



Orlando, Florida one year later.

Lessons learned. We are stronger now. Orlando Strong.

One year ago, the world was shook by the Orlando, FL Pulse nightclub shooting, when 49 people lost their lives. It is natural to assume that mental health professionals trained in EMDR therapy can be key to the recovery. While this is true, sometimes it is a challenge to link these vital recovery services to the community, especially in times of disaster.

Cherilyn Rowland-Petrie, LMHC, Coordinator of the Orlando Trauma Recovery Network (TRN) explains, "After a tragedy the size and significance of the Pulse nightclub shootings, a lot of people and organizations come forward to offer their help. And that's a good thing. Yet the sheer number of organizations and individuals coming forward makes it difficult for the response community to process and evaluate the merits of each organization. In this case, the community at large, first responders, families and the Latin LGBT community were all deeply affected and needed help. At the time of a big trauma like we saw in Orlando, if people don't already understand how you can be helpful, it is difficult to connect in any meaningful way."

She explained that the Greater Orlando TRN is part of Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs. Trauma Recovery/HAP has developed 40 TRN associations over the past ten years, throughout the United States. Lately, there has even been interest in taking this model overseas.

Cherilyn continued, "We learned so much and we are much stronger as a TRN now, but I have some recommendations based on this experience. First, each TRN needs to spend

time building an organization before tragedy strikes. It is difficult to convey the amount of time I spent addressing this in the months following the Pulse tragedy. That's not a complaint, but my work and family commitments continued along too, as this process unfolded. If you have a core team and processes in place, it will benefit everyone."

When TRN associations work to make communication and meetings more regular, it makes for easier organization during times of need. Trauma Recovery/HAP provides an email for each TRN association that is used for coordinators to reach out to their membership in addition to their community. Regularly active TRN associations have been able to organize pre disaster to hold conferences, attend events and work with other local response groups to further their efforts.

"Second, make sure your TRN and EMDR concepts are familiar to first responders. Once they realize what we do, they are grateful for the help. But until then, we are just more noise", Cherilyn noted. TRN associations need to spend time in community organization activities to build relations and familiarize themselves with their community structure. When this is done, associations are prepared with more EMDR therapy trained clinicians to volunteer for victim care and prove to be better organized to effectively respond to community needs.

Cherilyn continued "And finally, it is important to connect with the affected community. In our case, for example, most of the victims were part of the Latin LGBT community. We offered training specifically for mental health professionals already serving that community. These mental health professionals were then able to put their new training into practice almost immediately, and with tremendously positive effect."

The Orlando TRN, with the help of Trauma Recovery HAP, sponsored a Part I and Part II training in EMDR therapy. Each participant was actively interviewed by a TRN volunteer before the training and were asked for a commitment to join the Orlando TRN and to provide pro bono EMDR therapy for victims and first responders. This was effective and helped them to quickly provide EMDR therapy to many victims.

There was also a series of specialty follow-up trainings through Trauma Recovery/HAP to provide support and advanced trauma treatment skills to the members of the local TRN. The first training was a no-fee study group held just days after the shooting led by Bill Brislin, LMHC as a Recent

Traumatic Episode Protocol (R-TEP) refresher. This was followed shortly after by a full R-TEP and Group Traumatic Episode Protocol (G-TEP) training with Bill Brislin and Larry Shriner, MA. Then in the fall, Donald F. deGraffenried, Outreach and Community Director of Trauma Recovery/HAP, taught “EMDR Therapy with Crime Victims and Survivors of Homicide”. The trainers were honored to provide these specialty trainings for clinicians providing pro bono treatment to such a large group of individuals who were traumatized by the violence at the Pulse Night Club.

These efforts were a result of the Greater Orlando TRN leadership and membership quickly coming together with the support of Trauma Recovery/HAP. We provide as much guidance, financial and logistical support as possible, but it takes a local driving force to be able to help their community in its time of need. Being an active part of the local community makes the difference. Cherilyn concludes, “I am so proud of the work our community volunteer mental health professionals have done. And I’m encouraged by the progress we’ve made. I would simply encourage TRN’s across the country to do the outreach and organization now, before tragedy strikes. The EMDR skills we have are so important to helping communities heal after a disaster - we have to do all we can to be sure that we are called upon when we are needed most.”