



**FOUNDATION
FOR THE MID SOUTH**
ARKANSAS • LOUISIANA • MISSISSIPPI
Expanding Knowledge. Improving Lives.

Minds Matter

Making the Connection Between Mental Health and Community Well-Being



Poor Mental Health Costs Us

In the United States, about one in four adults (26.6%) exhibits behaviors consistent with a diagnosable mental disorder.¹ With nearly 60 million U.S. residents affected, the Foundation for the Mid South believes that mental along with physical health make up a more comprehensive, realistic measurement of individual and community wellness. It is our opinion that, without this wholistic view of health, our nation and the Mid South region will remain ill-equipped to improve the health, social—even the economic—challenges that exist here.

Mental health directly affects many of the factors that determine our quality of life, from our personal well-being to our education to the economy. Mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the nation and cost approximately \$193 billion in lost earnings alone according to a World Health Organization study.² Mental wellness not only affects how we function in society or on the job, it can also shrink our bottom line, causing lower pay checks for those affected and a weaker economy for all—increasing taxpayer costs in health care, Social Security, and criminal justice, among others.

If poor mental health is one of the underlying factors in many of the disparities we face, why do the mental health needs of too many people remain unmet? We have a few theories—based upon research and the opinions of mental health professionals:

Stigma. Unfortunately, mental illness has a largely negative public perception due in part to misinformation and fear. This stigma and shame of mental illness is a significant barrier that keeps people from seeking help.

Lack of Knowledge. The general public has not benefited from mental health education and awareness campaigns—elevating information and calls to action like other health issues such as smoking and obesity.

Access to Services and Providers. In many of our rural and urban places, the need for adequate care for physical and mental health and well-being of individuals and families is largely unmet. Overall, there are currently not enough highly-trained and skilled mental health providers or resources to expand services across all geographic areas equitably.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

We've seen tremendous results through our mental health grantmaking. Residents are better recognizing how health and wellness affects opportunities for themselves and their community. Cities are now integrating mental health into community improvement strategies and planning, showing how tightly physical and emotional health are intertwined into the well being of communities.

Necole S. Irvin, Program Officer
Foundation for the Mid South

“Without treatment the consequences of mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide and wasted lives.”

National Alliance on Mental Illness
(NAMI) website

In 2007, the percentages of adults in Arkansas and Mississippi reporting poor mental health were just slightly higher than the U.S. average.³ To get a more comprehensive picture of our region’s mental health status, though, we should go a step further and look at the effectiveness of our states’ mental health systems. For instance, The National Alliance on Mental Illness grades each state and the nation as a whole based upon available services, financing, and education, to name a few measures. It is interesting to note that the United States recently received a “D” along with Louisiana, but Mississippi and Arkansas both slipped from “Ds” to “Fs” between 2006 and 2009.⁴

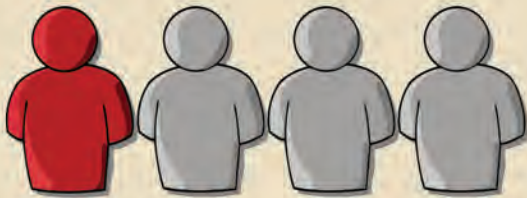
If the Mid South hopes to close the gaps between it and the rest of the nation—particularly in health, education, and economy—overcoming the barriers restricting access to mental health services in the region should be considered high among state and regional priorities.

MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

What are we seeing? While the number of adults reporting poor mental health in the Mid South is slightly above the national average, it seems unlikely that Mid South states will be able to improve or expand access to mental health care because of budget cuts and increasing need. Our region’s inadequate mental health systems will continue to leave too many without care until they reach the point of crisis.

