



**CBHA**  
CALIFORNIA BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION

# Wildfire Resource Guide

*This wildfire guide is brought to you by CBHA and the office of Assemblymember Harabedian.*

# Message from our CEO

The Southern California Wildfires have had a profound impact on our communities, disrupting lives, displacing families, and straining the essential services that behavioral health providers and other nonprofits offer. In the wake of these disasters, we have heard from many of our member agencies about the unique challenges they have faced—and the innovative solutions they have implemented to continue supporting those in need.

At CBHA, we recognize the critical role that behavioral health providers and human services nonprofits play in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. This guide is a reflection of our commitment to equipping our community with practical tools, shared experiences, and vital resources to navigate the complexities of wildfire-related disruptions.

By compiling best practices, funding opportunities, and real-world insights from those who have faced these challenges firsthand, we hope to strengthen the resilience of organizations like yours. Together, we can ensure that behavioral health services remain accessible and effective in times of crisis.

We are deeply grateful to our members who, despite the immense stress of managing their own agencies during the wildfires, took the time to assist us in compiling critical data and resources. Your dedication and collaboration ensure that our collective response remains strong and effective in supporting those in need.

Finally, we want to extend our gratitude to the first responders who work tirelessly to protect lives, homes, and communities during these disasters. By learning from those who have faced these crises before, our hope is that organizations can better prepare, respond, and recover from wildfire disasters.

Sincerely,



Dr. Le Ondra Clark Harvey Ph.D.



# The Impact of Wildfires on Behavioral Health Providers

The Los Angeles region wildfires had a devastating impact on individuals, communities, and the organizations that serve them. This guide is designed to support behavioral health providers and nonprofits as they navigate wildfire preparedness, response, and recovery. It compiles insights and feedback from member agencies that have experienced wildfires firsthand, offering practical strategies, funding resources, and best practices for continuing services during and after a disaster.



## Recent data from our member agencies highlights the significant impact of wildfires on behavioral health services:

- 50% of our members provide services in Southern California.
- Half of those are located in the Los Angeles metro area.
- 71% reported that staff experienced property damage or loss.
- 30% reported that clients experienced property damage or loss.
- 43% reported a disruption of services due to wildfires.

These statistics underscore the importance of preparation, crisis response, and recovery planning to ensure continuity of care for both clients and staff. The resources in this guide are designed to help behavioral health providers mitigate wildfire-related risks and sustain their services.

# Emergency Preparedness & Response

## Creating a Wildfire Emergency Plan

- Identify key risks and vulnerabilities specific to your region.
- Develop an evacuation plan that prioritizes client and staff safety.
- Establish roles and responsibilities for staff members during an emergency.
- Maintain an emergency supply kit with medications, client records, and essential documents.

## Evacuation Procedures & Safety Protocols

- Ensure all staff are trained on evacuation routes and shelter locations.
- Develop protocols for assisting individuals with disabilities and those needing additional support.
- Establish a system for tracking staff and clients during evacuations.

## Crisis Communication Strategies

- Develop a communication plan that includes emergency contacts, phone trees, and backup methods for connectivity.
- Use social media and text alerts to provide real-time updates to staff and clients.
- Coordinate with local emergency response agencies to ensure consistent messaging.



The following resources provide valuable frameworks and templates for developing emergency response and recovery plans:

- [Disaster Planning Handbook for Behavioral Health Service Programs](#) – A comprehensive guide from SAMHSA that offers detailed instructions for creating disaster plans specific to behavioral health services.
- [California Disaster Behavioral Health Plan \(2020\)](#) – Outlines strategies for disaster behavioral health response in California, including actions across different emergency management phases.
- [Disaster Behavioral Health Planners Resource Portal](#) – A collection of resources from SAMHSA to aid in all aspects of disaster behavioral health planning.

# Community Strength in the Face of Wildfires

The recovery journey of our members has been marked by resilience, collaboration, and a strong sense of community. Through a wildfire recovery survey sent to our members, we received inspiring stories of perseverance and collective action. One standout example comes from Hillside, which faced devastating losses yet emerged stronger through innovative problem-solving and community support. Through their survey responses, they shared their most important .



## Biggest Challenges in the Initial Recovery Phase

- Staff members experienced significant stress and trauma, making it difficult to maintain normal operations.
- Employees were unable to return to work due to personal recovery needs, relocation, or uncertainty about housing.
- Communication breakdowns and challenges in maintaining contact with staff who were displaced or relocated.
- Difficulty in securing housing, transportation, and other resources for staff to continue their work.
- Staff faced financial hardship, impacting their ability to focus on work.
- Limited access to short-term housing, financial assistance, or mental health support for staff in need.

