for staff members because of its similarities to Columbine.
- ◆ **Respect the parents who lost children.**
- ◆ **Do not discount your student leadership.**

JANET ROBINSON, SUPERINTENDENT, STRATFORD (CT) SCHOOLS

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ **Communicate.** I thought I was good at communicating and then found out that I was not keeping up with the overwhelming need for information. In the absence of truth and communication, the media puts out its own story.
- ◆ **Beware of the media.** I was right there but the media already had its own information. The media knocked on the doors of my grieving families and attempted to photograph students and staff when we opened the temporary school.
- ◆ **Collaborate with law enforcement.** I worked with the police chief from early on, and all press conferences were done in collaboration with the police.
- ◆ **Do not be afraid to set boundaries for the media.** I released the message that if anyone was insensitive to my families, those individuals would not be part of my press conference, and we enforced that message.
- ◆ **Find someone to handle your public relations.** We could not keep up with the need for communication.
- ◆ **Do not forget to take care of your staff.** I was so busy trying to do the “big” stuff that I forgot about those folks around me and their communication needs.
- ◆ **Be consistent.** Set up regular briefings to keep people updated.
- ◆ **The media is recurring.** You may want to develop relationships with some of them.
- ◆ **The PTSD is pervasive and long-term.**
- ◆ **Anniversaries are tricky.** In Newtown, we downplay the anniversaries and try to keep them low-key. We did not want our families retraumatized, so we held simple, unpublicized vigils and made them an interfaith event.
- ◆ **A lot of your support is short-term.** SAMSHA mental health funds provided counselors and mental health professionals readily available, but the funds only lasted for a set time frame. The additional funds added to budget were not enough to continue the long-term support that is needed.

KIM VANN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, JOPLIN COUNTY (MO) SCHOOLS

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ **Tell your story; do not ignore the media.** In the absence of information, someone will fill that void and they can be very creative about it. At the six-month point, you will have media looking for the “gotcha” story, so while it may seem easier to dismiss the request for stories, it is important not to ignore them.
- ◆ **Appoint or hire someone to be a designated public relations person.** Texas has the Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA) as an excellent resource if you do not have someone in your district to fill that role.
- ◆ **Move forward with your community.** It may take some time to pause and explain to community members why you have made certain decisions, but the time spent on the

front end will save you hours on the back end. It will help you build rapport within the community.

- ◆ **People will move on.** At six months, they will tire of hearing about the storm and its impact; however, most people do not understand the finer points of dealing with FEMA, so it is important to keep that in mind.
- ◆ **Know your internal community.** If you do not have a strong Board of Education or if there is a weak point in your staff, the disaster and recovery efforts will exacerbate these issues.
- ◆ **Be aware of what is being reported about you and address misperceptions.** During the closeouts and audits, FEMA uses the stories reported in the media as evidence to support findings. If something is not reported correctly on the front end, it can delay funding allocations on the back end. Use your key communicators and monitor social media to keep track of what is being said. Address misperceptions that may be circling online or in the media. It may be helpful to keep a scrapbook of all the media stories, so you can keep track of what has been said/shared.
- ◆ **Social media is a double-edged sword.** We branded our rebuilding #OperationRisingEagle. As the community saw that brand, they knew to pay attention. We tried to focus on the positive and to highlight our students and the things they were doing.
- ◆ **Do not discount the students.** Remember that students, especially older ones, are some of the biggest advocates for your school.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTION

Following the conclusion of the expert panel, Pam Hedgpeth requested that the participants reflect on the information shared. She asked that they take note of anything that particularly resonated with them and share with the small groups at their tables. After a brief discussion, Hedgpeth asked that they share some key ideas that resonated with the tables.

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Make sure you are communicating with all internal stakeholders, including central office staff. We are so busy as superintendents that we can forget to communicate with our internal audience. They need to hear from us first.
- ◆ It is very important to tell your story, because if you do not, someone else will tell it for you. The story needs to come from us, even if what we are saying is not good news.

"As we talk about our internal audiences, we sometimes forget about the kids, especially the high school kids because they're becoming some of the biggest audiences" – Kim Vann

Lessons Learned from Hurricane Harvey

The final session of the peer-to-peer mentoring sessions was an open discussion between all participants to share what they had learned from Hurricane Harvey, as well as provide feedback and suggestions. Participant responses are listed below.

- ◆ **Communicate and over-communicate.** Tell your story, ignore the criticism, and continue to do the best for your students. Communicate consistently in a variety of ways.
- ◆ **Put students first.** Focus on students' wellbeing, not their test scores.
- ◆ **Think and plan ahead.** Be prepared for the upcoming anniversaries.
- ◆ **Review existing resources.** We need to be prepared to mobilize the buses, especially for flood evacuations.
- ◆ **Trust the experts.** Do not underestimate warnings.
- ◆ **Present a unified message.** Participate in the ESC Region 4 teleconferences to help make sure impacted districts are consistent in messaging to the community.
- ◆ **Have a plan in place.** It is okay not to have all the answers, but it is critical to have the right phone numbers, so you know who to call for what you need.
- ◆ **Create a resource list.** Prepare a list of good, reputable contactors to call for various services.
- ◆ **Delegate.** Designate people to lead key functions.
- ◆ **Make sure your systems work.** Discuss, understand, and test your systems before something happens.
- ◆ **Have a plan for donations.** Develop a plan to coordinate the complicated logistics of donations.
- ◆ **Establish communication channels.** Ensure everyone is kept informed and that you have insight into what is being said.
- ◆ **Rely on each other.** Collaborate with your peers in surrounding ISDs to support one another throughout the recovery process.



Appendix A: Participant List

PEER-TO-PEER MENTORING SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Name	Role	Organization
Stacy Ackley	Superintendent	Royal ISD
Brian Allen	Director	Galena Park ISD
Greg Anderson	Superintendent	Danbury ISD
Wanda Bamberg	Superintendent	Aldine ISD
Ryan Boone	Assistant Superintendent	Dickinson ISD
Robert Bostic	Superintendent	Stafford MSD
Walter Braun	Police Chief	Santa Fe ISD
Tim Brittain	Business Manager	Huffman ISD
Loree Bruton	Assistant Superintendent	Alvin ISD
Richard Carranza	Superintendent	Houston ISD
Rodney Cavness	Superintendent	Texas City ISD
H.D. Chambers	Superintendent	Alief ISD
Bret Champion	Superintendent	Klein ISD
Robert Cobb	Assistant Superintendent	Dickinson ISD
Joe Crane		Anahuac ISD
King Davis	Superintendent	Sheldon ISD
Charles Dupre	Superintendent	Fort Bend ISD
Elizabeth Fagen	Superintendent	Humble ISD
Steven Galloway	Superintendent	Columbia-Brazoria ISD
James Gilcrease	Superintendent	Alvin ISD
Laura Gilcrease	Principal/Assistant Principal	Hitchcock ISD
Lloyd Graham	Superintendent	La Porte ISD
Carlin Grammer	Principal/Assistant Principal	La Porte ISD
Angela Gutsch	Superintendent	Hempstead ISD
Stephen Harrell	Assistant Superintendent	Deer Park ISD
Elizabeth Harris	Superintendent	Devers ISD
Mark Henry	Superintendent	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
Hector Herrera	Assistant Superintendent	Dayton ISD
Tory Hill	Superintendent	Sweeny ISD
Lance Hindt	Superintendent	Katy ISD
Teresa Hull	Central Office Staff-Professional	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
John Ideus	Police	Sweeny ISD
Jessica Johnson	Superintendent	Dayton ISD
Cami Jones	Principal/Assistant Principal	Hardin ISD
Marc Keith	Superintendent	Pearland ISD
Ken Knippel	Central Office Staff-Professional	Aldine ISD
Kirk Lewis	Superintendent	Crosby ISD
Danny Massey	Superintendent	Brazosport ISD
Troy McCarley	Superintendent	Pasadena ISD
Christopher Miller	Assistant Superintendent	Columbia-Brazoria ISD
Vicki Mims	Superintendent	Dickinson ISD
Mark Miranda	Central Office Staff-Professional	Spring ISD
Patricia Montgomery	Superintendent	Angleton ISD


Name	Role	Organization
Kevin Moran	Assistant Superintendent	Waller ISD
Kelli Moulton	Superintendent	Galveston ISD
Scott Muri	Superintendent	Spring Branch ISD
Darrell Myers	Superintendent	Cleveland ISD
Mike Niemeyer	Assistant Superintendent	Channelview ISD
Randy O'Brien	Superintendent	Goose Creek ISD
Greg Ollis	Superintendent	Channelview ISD
Bob Parker	Superintendent	Hardin ISD
Sherry Phillips	Assistant Superintendent	Danbury ISD
Greg Poole	Superintendent	Barbers Hill ISD
DeeAnn Powell	Superintendent	Pasadena ISD
Anthony Price	Assistant Superintendent	Goose Creek ISD
Thomas Randle	Superintendent	Lamar CISD
Curtis Rhodes	Superintendent	Needville ISD
Donald Rhodes	Superintendent	Damon ISD
David River	Police	Fort Bend ISD
Thad Roher	Superintendent	Friendswood ISD
Martha Salazar-Zamora	Superintendent	Tomball ISD
Greg Smith	Superintendent	Clear Creek ISD
Benny Soileau	Superintendent	Huffman ISD
Lance Stallworth	Executive Director's Office	Spring Branch ISD
Ryan Steele	Assistant Superintendent	Royal ISD
Danny Twardowski	Superintendent	Waller ISD
Carla Vickroy	Superintendent	Hitchcock ISD
Tyra Walker	Director	Alief ISD
Leigh Wall	Superintendent	Santa Fe ISD
Rodney Watson	Superintendent	Spring ISD
Ron Webster	Executive Director's Office	Klein ISD
Victor White	Superintendent	Deer Park ISD
Jay Whitehead	Assistant Superintendent	Brazosport ISD
Angi Williams	Superintendent	Galena Park ISD
Charles Woods	Central Office Staff-Professional	Alief ISD

PEER-TO-PEER MENTORING SEMINAR MENTORS/PRESENTERS

Name	Organization	E-mail
Joan Colvin	East Rockaway (NY) School District (retired)	drjcolvin@juno.com
Phil Cook	Carl Junction (MO) Schools	pcook@cj.k12.mo.us
Frank DeAngelis	Columbine HS/Jefferson County (CO) Schools (retired)	frankdeangelis1@yahoo.com
Janet Earl	Joplin (MO) Schools	janetearl@joplinschools.org
Trey Folse	St. Tammany Parish (LA) Public Schools	
James Robinson	Nassau BOCES	jrobinson@nasboces.org
Janet Robinson	Stratford (CO) Schools	robinsonj@stratk12.org
Lisa Ruiz	East Rockaway (NY) School District	LRuiz@eastrockawayschools.org
Kim Vann	Bright Futures USA	kim@brightfuturesusa.org

Appendix B: Presentations and Handouts

AGENDA



Recovery Leadership: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Seminar Agenda

**ESC Region 4
7145 W. Tidwell Road
Houston, TX 71902**

**Tuesday, March 6, 2018
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

9:30 a.m.	Introductions
9:40 a.m.	Program Overview and Goals
9:50 a.m.	Participant Introductions
10:00 a.m.	Overview of Agenda
10:05 a.m.	Panel of School Experts: Lessons Learned from Previous Disasters
10:50 a.m.	Break
11:00 a.m.	Mental Health “Blindspots” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to Expect Post-Disaster: Impact on Mental Health of Children, Youth and Adults Leveraging Resources in Support of Mental Health Issues
	Continued Mental Health “Blindspots” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leveraging Resources and Making Connections to Support Mental Health Needs
12:15 p.m.	CoP Project Overview
12:30 p.m.	Working Lunch— Leader Care
1:00 p.m.	Effective Communication: Keeping Your School Community Engaged Through Recovery
1:55 p.m.	Texas School Leaders: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Harvey
2:20 p.m.	Final Reflections and Program Evaluation

Thank you for your participation!