1 in 4 Adults

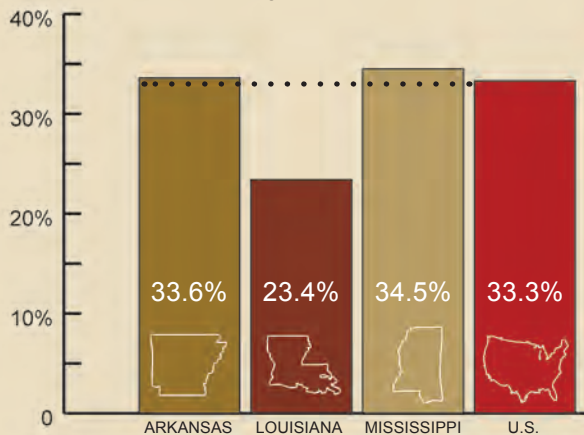
in the U.S. suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder



Source: Archives of General Psychiatry, June 2005

Poor Mental Health

% of adults reporting poor mental health, 2007



Source: CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

GRADING THE STATES 2009

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) surveys state mental health agencies to create a report that provides a comprehensive, comparative assessment of state mental health care systems. Categories include: Health Promotion and Measurement; Financing and Core Treatment/Recovery Services; Consumer and Family Empowerment; Community Integration and Social Inclusion. The following are some of NAMI’s recent findings:

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness website (<http://www.nami.org>)



The nation’s mental health systems and policies are fragmented, resulting in too few psychiatric beds, treatment services, and community-based supports for those who need them.



Louisiana has made some progress with recent legislation: including a 24/7 telephonic crisis screening and referral system and additional support for police Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT).



One reason for Arkansas’ grade is because of a complete absence of police Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT), jail diversion programs, and mental health courts relative to other states.



Despite a high per capita rate of state psychiatric beds, Mississippi lacks appropriate community-based services and support.

Katrina: A Tipping Point

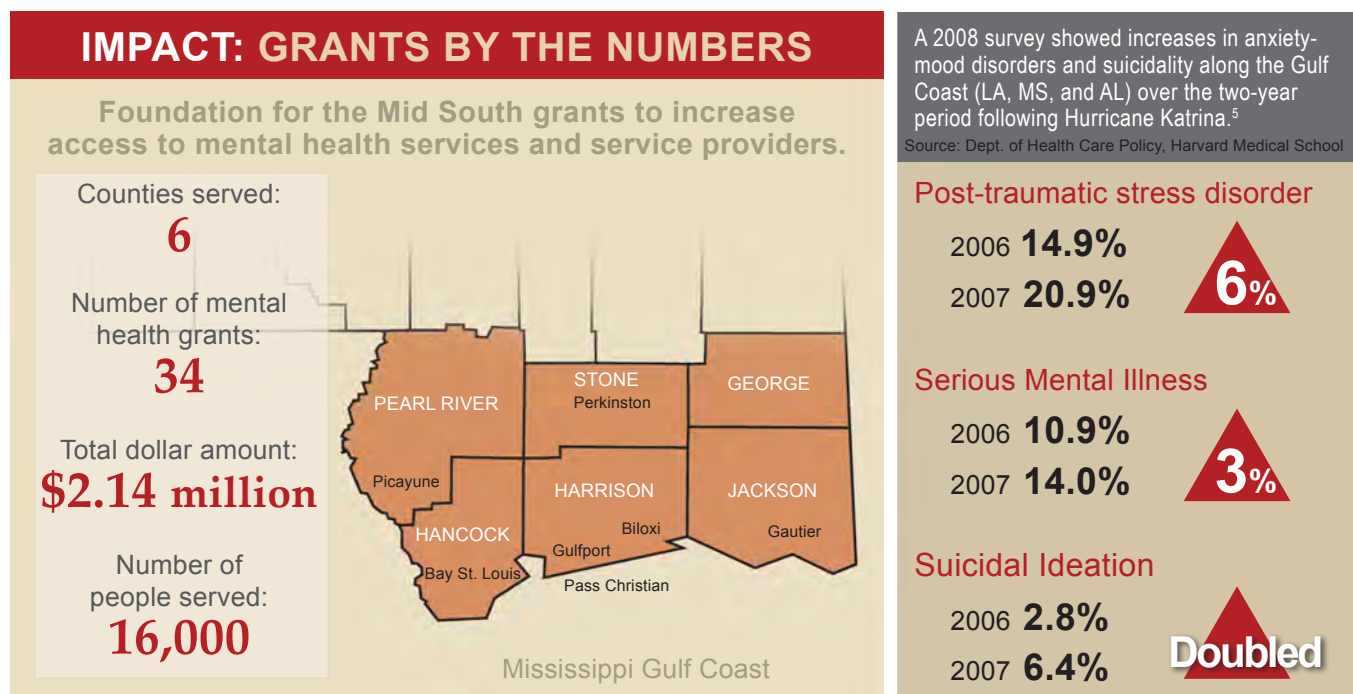
Hurricane Katrina shone a spotlight on the health disparities, particularly in mental health, that exist in the Mid South. Following the storm, reports of severe and mild to moderate mental disorders escalated along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. However, unlike past traumatic/catastrophic events, the prevalence did not decline within a two year period but increased—straining an already inadequate mental health system.⁵

