

# New York DMH Responder

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Office of **Health Emergency Preparedness**

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**The DMH Responder**  
is a quarterly production of...

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## Welcome

Welcome to the Winter 2014 issue of the New York DMH Responder, our quarterly newsletter for the Disaster Mental Health community. Our focus this month is on technology and communications. Most of the issue is dedicated to a round-up of more than a dozen apps that can improve our disaster preparedness and response.

Communicating with the public before, during, and after disasters is also the topic of this April's Institute for Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz conference, described in this issue. And, to understand the personal impact of communications technologies, our Research Corner looks at lessons DMH helpers can learn from research on the role of maintaining contact with home among deployed military personnel.

As always, your feedback and suggestions for topics to cover in future issues are welcome; please email any comments to Judith LeComb at DOH or Steve Moskowitz at OMH.

**"We cannot live only for ourselves.  
A thousand fibers connect us with our  
fellow men."**

– Herman Melville

## Technology Round-Up: Apps for DMH Responders

Anyone in possession of a smartphone or tablet knows there's been a virtual explosion of apps released to address every possible need – including many needs we never actually knew we had! There are a growing number of free or inexpensive tools that may be useful for DMH responders. Some are mental health specific, including a number of apps that

will remind you of key Psychological First Aid and self-care actions you can take during a response. Others are intended to encourage emergency preparedness among members of the public, so they may be useful to recommend to clients and patients. We hope you'll find these recommendations useful in the field.

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## Research Brief:

# Family Communications during Deployment

Standard advice for disaster responders during deployment to a distant location is to be sure to stay in touch with family and friends and the increased number of communications technologies (cell phones, texting, Skype, etc.) makes that easier than ever. However, is it possible that frequent contact with home isn't always the best form of self-care? There doesn't appear to be any research on this question for disaster responders but some lessons can be drawn from research on military personnel who receive similar advice about maintaining regular contact. To be sure, the stressors faced by military families who may be separated for months and who know the service person may be in danger are significantly more intense than those involved in a disaster response of a few days or weeks but some of the same dynamics apply.

In a summary of research on service member's mental health and occupational effectiveness, Greene et al. (2010) describe communications with home as a "double-edged sword." Having regular contact with family can boost morale and reduce isolation and can ease the stress of separation. However, several factors were found that actually increased stress and distracted the service person from his or her duties. The biggest issue was hearing about problems at home: "Easy access increases the immediacy and proximity to negative events at home for deployed troops while highlighting the limited ability that troops have to

problem solve or provide effective support because of their physical distance from home" (p. 747). On the other hand, some personnel reported increased stress when they returned home and learned that news about family problems had been withheld from them so there's no simple solution to that particular issue.

Other concerns may be more specific to the family members at home who may not have a realistic sense of the deployed person's available time or access to

communications technology. Ironically, the modern expectation that we can always be in touch can increase stress if someone doesn't respond immediately because they're otherwise occupied or technology isn't functioning. As Greene et al. say, "The mismatch between expectations and reality can lead to a great deal of frustration and distress, for both the service member and their family" (p. 746).

So, while technologies that increase a deployed person's

contact with home appear to be largely positive there are potential drawbacks that DMH helpers should be aware of when preparing to deploy to a distant disaster or even to engage in an intense response in their own community. Perhaps the best lesson from the research on military personnel is to communicate in advance with family members to set realistic expectations about how much access they will have to you and to agree on a policy about how much news to share and what can wait until your return.



### Source:

Greene, T., Buckman, J., Dandeker, C., & Greenberg, N. (2010). How communication with families can both help and hinder service members' mental health and occupational effectiveness on deployment. *Military Medicine*, 175, 745-749.

## Psychological First Aid and Other Clinical Tools



### PFA Mobile

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Useful for those using Psychological First Aid in the field PFA Mobile offers interventions, tips and other resources to support responders. Developed by the VA's National Center for PTSD, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, and DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, this app has an incredible breadth of information.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nctsn.pfa.mobile>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pfa-mobile/id551079424?mt=8>



### SAMHSA Disaster App

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, Blackberry (Coming Soon) iOS**

This app was mentioned in the last Fall 2013 issue of the DMH Responder. Now that it has been released we can share with confidence its utility as a disaster mental health tool. With the ability to access and easily share important information such as tip sheets for survivors, how to get them support, coping information and pre- and post-deployment resources for the responder, this app is a true must-have for any responder in the field.