PRESENTATION





Introduction

Welcome/Introductions

- ❖ Opening Remarks/Welcome
- ❖ Background of the Project
 - Overview of the program
 - Expected outcomes



Participant Introductions

- ❖ Participants
 - Share name, district, position
 - Type of disaster you have experienced
 - Interesting personal fact



Hello
my name is

Agenda/Logistics

- ❖ Overview of agenda
- ❖ Housekeeping matters
- ❖ Norms of participation

Tuesday, March 6, 2018
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

- 9:30 a.m. Introductions
- 9:40 a.m. Program Overview and Goals
- 9:50 a.m. Participant Introductions
- 10:00 a.m. Overview of Agenda
- 10:05 a.m. Panel of School Experts: Lessons Learned from Previous Disasters
- 10:50 a.m. Break
- 11:00 a.m. Mental Health “Blindspots”
 - What to Expect Post-Disaster: Impact on Mental Health of Children, Youth and Adults Leveraging Resources in Support of Mental Health Issues
- Continued Mental Health “Blindspots”
 - Leveraging Resources and Making Connections to Support Mental Health Needs
- 12:15 p.m. CoP Project Overview
- 12:30 p.m. Working Lunch— Leader Care
- 1:00 p.m. Effective Communication: Keeping Your School Community Engaged Through Recovery
- 1:55 p.m. Texas School Leaders: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Harvey
- 2:20 p.m. Final Reflections and Program Evaluation

Thank you for your participation!



Mentor Panel

*If I knew then what I know now about dealing with a disaster,
what would I have done differently?*



Mental Health Blindspots

Identifying Mental Health Blindspots: Faculty/Staff, Students, and Parents

What are Blindspots?

How might we use “blindspots” and other challenges during a disaster in a positive way to help our schools and communities be more resilient and stronger?



Kotter, 2014



THE MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE

**Identifying Mental and Behavioral Health Needs
and Connecting to Resources**

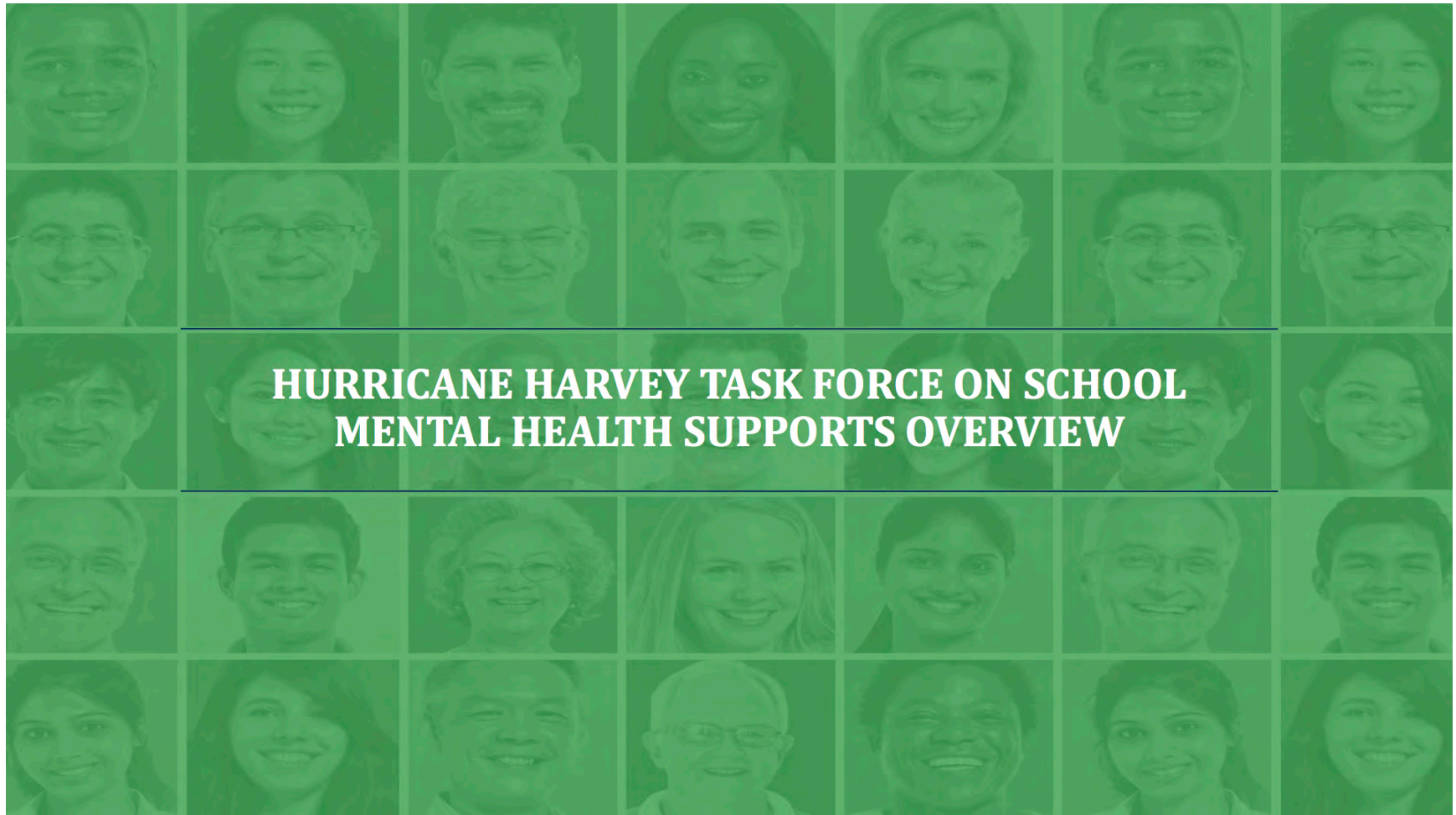
Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Agenda

Overview

**Leveraging
Resources**

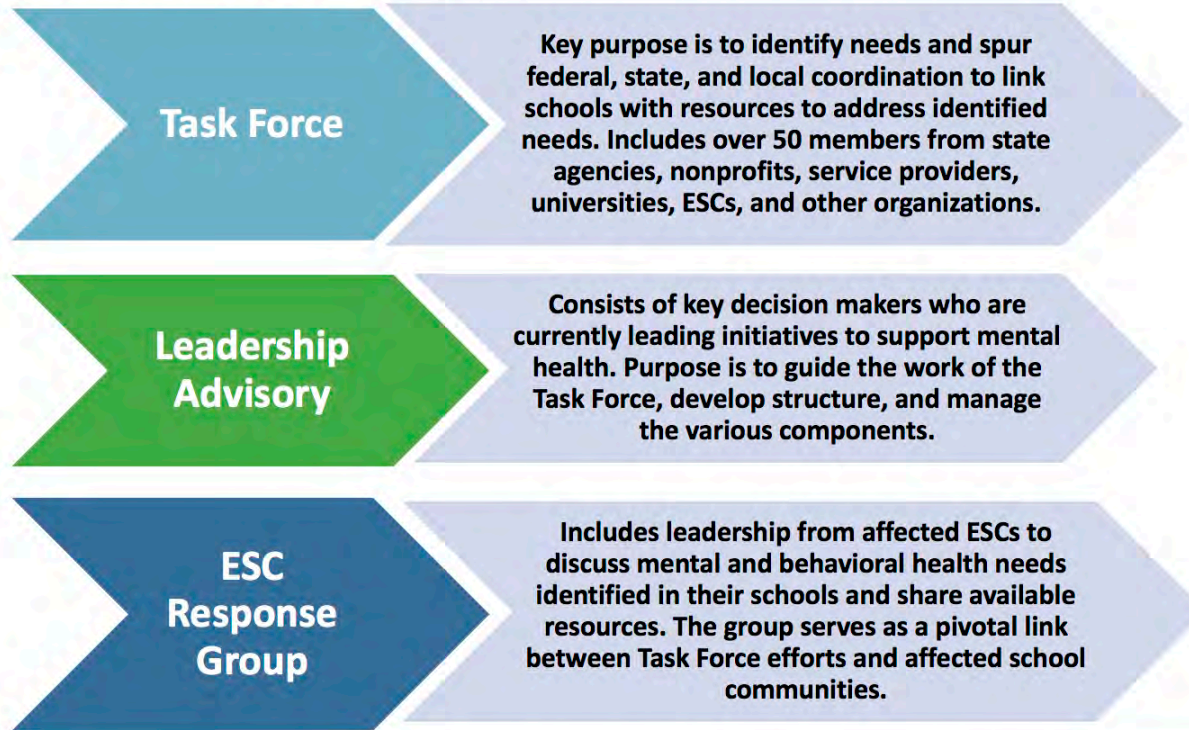
**Next Steps
and
Securing
Supports**



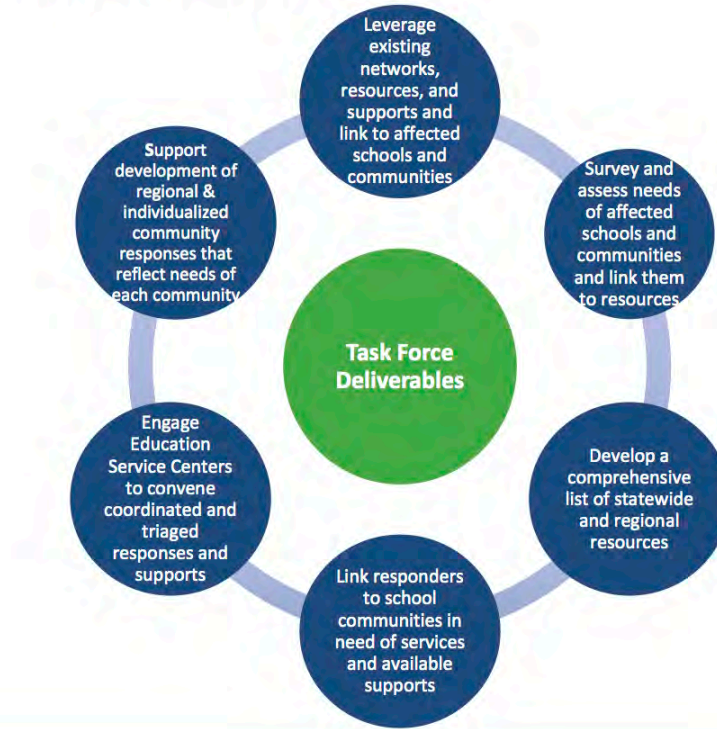
Hurricane Harvey Task Force on School Mental Health Supports

- The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), is spearheading the *Hurricane Harvey Mental Health Task Force* (Task Force) to support mental health needs at Texas schools.
- The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) is providing the Task Force with administrative, operational, and subject matter support.
- Purpose: To identify needs and spur federal, state, and local coordination to link schools with resources to address identified mental and behavioral health needs.