**“We immediately created a staff wildfire relief plan and asked donors, volunteers, vendors and board members to donate to our staff. We also asked for basic necessities for our staff. We received \$70K and a ton of clothing, toiletries and furniture. We also increased PTO to an extra 40 hours for all affected staff. We also opened up a cottage for staff to use to sleep in and/or do laundry and get meals. Maryvale reached out and offered up 40 empty beds if staff needed. Vista Del Mar offered emergency supplies. Many other organizations reached out to ask how we were.”**

- Stacey Roth, CEO Hillside

## Lessons Learned & Best Practices

- Through this experience, Hillside identified key strategies that can help other behavioral health providers in future wildfire recovery efforts:
- **Establish Mutual Aid Networks:** Building relationships with peer organizations before disaster strikes ensures access to shared resources and support.
- **Prioritize Staff Well-Being:** Supporting employees through trauma-informed practices enhances their ability to serve clients effectively.
- **Utilize Flexible Service Models:** Expanding telehealth services and mobile outreach can bridge gaps in care when facilities are inaccessible.
- **Engage the Community:** Encouraging community participation fosters a sense of unity and resilience in the aftermath of a disaster.



# Community Strength in the Face of Wildfires



“We at Pacific Clinics are a culture of caring. It is about teamwork, community and mutual support. It is about caring for each and those in need. It’s about our core service delivery principles and who we are as an agency. Our initial steps to recovery began with creating funding source for our employees and clients. We then created workgroup committees and allowed staff to donate PTO to others, it was important to implement flexible policies” says Pacific Clinics’ Chief Executive Officer/President Kathy McCarthy “I’m proud we’re in this together.”



# CBHA in Action

Assemblymember John Harabedian (D-Pasadena) and Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) announced legislation to support the behavioral health needs and wellness of Los Angeles and California residents affected by wildfires.



***“CBHA understands that recovery isn’t just about rebuilding what was lost, but healing what remains. Their work is vital, especially in crises like wildfires, where trauma lingers long after the flames die down. That’s why I will continue to fight for legislation like AB 1032—to make sure Californians facing these disasters aren’t left to carry the emotional burden alone.” – Assemblymember John Harabedian***

[Click here to view the story\\_](#)

# Recovery Resource Links

## Personal Resources

### Free Mental Health Resources:

- [Pro Bono therapy](#)
- [Mental Health and Stress After An Emergency \(LACDMH/DPH\)](#)
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at **800-985-5990**
- [CalHOPE Warmline](#) at **833-317-4673**
- [Crisis Text Line](#) by texting **LA** to **741741**

## Financial Recovery Resources

- [FEMA](#) (Deadline extended to March 31st)
- [Taxes](#)
- [Insurance](#)

## Property Resources

- [Debris Removal by US Army Corps of Engineers](#)
- [LA County Permits for rebuilding](#)

## Business Resources

- [Physical Property Damage Assistance](#)
- [Economic Injury Disaster Loans](#)
- [Free Shared Business Space](#)
- [CDP- California Wildfires Recovery Fund](#)



# Behavioral Health Support During & After Wildfires

## Addressing Trauma & Stress

- Recognize common psychological responses to wildfires, including anxiety, PTSD, and grief.
- Provide immediate emotional support through psychological first aid and crisis counseling.
- Encourage trauma-informed care approaches to support clients effectively.

## Crisis Intervention & Mental Health First Aid

- Train staff in de-escalation techniques and crisis response strategies.
- Offer immediate counseling services via telehealth or in-person crisis teams.
- Provide referrals to long-term mental health support for clients experiencing ongoing distress.

## Self-Care for Providers & Staff

- Promote mindfulness and stress management techniques among staff.
- Implement peer support groups or access to mental health services for employees.
- Encourage breaks and workload adjustments to prevent burnout.

## Culturally Responsive Disaster Response

- Ensure services are accessible to diverse populations, including non-English speakers and undocumented individuals.
- Partner with cultural organizations to provide trusted support within affected communities.
- Respect cultural differences in coping mechanisms and recovery processes.



# Supporting a Child Through a Disaster

Experiencing a disaster can have a significant emotional impact on children and young people. This resource offers 5 tools to guide parents and guardians in helping a child adapt to relocation and providing emotional support to foster resilience.

1

## Remain Reassuring

Children look to adults for cues for how they should feel. As challenging as it may be, try to maintain a soothing tone to create safety for them and offer extra comfort. Recognize the loss, but emphasize efforts to rebuild and recover. Remind the child that adults are here to take care of them.



2

## Encourage Expression and Feelings

Help the child process their experience through play, drawing, and telling stories. Allow them to share their feelings - without forcing them to discuss the disaster. Listen and emphasize that their reactions are normal.



