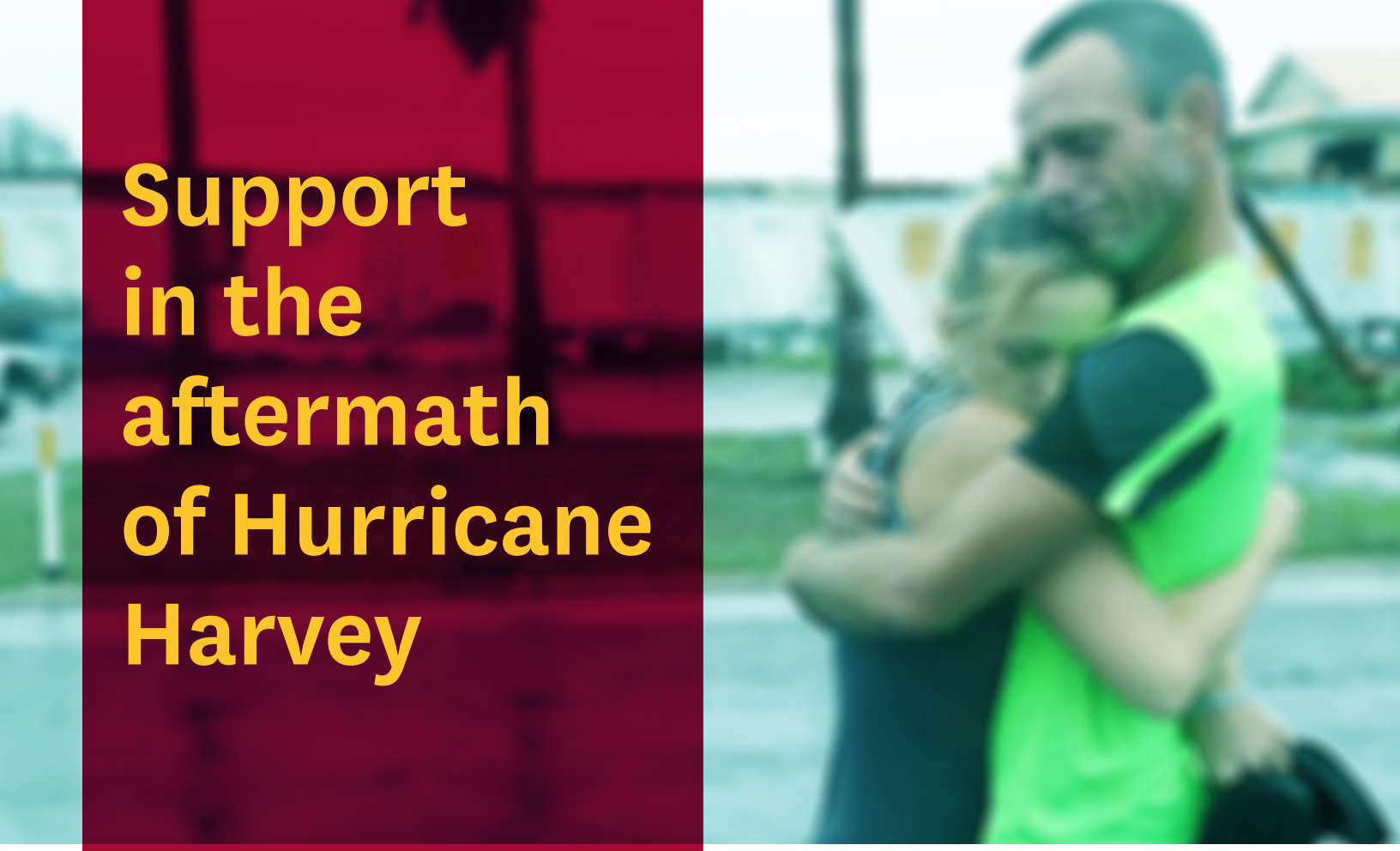


Support in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey

SUPPORT THROUGH SCHOOLS

As communities begin what is likely to be a long recovery process from Hurricane Harvey, the special needs of children whose families may have suffered significant losses should be considered. This may include the loss of precious human life or personal property, as well some which are less tangible such as the loss of community or peers (if relocation is required) or the loss of family routines.

School professionals can play a critical role in supporting children both in the immediate aftermath of this crisis or throughout the recovery period as they cope with their losses. The circumstances of each individual child and their family will be different, but all children will share the common experience of the disruption caused by this disaster. School professionals should offer students ongoing understanding and support that can help them make sense of their experiences and stay productive and positive in their lives.

This can be accomplished by:

1. Decreasing their sense of isolation by encouraging discussion among students.
2. Re-establishing routines (with adequate accommodations to help children who are not yet ready to resume the academic demands that they met before the storm) which help children feel more secure.
3. Making appropriate adjustments to their class work to help them stay on course academically so children have a sense they are still building toward their futures.
4. Increasing the likelihood that children will talk with their families by initiating conversations within the school, where school professionals can serve as role models and share positive coping strategies.

(Continued)

5. Facilitating support among peers through classroom discussions and availability for one-on-one conversations.

6. Attentively listening to each child so that challenges facing children and their families can be identified early and referrals, as appropriate, made for additional support.

7. Working with students so that they can identify ways they can be personally involved in helping others, which may decrease their sense of helplessness and powerlessness.

8. Remaining sensitive to situations that may trigger distress, such as future severe weather.

Teachers and other school staff in these communities are likely to be at least as impacted as many of the students. It is therefore important that the adults practice professional self-care and provide support to their peers. While it may be especially difficult to provide such support when the staff themselves are impacted as well, it can also be deeply gratifying and rewarding to be able to help children at a time of great need.

RESOURCES

- *More detailed information on how to provide psychosocial support to children after a disaster released by the American Academy of Pediatrics can be found at schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/aap-guidelines-support-disaster/. Although written for pediatricians, it is applicable for other professionals, including those in school settings.*

- *Additional free educational resources can be viewed or downloaded from the Center's website, including: a psychological first aid booklet for natural disasters at schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-natural-disaster/; and a psychological first aid booklet for teachers at schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-students-teachers/.*

- *Other material can be found on the website for the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement – Get Help Now.*

- *For those children who are grieving the death of a family member or friend, extensive free video and print materials developed by the* **Coalition to Support Grieving Students** *are available at www.grievingstudents.org.*

The **National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB)**, located at the University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak-Peck of Social Work, is dedicated to helping schools support children at times of crisis and loss. The NCSCB provides free technical assistance and training to schools and communities responding to major crisis events, with a focus on supporting their students and staff—both on the short-term as well as throughout the recovery period. The Center has assisted communities and schools after natural disasters, including Hurricanes Katrina in New Orleans and Ike in Galveston; Superstorm Sandy in NJ and NY; after the tornadoes in Joplin, MO and Alabama; the recent wildfires in the Great Smoky Mountains; and the 8.0-magnitude earthquake in Sichuan, China. The NCSCB has also assisted many schools impacted by school and community shootings, providing consultation and advice to schools at no charge by phone or in-person through on-site visits.

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