Task Force Efforts



Task Force Deliverables





WHAT TO EXPECT: POST-DISASTER IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADULTS

Trauma and the Effects of Trauma

- Hurricanes and other natural disasters can have long-term and harmful effects on the mental health of children, youth, and adults, including school leaders.
- After a disaster, it is anticipated that schools will observe higher rates of mental health challenges, including post-traumatic stress disorder.
- School staff can expect a rise in mental health needs in the months following the storm, with the needs of children and youth peaking between 12-18 months.
- Trauma can lead to behavior changes, lower GPAs, increased suspensions and expulsions, increased number of students dropping out of school, higher rates of absences, interference with concentration and memory, and decreased reading ability.

Signs of Trauma in Children & Youth

- Trauma manifests itself differently in everyone.
- Younger children may become more dependent than usual, have temper tantrums, be more aggressive or hyperactive, have difficulty focusing, or have decreased motivation.
- Older children and youth may experience more stress, sadness, or problems with school or people. They may also act out in riskier ways, such as using alcohol or drugs.
- Physical symptoms may include stomachaches, headaches, loss of appetite, sleep problems, and nightmares.

Signs of Trauma in Adults

- The expected impact on mental health may be greater for adults, often because adults bear the brunt of post-disaster stresses.
- Adults may experience mood changes such as irritability, frustration, anger, crying, sadness, fear, depression, and anxiety.
- They may also experience physical symptoms to varying degrees, such as headaches, sleep problems, loss of appetite, difficulty with concentration and memory, and difficulty staying organized with tasks or being timely.
- Some adults may be more likely to abuse substances, engage in family violence, or neglect or abuse children.

Individual Reflection

- ❖ **What mental health challenges are you hearing about and/or actually seeing in your districts that may be connected with the storm and recovery?**
 - Individually consider
 - Write ALL ideas; one on each post it note

Small Group Discussion

- Individually sort your mental health challenges into TWO stacks:
 - ❑ Student Needs
 - ❑ Faculty/Staff Needs

Small Group Discussion

- Each person share at least one challenge.
- Listen for common themes to be shared with the whole group.

Small Group Discussion

- ❖ **Consider the current resources in your district available to support students and staff. Where are there gaps in resources?**
- ❖ **Do those providing the support have the capacity/training necessary to successfully meet these needs? If not, what type of training is needed?**





Potential Resources

❖ **Hurricane Harvey Mental Health Task Force**

- The Task Force is helping to link local mental health organizations, providers, and resources to schools with mental health needs.
- Over the long term, the Task Force will also work with communities to strengthen their mental health infrastructure.

❖ **Regular Service Program (RSP) Crisis Counseling Program (CCP)**

- These programs offer crisis counseling, brief interventions, practical stress management education, and referrals to disaster recovery resources and community-based services.
- Service providers include ESCs 2, 3, 4, and 5; The Harris Center; The Gulf Coast Center; and Tri-County MHMR.

Potential Resources

❖ **Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs)**

- School districts can connect their students, staff, and faculty to mental health resources through their respective LMHA.
- LMHAs provide psychiatric crisis response through 24-hour hotlines and mobile crisis outreach teams. LMHAs also provide behavioral health services and referrals.

❖ **Foundation Support**

- Rebuild Texas of the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF)
- Harvey Kids

Potential Resources

❖ Hurricane Harvey Recovery: Mental Health Resources for Schools

[Home](#) / [About TEA](#) / [Other Services](#) / [Hurricane Harvey Mental Health Resources](#)

Hurricane Harvey Recovery: Mental Health Resources for Schools

Addressing the mental health needs of our school staff, students, and families impacted by Hurricane Harvey is paramount. TEA is working closely with [The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute](#) and various state and local organizations to identify resources, build sustainable infrastructure and coordinate mental health supports in impacted communities.

TEA has developed a two-page Mental Health Brief for School Districts and Schools that are recovering from Hurricane Harvey. The brief includes common reactions, what to expect regarding mental health for children, youth and adults during the recovery period, and some example responses for schools based on best practices and research. [Hurricane Harvey's Impact on the Mental Health of Children, Youth and Adults\) A Mental Health Brief for Schools](#).

To help individuals in the affected areas identify and connect to appropriate services and supports, TEA collaborated with state and federal agencies, and local community organizations, to create the compilation of mental health resources listed below. If you are aware of additional resources or tools that are available, please email HarveyRecoveryMH@tea.texas.gov.

Related Content

- [Hurricane Harvey Resources Page](#)
- [Hurricane Harvey Parent Resources Page](#)
- [Hurricane Harvey Help](#)

Resources at a Glance

- [Considerations of Mental Health Professionals \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guidelines-for-evacuation-of-Individuals with Disabilities during Disasters \(PDF\)](#)
- [Helping Children Cope after Hurricane Harvey \(PDF\)](#)
- [How Families and Caregivers Can Help \(PDF\)](#)
- [How Teachers Can Help \(PDF\)](#)
- [MMHPI Hurricane Harvey Resources and Links for the TEA Website \(PDF\)](#)
- [PEI STAR Program \(PDF\)](#)



Potential Resources

❖ Hurricane Harvey Recovery: Mental Health Resources for Schools

Resources for school systems, staff, students and families are available on the webpages listed below:

[Mental Health Resources: Funding](#)

[Mental Health Resources: Counseling and Crisis Intervention Services](#)

[Mental Health Resources: School Personnel Training and Classroom Resources](#)

[Mental Health Resources: Special Populations](#)

[Mental Health Resources: Parents, Caregivers and Families](#)

[Mental Health Resources: Community and General Resources](#)

Special thanks to The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for your overall support in this endeavor and for compiling the information and resources provided.



Contact Information

If you have questions or would like additional information please email:
HarveyRecoveryMH@tea.texas.gov

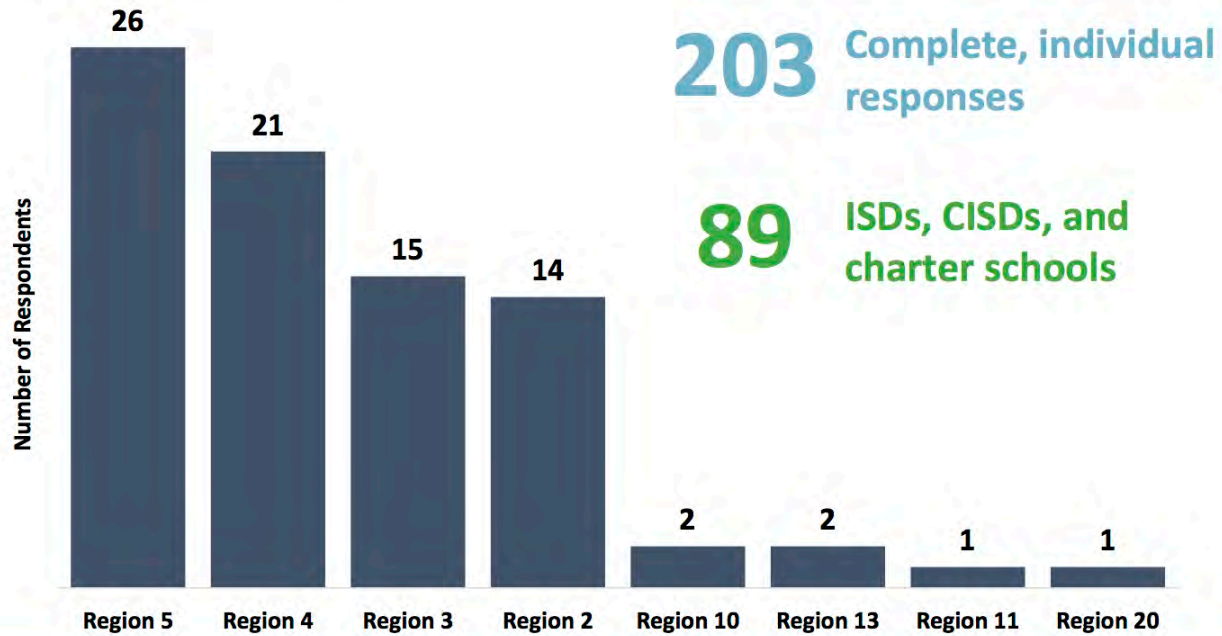
Office of Academics | Department of Special Populations
Division of Highly Mobile and At-Risk





**OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH
CHALLENGES & NEEDS POST-HARVEY SURVEY**

Responses by Education Service Center (ESC) Region

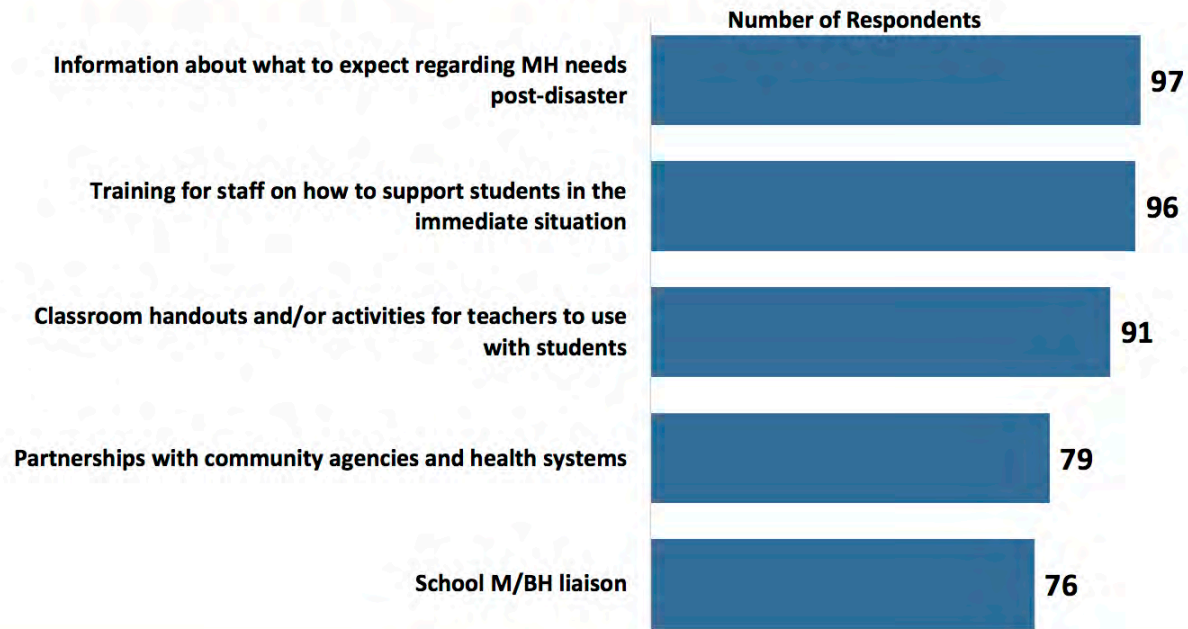


ESC Region



30

Top 5 Most Reported Additional Resources Needed for Meeting Needs



Requesting Support

- ❖ **If your district would like to request support you may:**
 - Take the survey by following this link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2H3YGD8>; or
 - Contact TEA at HarveyRecoveryMH@tea.texas.gov or
 - Contact Victoria Walsh at MMHPI at vwalsh@texasstateofmind.org.

Small Group Discussion

- ❖ **What ideas resonated with you regarding resources that you might “tap into” to support the needs of your school community?**

Small Group Discussion

Priority Mental Health Challenges Currently Facing Your Districts (3-4)	What Resources Might be Tapped to Support these Challenges/Note in RED Where Resources are Still NEEDED



Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) CoP Overview

<http://rems.ed.gov/>

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS)

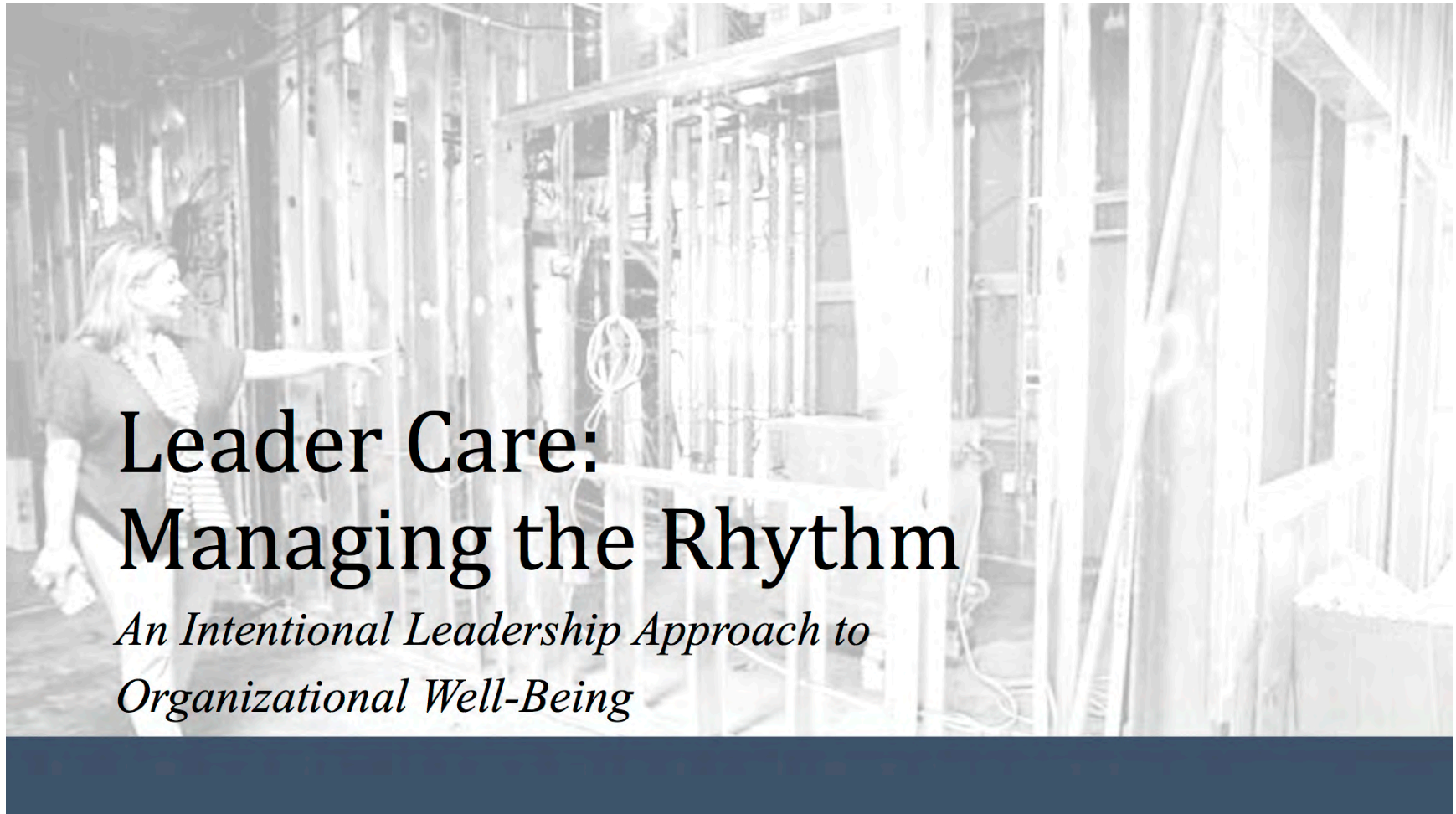
- ❖ Join CoP Practice
- ❖ Accessing the Community Huddle Section
- ❖ Starting a New Topic Discussion
- ❖ Sharing and Replying to a Post
- ❖ Receiving Notifications
- ❖ Conducting One-on-One Chats

Introduce yourself to the CoP

The screenshot shows the login page for the REMS Community of Practice (CoP). At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with the REMS logo and links for HOME, K-12 SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS, HIGHER EDUCATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, and ABOUT US. Below this is a green header section with the title "Community of Practice (CoP)" and a description: "A virtual space for schools, school districts, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and their community partners to collaborate, share, and learn from the experiences of others in the field." A navigation bar below the header includes links for CoP HOME, ABOUT THE CoP, RULES, JOIN, and a yellow LOG IN button. The main content area features a "LOG IN" heading, a prompt to enter username and password, and a link to register. Below this is the "Account Information" section with input fields for Username and Password, a "Keep me logged in" checkbox, and three buttons: LOG IN, FORGOT PASSWORD, and CHANGE PASSWORD.