To help individuals and communities heal, recover, and prepare for future disasters, the Foundation for the Mid South and the American Red Cross partnered to **identify and support efforts to increase access to mental health services** in the 6 Mississippi Gulf Coast counties. We invested over \$2 million in grants to 34 partner organizations in two categories to achieve the following results:

Outreach and Engagement Grants to reduce stigma associated with mental health, increase community engagement, and promote community well-being

Direct Services Grants to increase access to mental health services and increase the numbers and effectiveness of mental health service providers

This report highlights a few of our partners’ stories and the innovative approaches taken to better serve mental health needs and recovery along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Because of the significant investments in education, training, and resident and community engagement, the Foundation expects these efforts to yield long-lasting, positive results that increase access to mental health care on the Gulf Coast. Similarly, these partnerships and activities demonstrate solid first steps for the Foundation for the Mid South in its focus to provide a more integrated, comprehensive approach to health and wellness across Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.



While it is difficult to measure the full impact these grants have on mental health along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, we are seeing many of the results we hoped to achieve:

- Our partners reached and served a greater number of Gulf Coast residents, first responders, and mental health professionals than would have been possible without the Foundation’s support.
- Many of these efforts, like that of the Mississippi Coast Interfaith Disaster Task Force, have continued and grown, becoming a sustainable long-term resource on the Gulf Coast.
- Some cities, like Pascagoula, Mississippi, have integrated mental health services into their community plans.

We encourage you to learn more about the Foundation for the Mid South (www.fndmidsouth.org) and how efforts, like these, can be replicated to achieve positive results in health and wellness in your community.



Outreach and Engagement Matter:

Reducing Stigma and Promoting Community Well-Being

Stigma is a difficult barrier to overcome with regard to treating mental illness. Whether it is because of a lack of information, fear, or a negative perception of mental illness, some choose to ignore their mental health problems rather than seeking help. Still, others can remain undiagnosed because symptoms are unrecognized or misinterpreted (i.e., “he’s being lazy” when he might be suffering from depression and anxiety).

This section demonstrates how the Foundation for the Mid South and our partners sought to engage residents and communities in meeting their mental health needs and combating the stigma associated with mental illness. With civic and local health services overloaded, groups such as churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations became instrumental partners in recovery and outreach efforts. The Foundation believed that three groups in particular could best reach deeply into Gulf Coast communities:

1. Organizations providing mental health or similar services
2. Faith-based institutions
3. Organizations promoting the arts and culture

The Foundation’s history of working with the faith-based community in the region has allowed us to reach and influence a significant number of geographically, economically, and racially diverse Mid Southerners. In addition to faith, the Mid South is comprised of wonderfully creative and expressive cultures steeped in the arts—literature, music, dance, and visual art. Some of our partners used art therapy or cultural activities to bring neighbors together and provide familiar and comforting outlets for healthy expression and stress relief.

The Foundation tapped into these established, trusted channels to help improve residents’ health and well being and encourage them to access available mental health services. In the process, our partners were able to effectively reach people where they live, work, worship, and play. Whether through faith, art, or local community groups, the combined efforts in the following pages met a variety of needs, ranging from counseling and therapy, to strengthening the strained connections between residents and their fractured communities, to reducing the stressors undermining well being.