Download at:

- <http://store.samhsa.gov/apps/disaster/>



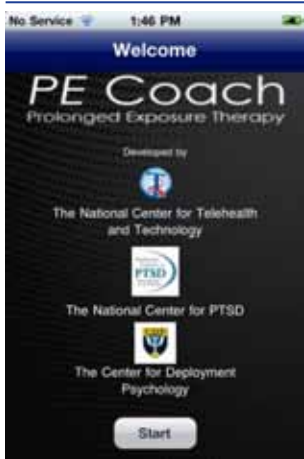
### Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

This app from University of Minnesota Public Health allows the user to review the core components of PFA, promoting safety, calm, connectedness and self-empowerment. This app comes complete with information about the common reactions to traumatic events, when to refer someone to a mental health provider and practice scenarios to test the user's knowledge.

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.umnsph.pfa>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/psychological-first-aid-pfa/id551424464?ls=1&mt=8>



### PE Coach

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

For clinicians working with clients in a long term setting Prolonged Exposure (PE) is a highly recommended, evidence-based psychotherapy treatment for PTSD. PE Coach was designed as a tool for clinicians and their clients to maintain treatment goals.

\*Please note: This is not a training tool in Prolonged Exposure therapy; clinicians should seek training in this model before attempting to use this therapy and app with a client.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.t2health.pe>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pe-coach/id507357193>



### Tactical Breather

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Another app created by the The National Center for Telehealth and Technology Tactical Breather is an app that allows the user to practice breathing in a way that lowers their arousal levels. Useful in both disaster and other clinical settings to help an individual maintain calm.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=t2.tacticalBreather&hl=en>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/app/tactical-breather/id445893881?amp%3Bmt=8&mt=8>

## Self-Care



### Responder Self Care

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Released by University of Minnesota School of Public Health Responder Self Care helps you keep track of your wellness as you respond to a disaster. From the app's description: "This mobile app aids those deployed to emergency response events in maintaining their own physical, emotional, and social well-being". It provides checklists for before, during, and after deployment that help responders pack for deployment, take care of daily needs, maintain important relationships, reflect on experiences, and more."

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.umn.umnsc>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/responder-self-care/id708390024?mt=8>



### Provider Resilience

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

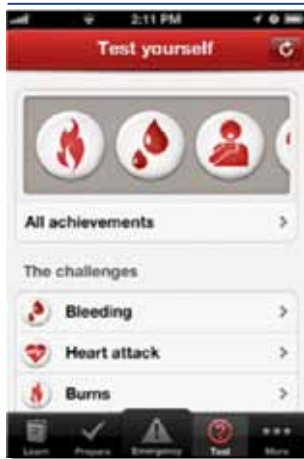
Offered by the National Center for Telehealth and Technology Provider Resilience allows you to assess your burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue in a quick and easy app. Provider Resilience also allows you to keep track of how long it's been since you've had a day off and can give you tips on coping and maintaining compassion satisfaction.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.t2.pr&hl=en>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/provider-resilience/id559806962?mt=8>



## Emergency Preparedness: For You and Your Clients



### American Red Cross Apps

Price: Free to \$.99

Platforms: Android, iOS

The American Red Cross has put out a series of apps related to preparedness and recovery. Use these for your own needs or refer clients and survivors to them!

- First Aid
- Pet First Aid
- Hurricane
- Tornado
- Earthquake
- Wildfire

For a full list of American Red Cross apps and instructions on how to download them, visit:

- <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/mobile-apps>



### FEMA App

Price: Free

Platforms: Android, Blackberry, iOS

FEMA's disaster app has a tool for building an emergency kit, general tips on how to prepare for disasters and information for affected individuals on how and where to apply for assistance. This app is another that can be both useful to you in the field and for survivors.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.fema.mobile.android>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fema/id474807486?ls=1&mt=8>
- <http://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore/vendor/18869/?countrycode=US&lang=en>



### Pocket First Aid & CPR

Price: \$1.99

Platforms: Android, iOS

Released by the American Heart Association this guide provides you with step-by-step information about how to perform CPR and other basic first aid. From an emergency preparedness perspective this app also provides the user a place to store medical information for themselves and family members and can place wallpaper on their phone that tells medical personnel where to find information about allergies, pre-existing health conditions and emergency contact numbers.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=me.jive.firstaid>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pocket-first-aid-cpr-from/id294351164>

## Information Tracking



### iAlertz

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **iOS**

iOS users can download this app based on NY-Alert notifications. This app will enable you to get information about current alerts, nearby emergency services. It also gives NY-Alert Authorized Notifiers a platform to create alerts for distribution.

- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ialertz/id447896305?mt=8>



### Disaster Alert

Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Purely informational this app gives you the opportunity to stay abreast of any occurring disasters around the globe.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=disasterAlert.PDC>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/disaster-alert-pacific-disaster/id381289235?mt=8>



### HealthMap: Outbreaks Near Me

Price: **Free**

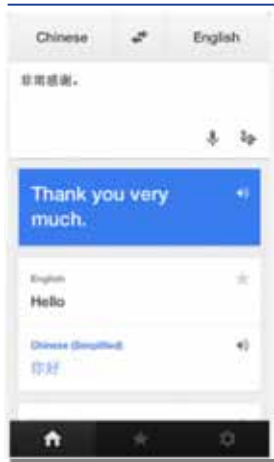
Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Use this app to get information about disease and health outbreaks in your area and set the app to alert you with a notice when an outbreak occurs.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.duethealth.healthmap>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/healthmap-outbreaks-near-me/id328358693?mt=8>

## Other Useful Apps



### Google Translate

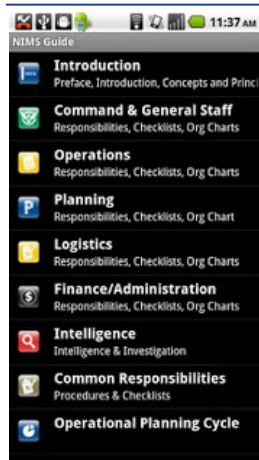
Price: **Free**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Google's translator app offers the ability to communicate in more than 70 different languages. For disaster responders, the ability to break through language barriers to give timely, accurate information and support to survivors is invaluable. Android users can download languages ahead of time to access translations without 3G and can even take photos of signs and documents for easy translations.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.translate&hl=en>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/google-translate/id414706506?mt=8>



### NIMS ICS Guide

Price: **\$6.99 to \$14.99**

Platforms: **Android, iOS**

Though it has a much higher price tag than the other apps the NIMS ICS Guide is recommended for responders working in Emergency Operation and Incident Command Centers.

Download at:

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.informedpublishing.NIMS>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nims-ics-guide/id406880725?mt=8>

## A final tip: What are the locals using?



If you're deploying to an unfamiliar location it could be useful to ask local volunteers or staff members if there are any region-specific apps they find helpful, especially as some counties, states, and organizations move towards developing their own disaster information and operations apps. For example, HOPSTOP became a very valuable navigation tool for Hurricane Sandy recovery volunteers who were unfamiliar with New York City public transportation.





## 11th Annual IDMH Training & Conference

Friday, April 25, 2014

### “Why Don’t People Listen? – The Whole Community and Communicating in a Crisis”

Emergency responders, healthcare workers, and mental health helpers statewide work extremely hard to prepare for a vast range of disasters and crises. Regardless of the nature of the event there is one form of preparation that truly applies to all hazards and all populations: public education and risk messaging. Numerous events have demonstrated that citizens don’t simply do as they’re instructed by authorities, such as evacuate before a hurricane. Public indifference to official recommendations applies to general preparedness as well as to specific warnings: Despite their personal experiences in recent hurricanes, a Red Cross-Weather Channel survey in Summer 2013 found that only about half of residents of coastal counties had evacuation or family communications plans and nearly a third did not even have an emergency supply kit.

What prevents people from taking actions to prepare for recognized hazards or from complying with official warnings and what can authorities – from government personnel to first responders to healthcare and mental health helpers – do to communicate more effectively with community members in times of crisis? Much physical and psychological harm could be prevented if community members were educated to make accurate decisions about when to evacuate and when to shelter in place. Whole Community resilience, as defined by FEMA, would be increased if each member actually took responsibility for their own emergency preparedness. But achieving these results requires messaging that overcomes emotional and logistical barriers to convince New Yorkers that the benefits outweigh the costs.

The 11th annual Institute for Disaster Mental Health conference on April 25, 2014, will focus

on how disaster response professionals can best communicate with community members to help them avoid or minimize their exposure to disaster and to jumpstart their recovery when events do occur. Presentations and workshops will address specific hazards and populations with representatives familiar with the challenges of message dissemination during complex and rapidly changing disasters.

Keynote Presenters:

- **Richard Serino**, Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (retired) on the role of government and the Whole Community approach to resilience.
- **Eric Klinenberg, Ph.D.**, Professor of Sociology at New York University and author of *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* on superstorms, climate change and the future of cities.
- **Wendy Harman**, Director of Social Strategy for the American Red Cross on the strengths and limitations of social media in disasters.
- **Lou McNally, Ph.D.**, Research Assistant Professor, Climate Change Institute, University of Maine at Orono, Maine and Assistant Professor of Applied Aviation Sciences, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University on the mass media’s role in communicating in crisis.

Opening remarks will be delivered by Congressman Chris Gibson and by Jerome Hauer, Ph.D., Commissioner of the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES).

Please check [www.newpaltz.edu/idmh](http://www.newpaltz.edu/idmh) for additional information and be sure to save the date of April 25, 2014.

**Sponsored by the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services**