3

## Self-Care as Adults

Take your own time to take care of yourself so you can address your own responses as much as you can by talking to other adults. Try to avoid conversations about serious concerns in front of the child. Limit exposure to the news and media (*especially for the child*).



4

## Family Time & Peer Support

Prioritize spending quality time with family and peers where the child can enjoy games, tell stories, and experience normalcy. Children who have strong support become more adaptable during times of distress.



5

## Monitor & Seek Help When Needed

With support systems, children are often resilient and adaptable, even during disasters. Watch for prolonged distress, but know that regression can be a normal stress response. If symptoms worsen or persist beyond two weeks, seek professional guidance.



West Valley  
Counseling  
Center

A Non-Profit Corporation

Needing additional support for you or your child? We are here.

**24/7 Support: 1-800-985-5990**

# For Complimentary App Access, Contact CBHA



## Like physical therapy for your brain

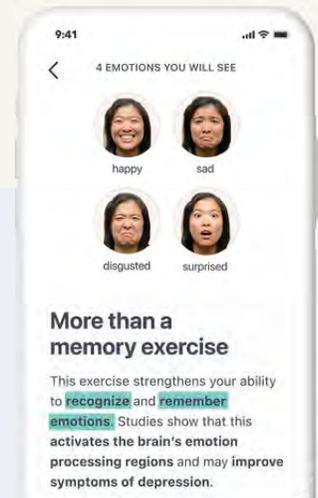
In depression, the feeling and thinking parts of the brain struggle to communicate, making it harder to process emotions. Over time, repeating the proven brain-training exercise in Rejoyn may help strengthen their connection.

### Proven brain-training exercise

- ▶ Helps strengthen the connection between the thinking and feeling parts of the brain
- ▶ Helps the brain process emotions, which may reduce depression symptoms

### Short skills-based therapy lessons

- ▶ Help you learn strategies for handling strong emotions, reframing negative thinking, and taking positive action



## Rejoyn has built-in support

- ▶ Receive motivating texts and helpful in-app messages
- ▶ Sign up for nurse support during your 6-week treatment
- ▶ Have questions? Call 1-833-Y-REJOYN (1-833-973-5696). Available Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 8 PM ET, excluding holidays



Scan here to get a discount code for Rejoyn

✓ HSA/FSA Eligible

## How to get Rejoyn

Rejoyn is an app that's prescribed like a pill.

There are two ways to get it:



### Option 1

**Talk to your healthcare provider** to find out if it's right for you.



### Option 2

**Start a virtual consult** with Wheel, a telehealth provider, via a link at RejoynNow.com. The cost of the consult is \$29. If Rejoyn is appropriate for you, you can get a prescription—all from home.

FSA=flexible spending account; HSA=health savings account.

**SAFETY INFORMATION:** Rejoyn cannot send alerts or warnings to your healthcare provider. If you feel that your depression symptoms are worsening or if you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, contact your healthcare provider, dial 911, or go to the nearest emergency room immediately.

**See Indication and additional Safety Information on the front and the Patient Instructions for Use at Rejoyn.com/IFU.**



The Apple logo is a trademark of Apple Inc., registered in the United States and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc., registered in the United States and other countries. Google Play and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google LLC.



Otsuka Precision Health, Inc.

© 2025 Otsuka Precision Health, Inc. All rights reserved.

February 2025

20US25EBC0022

# IT Emergency Response

Recovering from a catastrophic event requires a comprehensive approach:

## 1. Assessment and Evaluation

- Inspect hardware for fire and water damage
- Determine extent of data loss
- Review backup options and cloud service accessibility

## 2. Prioritization and Recovery

- Restore network infrastructure and connectivity
- Implement temporary solutions to maintain operations
- Rebuild systems based on business priorities (finance, EHR, communication)

## 3. Long-term Rebuilding

- Upgrade to disaster-resilient systems
- Enhance backup protocols and redundancy measures
- Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure



### If your organization needs assistance with:

- · Disaster recovery planning
- · Network infrastructure rebuilding
- · Cybersecurity management
- · Cloud system implementation and management
- · Break-fix Support - Helpdesk

**Contact:** Garrett Fischer at [garrett.fischer@kvps.com](mailto:garrett.fischer@kvps.com)



# Join Our Network – Strengthen Our Collective Impact

Wildfires and other crises remind us of the importance of connection, collaboration, and preparedness. By joining our association, you'll gain access to a strong network of peers, advocacy efforts, and resources designed to help you navigate challenges and expand your impact

## Become a Member Today!

- **Stay informed on critical policy updates and funding changes.**
- **Access exclusive training, networking events, and member-only resources.**
- **Connect with a supportive community of behavioral health leaders.**

To learn more about the work we're doing please visit our [website](#).



To become a member or sponsor, please contact:  
Catey McSweeney,  
cmcsweeney@calbha.org