Tapping into the Power and Influence of Faith

Because of their ability to reach a broad swath of residents, churches and faith-based leaders were stalwart partners in the aftermath of the storm. One example of successful collaboration was the formation of a partnership between religious leaders and mental health professionals—the *Clergy-Mental Health Clinician Collaborative: Promoting Equitable Community Care Partnerships*—that focused on increasing the emotional well-being of Mississippi Coast residents.

The Mississippi Coast Interfaith Task Force, mental health professionals, and researchers from the University of Southern Mississippi worked together to better equip clergy and mental health service providers to respond to the long-term emotional and spiritual needs along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Specifically, project participants increased their knowledge of mental health assessment and referral and the healing potential of faith and spirituality.

Since reports indicated that mental health services were underutilized by African Americans, the Mississippi Coast Interfaith Disaster Task Force conducted focus groups with 450 churches and faith-based institutions to identify the reasons why. The feedback received by the Task Force suggested that barriers existed resulting in fewer African Americans accessing services, including a lack of knowledge of, access to, or trust in traditional mental health facilities and/or professionals. One recommended approach was to have trusted African-American institutions, like the church, advocate and expand access to mental health services in their communities.

Collaboration and trust were key ingredients for this partnership. During the project, one pastor stated, “I really want to see something happen with mental health, because I know that people are still hurting... and what better place to start than with the churches,

to help people to heal. And I don’t think it should be just because of Katrina, I think that mental health services should be open within the churches.”

The Mississippi Coast Interfaith Disaster Task Force also hosted the *Gulf Coast Mental Health Summit*, which raised community awareness of mental health and provided new information and continuing medical education credits for professionals and clergy. Participants’ response was so positive with regard to its helpfulness that the *Summit* has become an annual event and a central resource in the state. The Task Force also created and leads a monthly mental health collaborative group to share information and advance knowledge and training.

Mississippi Coast Interfaith Disaster Task Force
Biloxi | www.msitdf.org



AN EXPRESSION FAITH

Convenings, like the one shown above, are one of the ways the Task Force helped to expand the public dialogue about how faith-based and other institutions can play roles in improving community health and can facilitate the integration of mental health services into communities.

Nourishing the Bonds of Community

At a time when the fabric of the community was torn, St. Rose Outreach and Recovery in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, sought to weave theirs back together with a simple, yet effective, activity. In partnership with the Hancock Community Development Foundation, SOAR hosted old-fashioned Sunday Suppers to bring together the Bay St. Louis-Waveland community. The gatherings provided opportunities for social interaction, community outreach, education, and integration for new residents. The gatherings enabled residents, especially those who had difficulty leaving their homes, to either develop or re-establish their connection to their communities

Sunday Suppers brought together diverse populations from the area to share meals and experiences at the newly constructed St. Rose Community Center. All were welcome, but the organization specifically sought out older residents. Each month, up to 125 residents came together to forge relations and bonds that spanned across generations and cultures. To ensure that all residents could equitably access mental health services, the events were well-publicized and transportation was provided for the elderly and isolated individuals.

“Sunday Suppers,” said Ashley Bowman, SOAR Outreach and Youth Coordinator, “provide a place for community members from the Waveland and Bay St. Louis areas to gather and share good food and great times. They have become an event that people look forward to and many say it was the kind of thing they remembered doing before the storms.”

SOAR – St. Rose Outreach and Recovery
Bay St. Louis | www.strosedelima-bsl.org

Hancock Community Development Foundation
Bay St. Louis | hancock.wiinc3.com

Being Heard and Involved Does Make a Difference

Throughout the recovery process, many reported feeling disconnected and uninvited from planning and rebuilding efforts within their communities. The Foundation for the Mid South believes that the engagement of residents and institutions is vital to any community development effort, particularly those focused on rebuilding the Gulf Coast better than it was before the storm. To this end, the Foundation supported a partnership between the Mississippi Urban Research Center of Jackson State University and RAND Gulf States Policy Institute to engage communities and residents in identifying and addressing important local health concerns.

The partnership brought together health policy experts and thirty-two lay Moss Point, Mississippi community leaders. Two key results from the project included the collection of new, community-specific health data and additional funding to create greater public awareness of group-identified health issues. Additionally, Jackson State University, RAND, and the University of Southern Mississippi are working with Moss Point residents and leaders to integrate this work into their city plan and to attract funding for other community projects.