Lunch Presentation: Leader Care

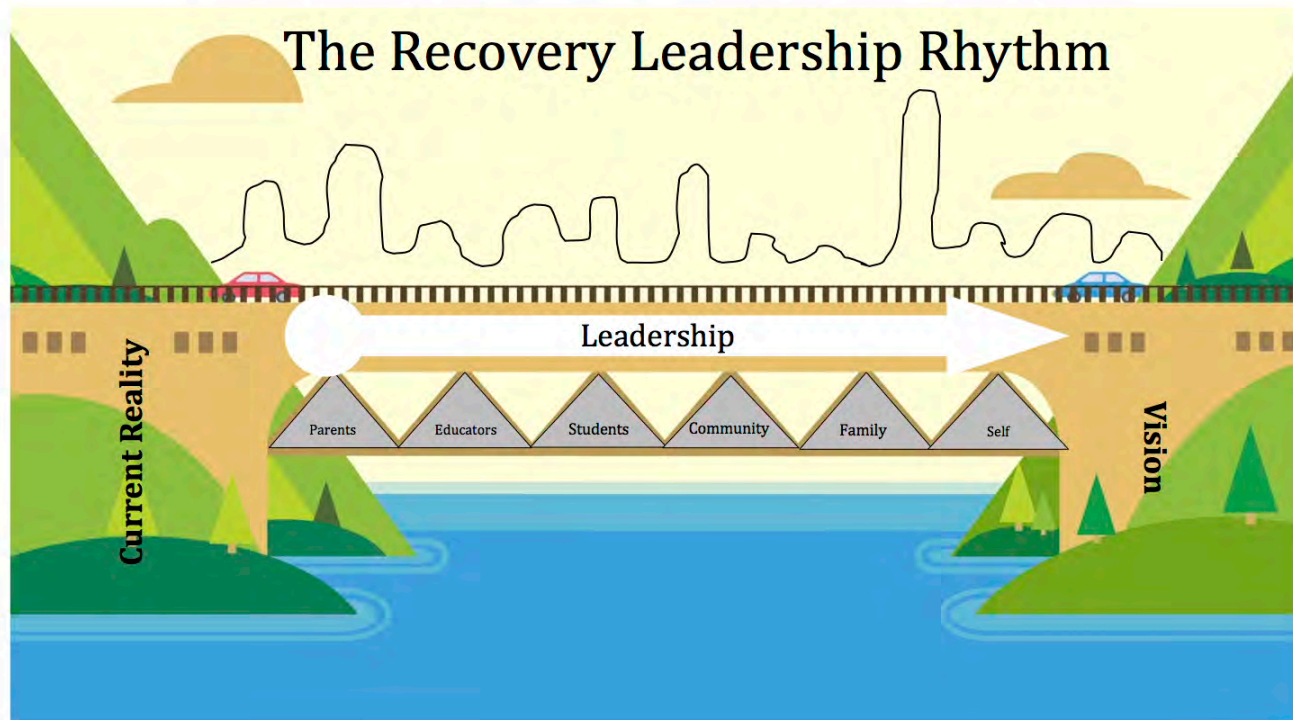


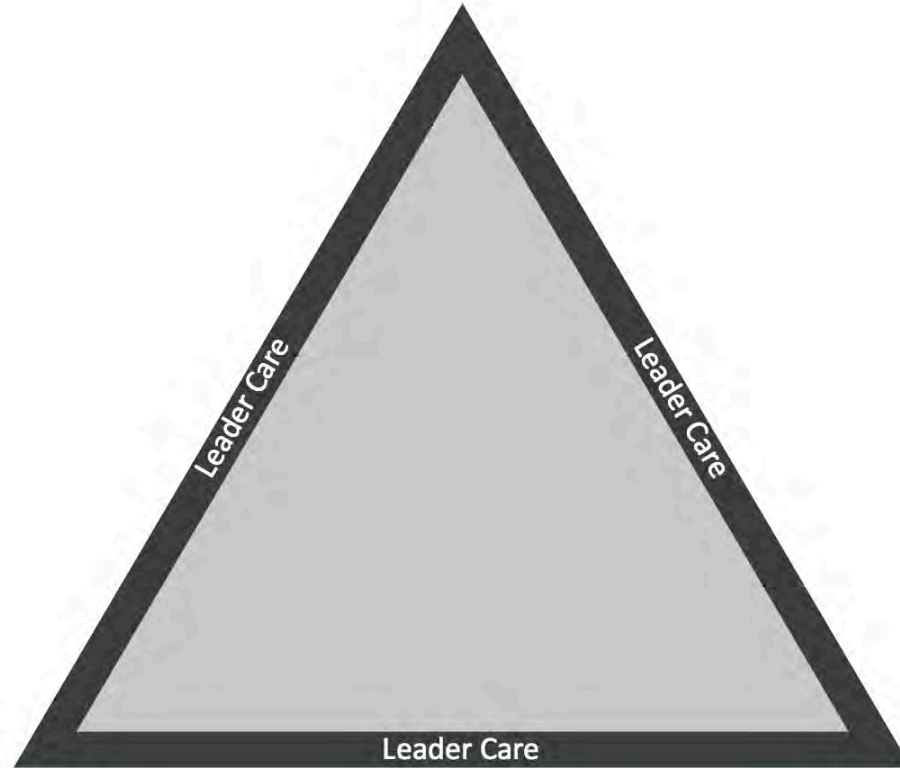
Leader Care: Managing the Rhythm

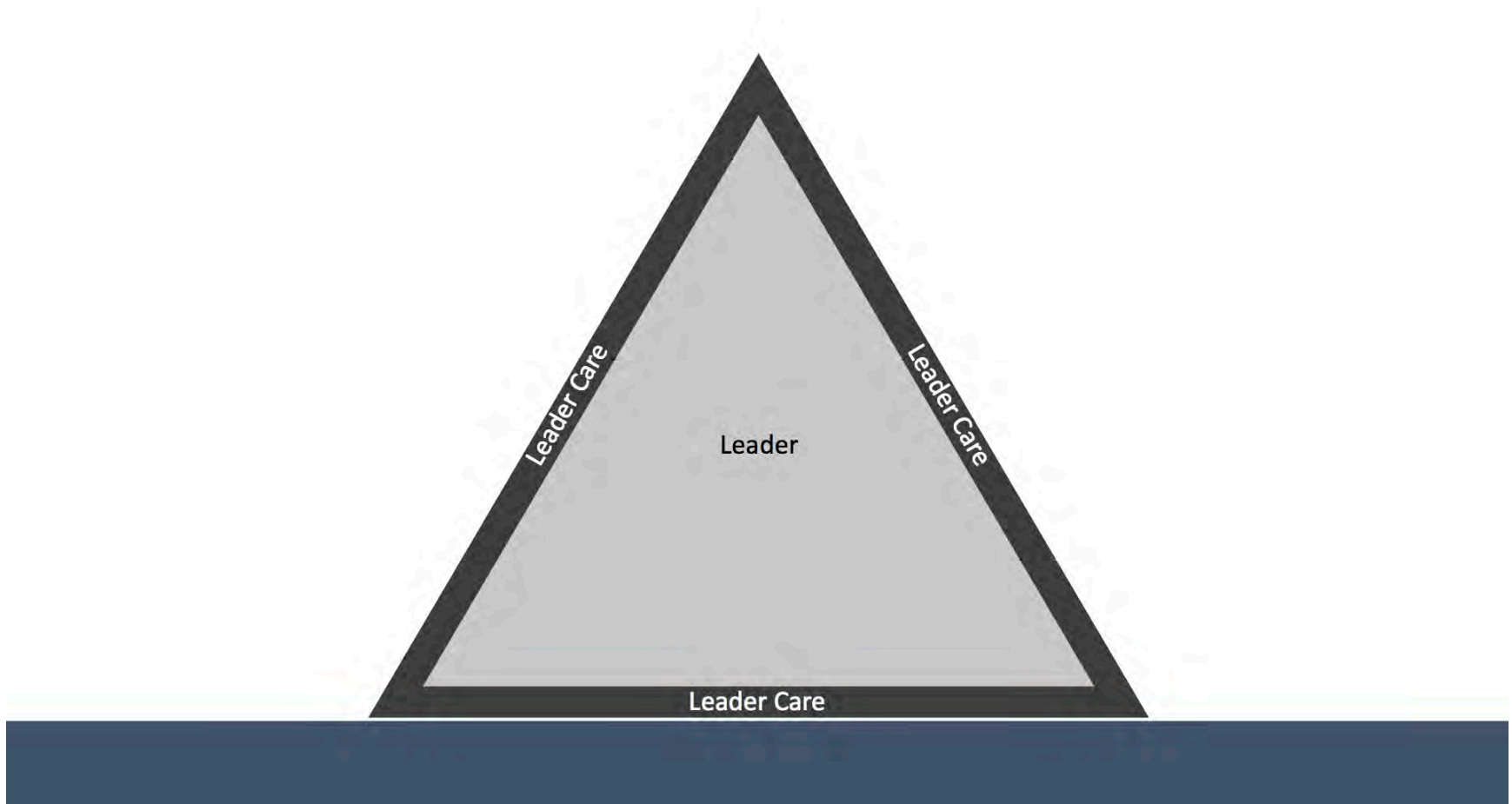
*An Intentional Leadership Approach to
Organizational Well-Being*

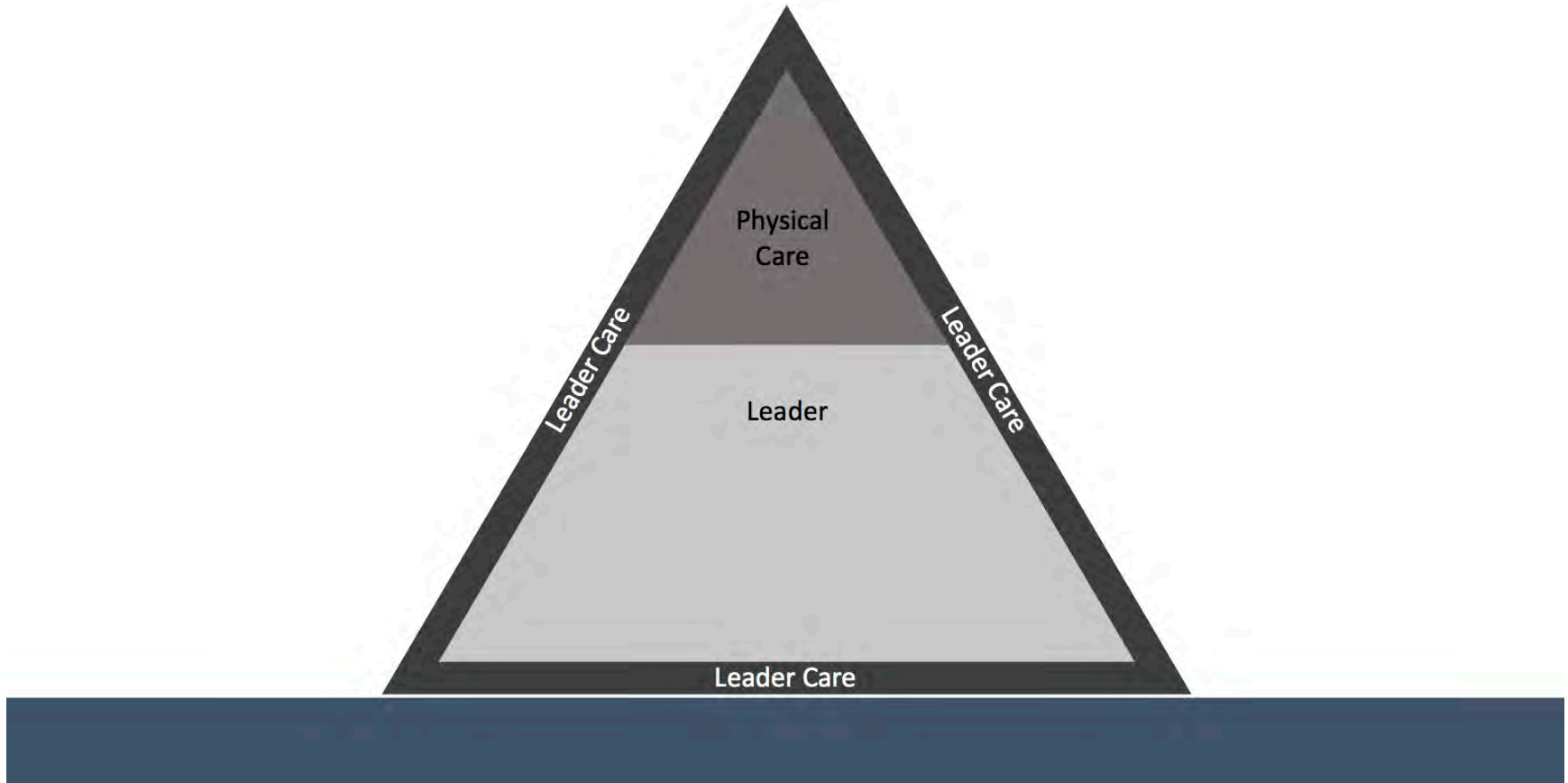
Why is leader care important?

