



A Disaster Response Law & Policy Center

Mental Health Symptom Checklist for Camp Residents and Volunteers

Please note: that many of the following signs and symptoms are expected in high trauma scenarios, such as in natural disasters; it is only when the symptoms become more severe or intrusively persistent that they are problematic.

Post (Primary)- Traumatic Stress Symptoms¹

1. Person was exposed to traumatic event (witnessed, experienced, confronted with events that involved or threatened death, serious bodily injury, or serious threat of physical integrity to self or others. Typically response at this time is of fear, helplessness, or horror but note that in children this may be expressed by what looks like disorganized or distressed behavior.
2. Reliving (persistent re-experiencing) the event through **1 or more** of the following ways:
 - a. Recollections (recurrent, intrusive thoughts). In children look for repetitive play in which aspects of the traumatic event are played out.
 - b. Recurrent and distressing dreams. In children there may be an increase in frightening dreams without understandable content.
 - c. Sudden feeling of event is recurring, sense of reliving the event. In children trauma-specific reenactment may occur.
 - d. Distress from reminders and cues (both internal and external)
 - e. Physiological reactivity to cues (both internal and external)
3. Avoidance of things related to the trauma and Numbing of general responsiveness in **3 or more** ways:
 - a. Effort to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations.
 - b. Effort to avoid activities, situations, people. Especially those that remind you of the event.
 - c. Inability to remember recent activities or events related to the trauma.
 - d. Markedly diminished interest or participation in activities
 - e. Feeling detached or estranged from others
 - f. Restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings)
 - g. Sense of foreshortened future
4. Increased Arousal in **2 or more** ways:
 - a. Difficulty staying or falling asleep
 - b. Irritability or outbursts of anger
 - c. Difficulty concentrating
 - d. Hypervigilance
 - e. Exaggerated startle response
5. Duration of above symptoms is greater than 1 month
6. Causes significant distress and impairment in functioning

Depression¹

Many of the signs and symptoms of depression are similar to the ones listed above. But in addition to the above keep an eye out for sudden losses or increases in appetite, sudden weight loss or gain, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and/ or recurrent thoughts of death.

Compassion Fatigue/ Secondary Stress Disorder²

The signs and symptoms of volunteers and caregivers are similar to those that were directly impacted. Symptoms often times have a rapid onset and may seem disconnected from real causes.

¹ Content summarized from: American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text revision). Washington, DC: Author.

² Content summarized from: Figley, C. R. ed (1995). *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in those who Treat the traumatized*. Brunner-Routledge Publishers.