Mississippi Urban Research Center
Jackson | www.murc.org

RAND Gulf States Policy Institute
New Orleans | www.rand.org/rqspi

Expressing the Importance of Culture and Place

Hurricane Katrina brought many displaced storm victims to communities like Perkinston and Wiggins in Stone County, Mississippi. To help new neighbors assimilate, the *Under the Telling Trees* project—a collaborative of artists, students and community members—used storytelling, music, and art to share and celebrate the culture and history of the area in schools and after-school programs, community activities, and public spaces.

Over twelve months, the project taught students about local history, nature, and art. An interactive curriculum was integrated into activities to help students learn the importance of celebrating successes. Stone County students became better connected to their community by gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultures, history, and character of their *place* and of their roles in its present and future.

Over 5,500 residents participated in activities, including the creation of 11 painted and ceramic murals in parks, schools, and rest stops throughout the county. The mural project teamed professional artists with students and community members. The themes and visuals were incorporated into classroom lessons, like conservation of trees and other natural resources and environmental protection.

“Our community has been so generous with its time, talent, and donations, to support this project,” said Kathryn Lewis, project director. “After seeing the beautiful murals and students expressing themselves and translating that to where they live, it speaks directly to the excitement, team work, and communication between adults, children and artists that I have not seen in my 40 years as a citizen.”

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Foundation, Inc.
Perkinston | www.mgcc.edu



BREAKING BREAD

Sunday Suppers helped to reconnect Bay St. Louis and Waveland residents back to their communities. The suppers also enabled people to access education materials and mental and physical health services.

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

Moss Point community members teamed up with academicians to create a model for the community that engages residents in recovery and health issues. The logo above was created by a resident and represents the strength of a healthy and engaged community.

MURAL SUPPORT

Murals, like the one above, were created in public buildings across Stone County to celebrate the history and culture of the area. Thousands of residents participated and used art and local stories to build community and welcome new residents coming to the area after Katrina.

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH GRANTS

Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities of Mississippi Jackson

The Coalition established an art therapy project, the *Kids of Katrina Campaign*, to address the emotional and mental health of youth with disabilities. The project served children and their families from the six lower Mississippi counties, with a concentration on residents living in FEMA housing and Jackson, Mississippi—a city with a large number of displaced residents.



“Some parents who came with their children participated and it became very evident that this form of emotional expression was a benefit to them as well.”

Mary Troupe, Executive Director
Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities of Mississippi

DeLisle/Pass Christian Shalom Community, Inc. Pass Christian

A grant enabled the organization to provide residents a wide variety of community support and healing activities: communal meals, therapy, support groups, games, and an array of other coping resources and activities.

East Biloxi Coordination, Relief & Redevelopment Agency Biloxi

The agency held training sessions and events to build community in East Biloxi—one of its oldest, most diverse neighborhoods. Through leadership training, residents strengthened the attachments to their neighbors and community. As a result, a cohort of volunteer residents serving as neighborhood captains emerged, empowering other community members to address local concerns and promote community well-being.

El Pueblo (The Village) Biloxi

El Pueblo organized a variety of activities and programs to help Latinos integrate into Gulf Coast communities after Katrina, including English language classes and cultural preservation art nights. Activities provided information on health and wellness and encouraged Latinos to become civically engaged in their communities. One result was the creation of a women’s support group, *Mujeres Unidas*, that has begun tackling issues of childcare and domestic violence, among others.

Hands On Network Gulfport

The Network hosted a 10-week community-based program known as the *Healthy Living Initiative* (HLI) in multiple communities. HLI worked with six Boys and Girls Clubs as well as over 300 community participants to engage and empower children on the Gulf Coast to make healthy lifestyle choices. The program also encouraged its young participants to restore or establish neighborhood green spaces and to volunteer in their communities.



Mercy Housing & Human Development Gulfport

A grant supported Mercy Housing and Habitat for Humanity of South Mississippi’s efforts to reduce the stress caused by the destruction of housing along the Gulf Coast. The partnership provided residents with expert advice on housing and insurance along with financial education services to combat the rising cost of home insurance. The program also gave 100 participating families a hand-up by providing \$300-600 to apply toward their insurance premiums.