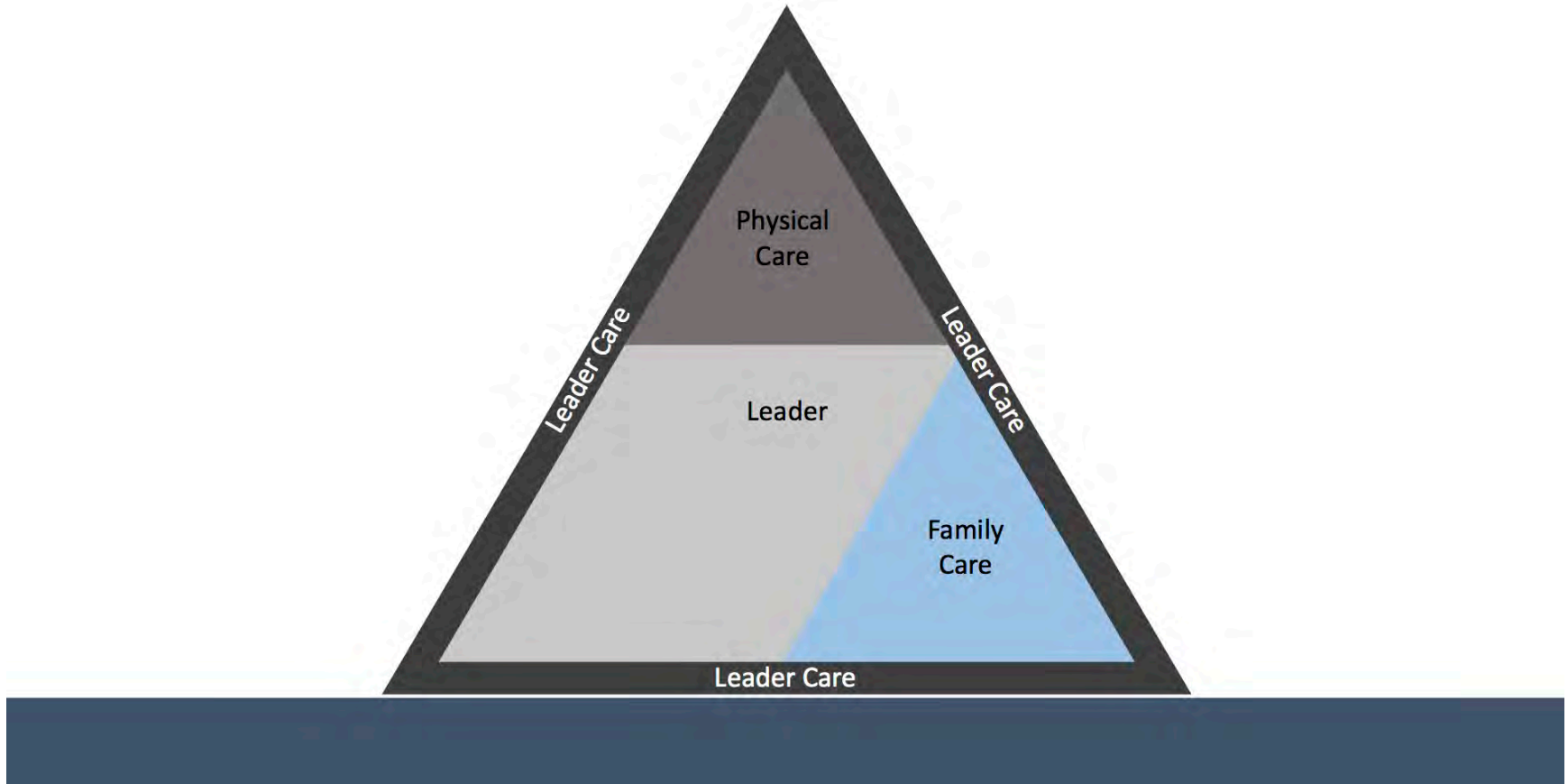
- ❖ Leaders set rhythm. That tempo ultimately impacts...
 - The overall health of your organizational culture.
 - The overall health and well-being of the people you lead.
 - Decision making processes and the acceptance of those decisions by your school community.
 - The overall health of you and your family.

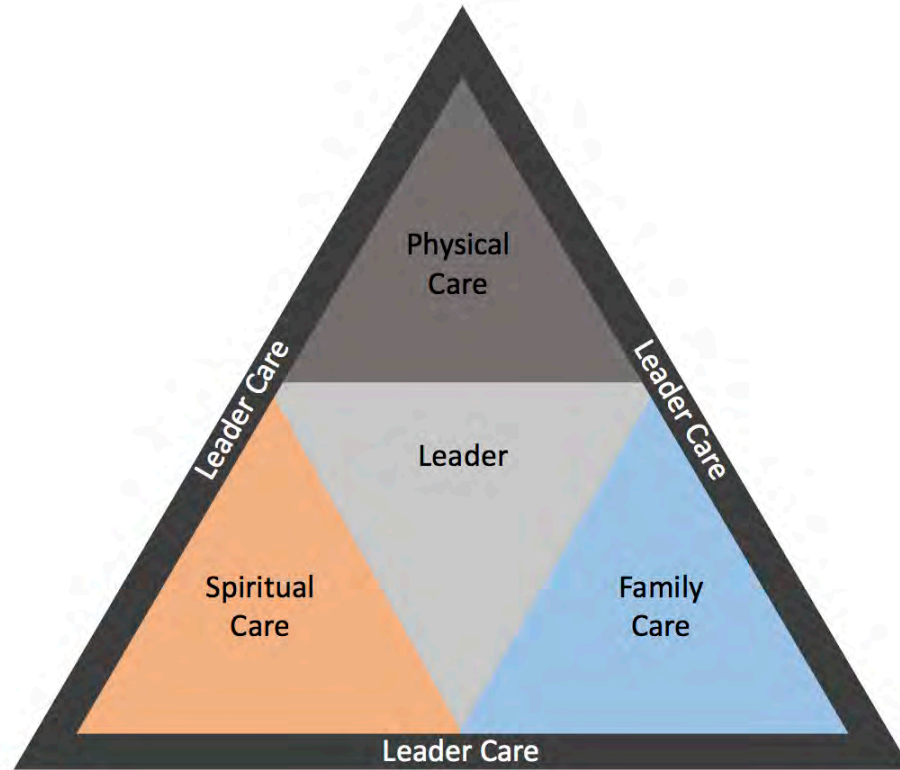


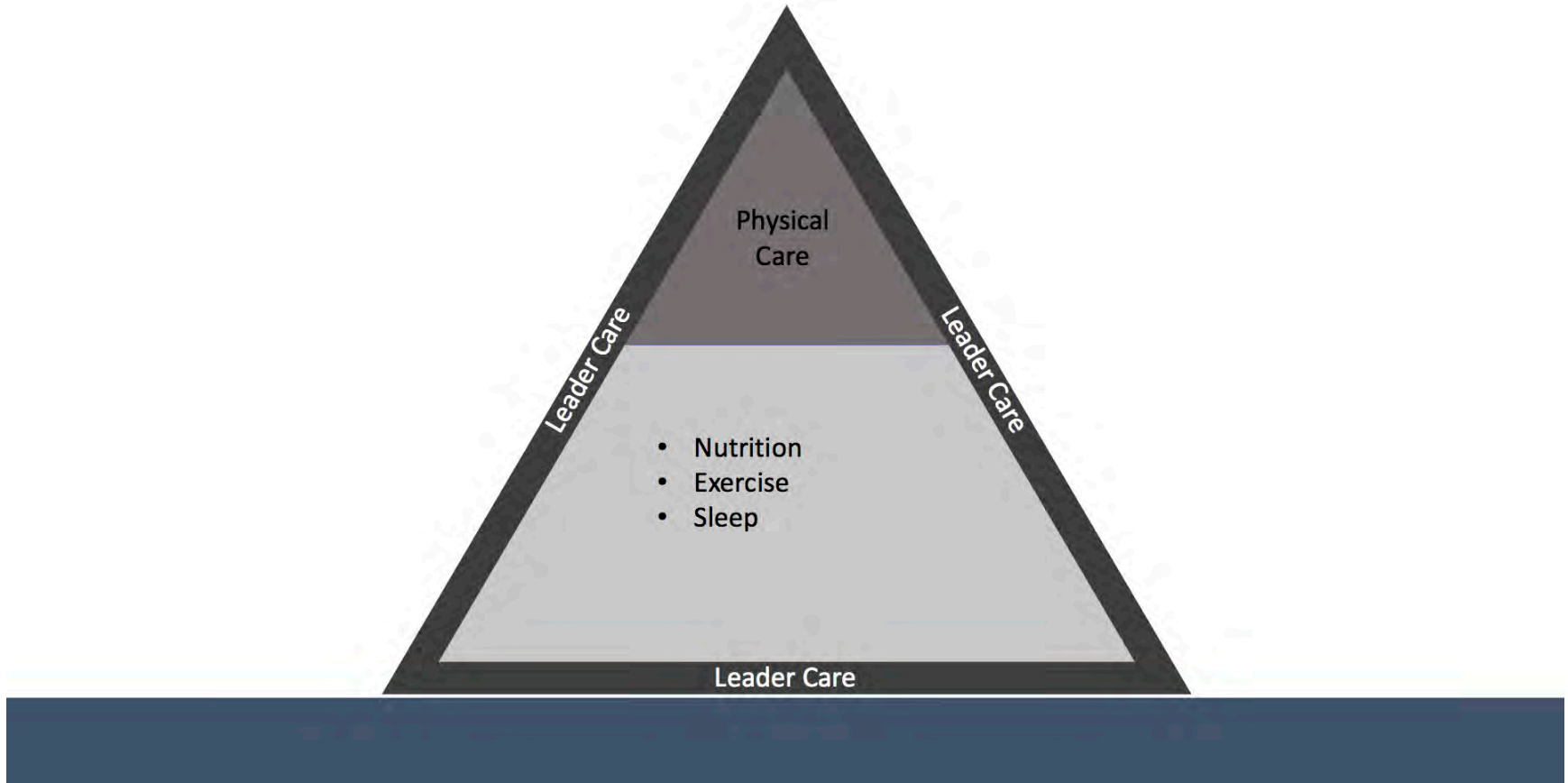


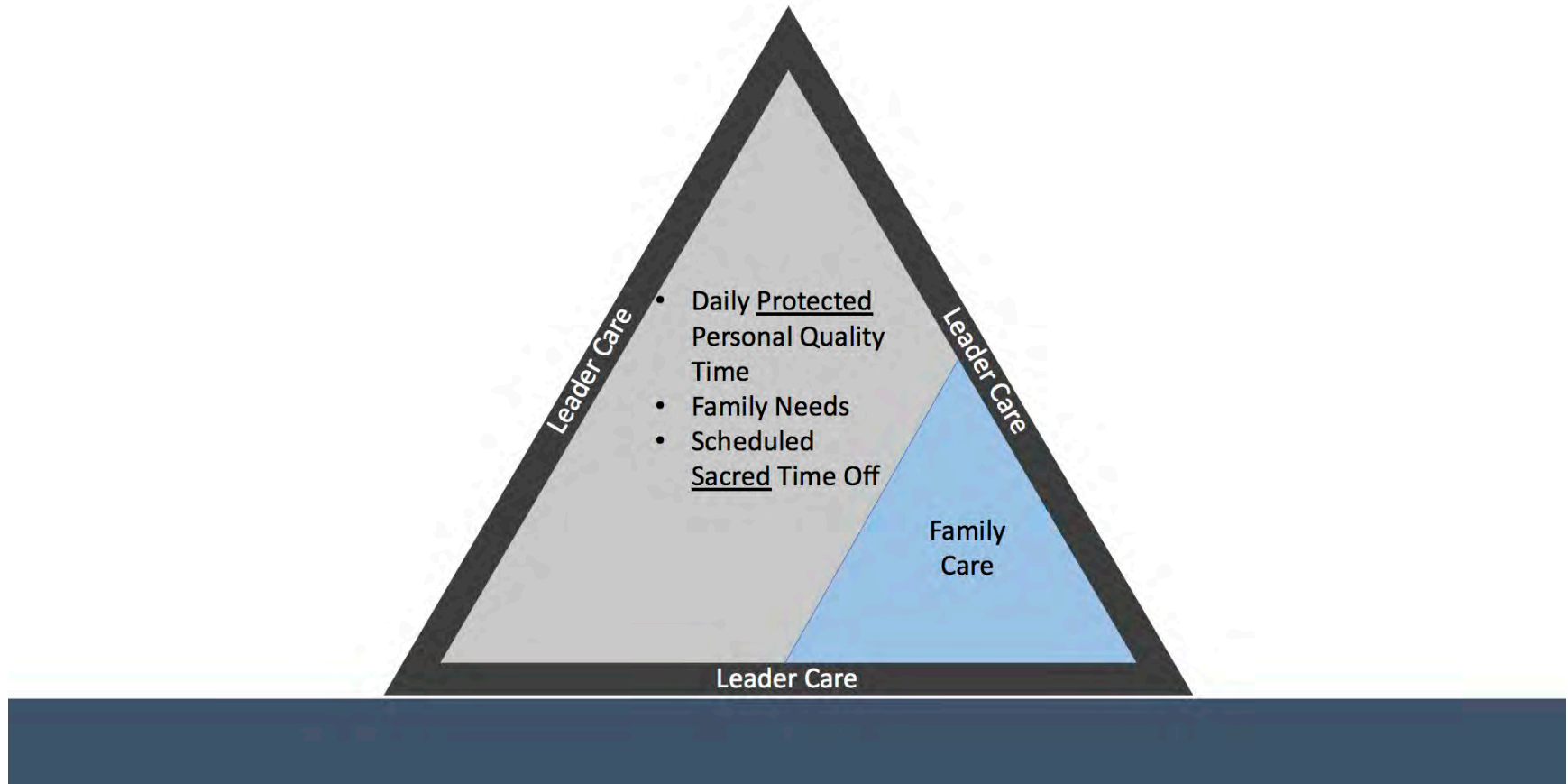


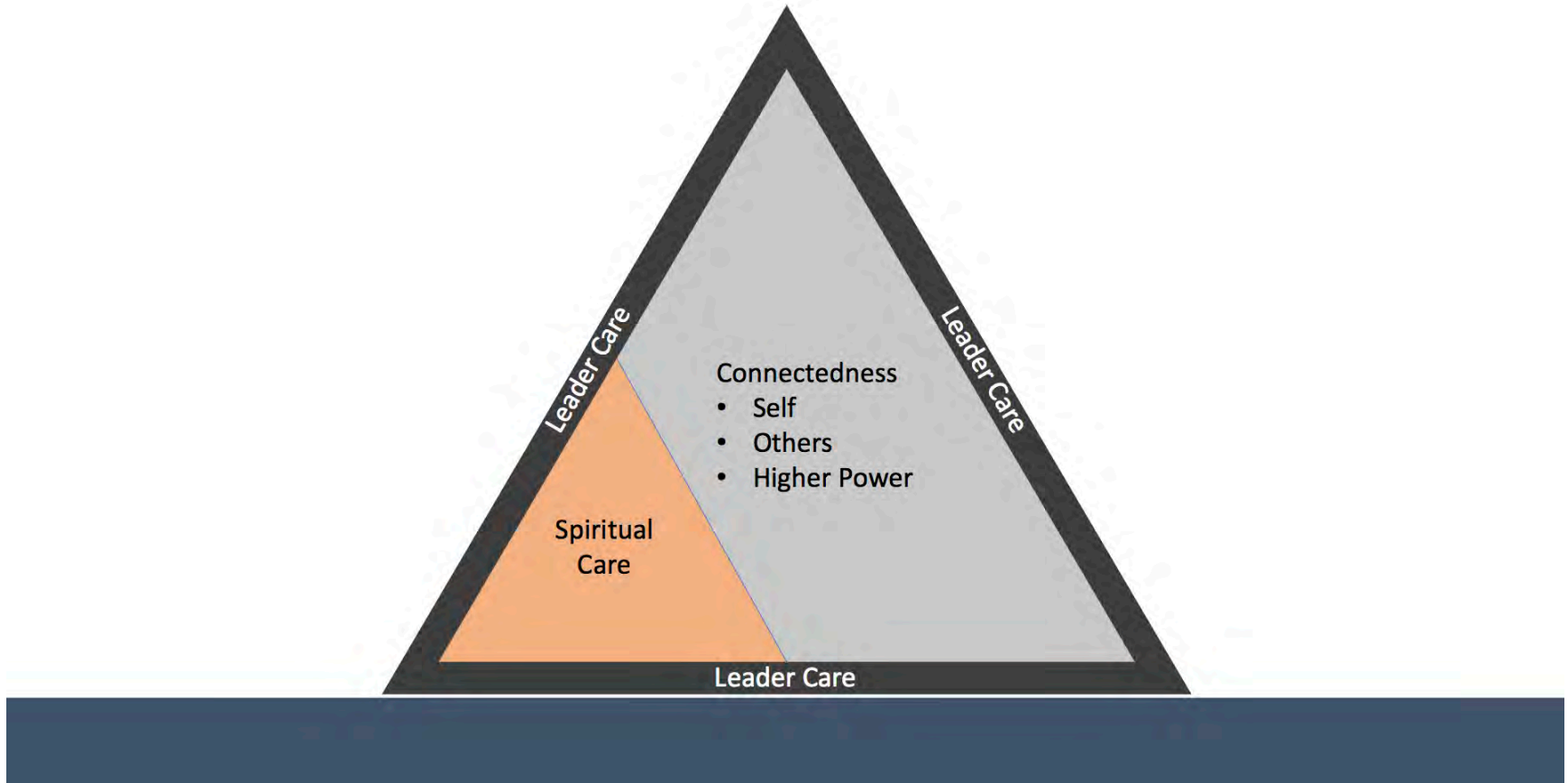














Leader Care: Two Things You Need to Know

1. Achieving your recovery vision is a marathon – Not a sprint.



Leader Care: Two Things You Need to Know

2. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of others.



Journal Reflection

- ❖ How might you better prioritize “taking care” of yourself as the school leader dealing with a disaster?
- ❖ Consider posting on online community in the “Leader Care” forum.



“I have learned the hard way the importance of setting aside time for myself – balancing my own healing needs with the needs of others. Otherwise I might have reached a point where I could no longer play a part in supporting others.”

Summer Olliver, seriously injured group



Effective Communication

Lessons Learned About Keeping Your School Community Engaged Through Recovery

Effective Communication...

- ❖ Builds confidence and “trust”
- ❖ Is intentional/proactive
- ❖ Includes two-way opportunities
 - This is how the leader “reads” the ever-changing context.
- ❖ Promotes a positive school culture
- ❖ Recognizes that perceptions become realities
- ❖ Involves internal and external stakeholders



External Public

- ❖ Any taxpayer
- ❖ Alumni
- ❖ Civic groups
- ❖ Legislators
- ❖ Preschool parents
- ❖ Churches
- ❖ Business/Industry
- ❖ Retirees
- ❖ Media
- ❖ Parent booster groups



Internal Public

- ❖ This public is your school family
- ❖ Ambassadors to the community
- ❖ School boards have to be continually “looped in”

Keeping Your Community Engaged Through Recovery

- ❖ How do school leaders continue to sustain the communication efforts six months after the hurricane?
- ❖ How can social media be leveraged as a positive communication tool?



Action Plan

Current Challenge (Internal/External Stakeholders)	Initial Action to Take	How will I know if the action is making a difference?	Possible Resources Needed	Support Needed from Others	Timeline

Accountability Partners

- ❖ Share with a partner at your table
- ❖ Provide each other feedback



more funny stuff at FUNNYASDUCK.NET



Lessons Learned from Hurricane Harvey

If I knew then what I know now about dealing with a disaster, what would I have done differently?

New Small Groups

- ❖ Move to a new table. Pick a recorder.

Reflect on this question:

- ❖ If I knew then what I know now about preparing for and responding to a disaster, what would I have done differently?
- ❖ Share at your tables.

Group Debrief

- ❖ Reporters share 2-3 “NEW” ideas your group discussed.





Conclusion & Program Evaluations

Recovery Leadership: Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project

Final Reflection

- ❖ Record one key idea you learned from a colleague who is dealing with a current disaster that might be a consideration in your district.
- ❖ Consider posting on the CoP at <https://rems.ed.gov/> on the “Reflections of the Day” forum.
- ❖ Address this question: *What is one idea I learned from a colleague today about dealing with disasters or tragedies?*

Program Evaluation

- ❖ Thanks for your participation.
- ❖ Please complete the evaluation found on your tables.

Recovery Leadership: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Seminar Evaluation

*Thank you for participating in the Leadership Recovery Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project!
Please take a moment to provide some feedback on today's session.*

1. I learned something today that I can apply to my district's recovery efforts. (Please circle one.)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Of the topics we covered today, I want to learn more about ...

3. We did not cover some topics today, I would like information about ...

4. As a result of this workshop, I will take the following next steps to support recovery in my district or facility ...

5. New ideas and tools that I found helpful from this seminar include ...

Thank you for your participation!

For additional information or to receive additional copies of any of the materials, please contact:

CJ Huff

cj.huff@jandmrecoveryteam.org

Josh Barnes

National Coordinator

Health and Social Services RSF

joshua.barnes@hhs.gov



MENTOR BIOS

Recovery Leadership Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project Mentor Bios: Houston ESC

Joan Colvin



Assistant Superintendent (Retired), East Rockaway (NY) School District
516.749.4360 | drjcolvin@juno.com
NCES Enrollment: 1,212 | NCES Type: Suburb/Large
Relevant Experience: Hurricane | Hurricane Sandy

Joan has dedicated more than 40 years to public education. Her experience includes teacher, coach, negotiator, curriculum writer, administrator, and assistant superintendent for business affairs. After retiring as an Assistant Superintendent for Finance from the Jericho School District on Long Island, Joan worked as a consultant for several school districts. When Super Storm Sandy occurred on Long Island the East Rockaway School District reached out to her for assistance in managing the disaster. Joan has become very knowledgeable in the management of the Project Worksheets and has worked closely with many of the FEMA staff. Joan also assisted the Island Park School District with the recordkeeping of their expenditures during the disaster. Joan has developed a worksheet for tracking expenditures by specific project. Joan believes the most important skill for dealing with FEMA to recoup maximum funding for a school district is tenacity.

Phil Cook



Superintendent, Carl Junction (MO) Schools
417.439.7520 | pcook@cj.k12.mo.us
NCES Enrollment: 3,445 | NCES Type: Suburb/Small
Relevant Experience: Tornado/Staff/Student Suicide

In 2003, the Carl Junction community was hit by an F3 tornado. Superintendent Phil Cook led the rebuilding and recovery efforts for the school district. Since his time as superintendent, he has had to address several student deaths, two of which were suicides, and several staff deaths, of which one was a suicide. Carl Junction is a neighbor to Joplin and bore witness to their EF5 tornado disaster from the sidelines. Phil also serves on the board of the Missouri United School Insurance Council, which is a self-insured pool of 475 school district in Missouri.

Frank DeAngelis



Principal (Retired), Columbine HS/Jefferson County (CO) Schools
frankdeangelis1@yahoo.com
NCES Enrollment: 1,690 | NCES Type: Suburb/Large
Relevant Experience: Shooting | Columbine Shooting

Frank DeAngelis served as a staff member at Columbine High School in the Jefferson County School District in Littleton Colorado since 1979. He started as a Social Studies teacher and filled the roles of Head Baseball Coach, Assistant Football Coach, Dean of Students, and Assistant Principal before becoming Principal in 1996. Frank is a Colorado native who has been involved in numerous professional activities

and associations, and has received multiple awards for his teaching, leadership and coaching skills. He has also been called upon to speak about recovery after a school tragedy at a variety of conferences and has assisted as a consultant after a number of other violent school events. He was selected as Colorado High School Principal of the Year and was one of the three finalists for National Principal of the Year. He received the Jefferson County Lifetime Achievement Award and the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Award. He retired in June of 2014 after 35 years at Columbine High School. He presently serves as a consultant for safety and emergency management for the Jefferson County School District in Colorado, and continues to deliver speeches in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Janet Earl



Interim Assistant Director of Special Services, Joplin (MO) School District
417.437.5335 | janetearl@joplinschools.org
NCES Enrollment: 7,700 | NCES Type: City/Midsize
Relevant Experience: Tornado, Mental Health | Joplin MO Tornado

Janet Earl works as Interim Assistant Director of Special Services for Joplin Schools. During her time in Missouri, she experienced several tornadoes, including the EF5 tornado that struck Joplin in May 2011, killing 158 people and causing \$2.8 billion in damages. She coordinated mental health support efforts for Joplin students impacted by the tornado. More recently, she has had to address student mental health. Four students committed suicide in Joplin and Carthage, MO, between August 2017–January 2018. She is working with Joplin’s Department of Student Services to provide support for students affected by the trauma. She helped hire full-time guidance counselors, establish a student mentoring program, and is working to implement Transitions, a mandatory course designed to build relationships between teachers and students, and how to identify signs of mental distress in themselves or others and what to do about it.

James Robinson



Former Superintendent, East Rockaway (NY) School District
516.396.2205 | jrobinson@nasbooces.org
NCES Enrollment: 1,212 | NCES Type: Suburb/Large
Relevant Experience: Hurricane | Hurricane Sandy

James Robinson is the former Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations of the East Rockaway (NY) District. In 2016, he was appointed as Associate Superintendent for Administrative Services for the Nassau BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) Board of Education. He has been tasked to develop new services, programs, and technologies to help meet the needs of partnered school districts. In this position, he plays a key role in capital improvement programs, providing leadership to various programs and acting as liaison to local school district superintendents.

Janet Robinson



Superintendent of Schools, Stratford (CO) Schools
203.385.4209 | robinsonj@stratk12.org
NCES Enrollment: 6,846 | NCES Type: City/Small
Relevant Experience: Shooting | Sandy Hook

Dr. Janet Robinson is Superintendent of Schools for the Stratford School district. She began her career as an educator first as a substitute teacher. She progressed to school psychologist, and then superintendent.

Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project: Mentor Bios

She served as superintendent in Preston, CT, and Derby, CT, before serving a five-year tenure as superintendent for the Newtown district. She has also worked as an educational consultant. In her time at Newtown she experienced the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. In the days after the shooting, she was highly visible in the community, attending memorial services, working to shift Sandy Hook students to elementary schools in Monroe, and working with the community to recover. She received praise for her leadership in the weeks after the shooting during an appearance before a congressional panel and was honored as an outstanding superintendent for 2012 by the University of Connecticut educational alumni association.

Lisa Ruiz



Superintendent, East Rockaway (NY) School District
 516.887.8300 | LRuiz@eastrockawayschools.org
 NCES Enrollment: 1,213 | NCES Type: Suburb/Large
 Relevant Experience: Hurricane | Hurricane Sandy

Lisa Ruiz assumed her position as Superintendent in the East Rockaway Schools 10 months after Superstorm Sandy hit Long Island and devastated the school district and community. The East Rockaway Junior-Senior High School students had returned to the school in April, after a six-month displacement during the extensive repairs, and much remained to be done. Her main responsibility concerning the recovery has been ensuring the district was made financially whole from the almost \$12 million in damage caused by the hurricane and follow up with residual damages undetected and additional complications which arose from the repairs. She worked closely with more than 26 different teams from FEMA to document, submit, and track the expenses relative to the storm. The community also applied for and received over \$5 million in mitigation grants to protect and fortify the district's buildings in the event of another storm. Work on these projects will begin this summer. Additionally, during the past four and a half years, the community continues to have families displaced from their homes from the storm. They provided outreach and support for affected families, particularly during the first two years post Sandy.

Kim Vann



Executive Director, Bright Futures (formerly with Joplin Schools)
 417.434.4887 | kim@brightfuturesusa.org
 NCES Enrollment: n/a | NCES Type: n/a
 Relevant Experience: Tornado | Joplin Tornado

Kim Vann currently serves as the Executive Director of Bright Futures USA, a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing communities together to focus on the success of children. Prior to this, Kim worked as the Executive Director of Communication and Community Development for the Joplin School District. Her wide range of experiences in communications, marketing, and community building prepared her to serve on the leadership team for the district of 1,100 employees and 7,700 students through the recovery effort following the devastating 2011 Joplin tornado. The storm destroyed a third of Joplin, Missouri, including damage and destruction to ten of 19 school buildings and the loss of one staff member and seven students. District leadership was determined to "start school on time," and that effort is credited as a key factor that drew the community together and provided a positive light to rally around in the midst of such tragedy and destruction. On August 17, 2011, Joplin students started the new school year on time. By August 2014, the last of the buildings destroyed by the storm was rebuilt.

ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Action Planning Template

Topic: Effective Communication During/After a Disaster

Current Challenge (Internal/External Stakeholders)	Initial Action to Take	How will I know if the action is making a difference?	Possible Resources Needed	Support Needed from Others	Timeline

HOW MIGHT THE CHALLENGE BE TRANSFORMED INTO AN OPPORTUNITY?

REMS TA COP FLYER

The New REMS TA Center Community of Practice —Join Today!

A virtual space for schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, and their community partners to collaborate on special projects, share news and resources, discuss trends and ideas, and learn from the experiences of others in the field.



Join the Community

Visit the REMS TA Center Website at <http://rems.ed.gov/COP/Default.aspx> to register and join.

Start a Topic and Encourage Your Colleagues to Join the Conversation

Do you have a forum topic or group name in mind that's not listed? Email a proposed name and purpose of your group for consideration to info@remstacenter.org.



Share our Web and Email Signature Banners

Help us build the community by posting the banners to your Website or inserting them into your email signature. Download our banners and instructions for hyperlinking at <http://rems.ed.gov/banners.aspx>.



Become a Community Steward

Community Stewards are experts on a particular topic who are interested in leading Web chats. Do you think you qualify? Fill out our Subject Matter Expert Form at <http://remstacenter.org/experts/new/expertsubmission.aspx> and we'll be in touch within 7 business days.



1-855-781-REMS [7367]

<http://rems.ed.gov>

info@remstacenter.org

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Recovery Leadership: Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project Program Evaluation

*Thank you for participating in the Leadership Recovery Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project!
Please take a moment to provide some feedback on today's session.*

1. I learned something today that I can apply to my district's recovery efforts. (Please circle one.)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Of the topics we covered today, I want to learn more about ...

3. We did not cover some topics today; I would like information about ...

4. As a result of this workshop, I will take the following next steps to support recovery in my district or facility ...

5. New ideas and tools that I found helpful from this seminar include ...

Leadership Recovery Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project: Program Evaluation

6. I would like to maintain ongoing contact with the mentors. (Please circle one.)

Yes No

7. I would like to serve as a mentor to others in future disasters/crisis. (Please circle one.)

Yes No

If yes, please provide your name and contact information either on this form or to a member of the facilitation team.

8. Based on what I learned today, I would like to be better connected with the following federal, state, or local agencies:

9. As you reflect on the day, please provide any additional comments, suggestions, or insights.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix C: Acronyms

AASA	American Association of School Administrators
ADHD	Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
CCP	Crisis Counseling Program
COG	Council of Government
CoP	Community of Practice
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
ESC	Education Service Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
HSS	Health and Social Services
ISD	Independent School District
LMHA	Local Mental Health Authorities
NCTSN	National Child Trauma Stress Network
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
REMS	Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
REMS TA	Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center
RSF	Recovery Support Function
RSP	Regular Service Program
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TDEM	Texas Division of Emergency Management
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Appendix D: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Seminar Evaluation Summary

Evaluation surveys were received by 20 out of 53 participants. This provides an overview of their feedback on the peer-to-peer mentoring seminar.

- ◆ 15 out of 20 'Strongly Agree' that they learned something they can apply to their district's recovery efforts, and three selected 'Agree'
- ◆ Common responses for "Of the topics we covered today, I want to learn more about..."
 - Mental health
 - School safety procedures
 - Media
 - FEMA
- ◆ Responses for "We did not cover some topics today; I would like information about..."
 - Communication
 - More insight from mentors
 - Safety in active shooter scenarios
 - Mental Health First Aid
- ◆ Common responses for "As a result of this workshop, I will take the following next steps to support recovery in my district or facility..."
 - Self-care
 - Improve communication, especially with staff
 - Review plans for response/recovery
- ◆ Common responses for "New ideas and tools that I found helpful from this seminar..."
 - Insight from the mentor panel
 - Self-care
 - Communication
- ◆ 18 out of 20 said they would like to continue contact with mentors [all others left blank]
- ◆ 5 out of 20 said they would like to serve as a mentor in the future
- ◆ Responses for "Based on what I learned today, I would like to be better connected with the following federal, state, or local agencies:" were mental health. (Only three people completed this question.)
- ◆ Overall, mental health and communication were the running themes in the evaluations. The workshop as a whole was well-received and seemed beneficial in some way for most.