Lynn Meadows Discovery Center Gulfport

The Center offered free admission on Friday nights to provide a nurturing place for children affected by Katrina to access a variety of fun and interactive learning opportunities focused on the unique and diverse cultures of south Mississippi. Outreach efforts were aimed to reach and invite families facing financial hardships and others whose work schedules conflicted with the museum's regular business hours. Over 9,000 residents took advantage of the Discovery Center's 50 free Friday nights, many of whom reported the visit helped to relieve stress.



“Parents said how nice it was to have a relaxing place to spend time with their children and interact at the end of a long week. With so much loss and upheaval following Katrina, the Discovery Center has become a safe haven for families living along the Gulf Coast.”

Cynthia Minton, Executive Director
Lynn Meadows Discovery Center

Mississippi Faith Based Coalition for Community Renewal Inc. Gulfport

The Coalition's grant supported a three-day community festival and a summer program for 56 youth. The festival cultivated a feeling of community while providing housing, meditation and mental health services, and referrals to attendees. The youth program featured job placement sessions and included workshops designed to improve participants' skills and employment opportunities.

Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Foundation Jackson

The Museum provided positive and educational nature activities for children to counteract their experiences with the destructive force of Hurricane Katrina. In addition, the program brought naturalists into 33 schools and public programs throughout the Katrina-impacted coastal counties. The classroom and summer camp visits exposed 9,000 children to animals and the natural sciences. To help improve student interaction in classroom activities, over 70 teachers received additional training and educational resources.

“The naturalists who came to the schools offered children a connection back to the natural world in ways that promote mental health, overall wellness and science literacy.”

Libby Hartfield, Executive Director
Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Foundation



New Stage Theatre Jackson

New Stage's young professional traveling troupe provided coastal schools with twenty-two live dramatic performances. For many of the 9,000 youth who attended, the performances were their first theater experience and an opportunity to continue the healing process. A curriculum was created that aligned with the performances and included activities such as dialogue workshops, storytelling, and creative improvisation exercises.

Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art Biloxi

A grant enabled the Museum to hold its 15th Annual George Ohr Fall Festival of Arts in the Biloxi Town Green. The family arts festival promotes local culture and art and included a children's art tent, raku firing, artist exhibitions, live music, and local and regional cuisine.

Pinebelt Association for Families Petal

The Pinebelt Association provided structured group activities for kinship families, primarily grandparents raising grandchildren. The program's activities taught participants from ages 3 to 95 how to reduce stress, increase coping skills, build relationships and community, and how to lead healthier lifestyles. Over 350 members of kinship families, many of whom were disabled or economically disadvantaged, participated in the program's activities and therapeutic sessions across the Pinebelt region, including Covington, Forrest, Jones, and Smith counties.



“Exercise was an important component of the Summer Psycο-Educational Program, along with art, community service, and therapeutic activities. Grandchildren did aerobic exercises, stretches, and swam to keep their growing bodies healthy and reduce the stress of recovery.”

Sylvia Forster, *Ph.D.*, Executive Director
Pinebelt Association for Families

University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies Hattiesburg

Grant funds enabled the Institute to assist in the emotional recovery of senior adults and individuals with disabilities and to better prepare these vulnerable populations for future disasters. Through its ShareCare Resiliency & Recovery Connection program, the Institute provided residents with one-on-one case management, disaster preparedness workshops, grief support groups, and referrals.

“Although Hurricane Katrina was years ago, the effects are still felt every day. It has been especially difficult for some of the seniors and residents with disabilities to cope with the emotional effects and loss that occurred due to the hurricane. Being a part of such a special group has helped so many of them to recognize that they are not alone and that supports are available in the community.”

Royal Walker, Jr., Executive Director
University of Southern Mississippi, Institute for Disability Studies



Visions of Hope, Inc. Biloxi

Visions of Hope sponsored multi-racial, sociopolitical improvisational theater performances and a children's workshop in coastal schools and communities. The theater provided over 1,600 adults and youth lighthearted opportunities to acknowledge, unmask, and rectify subconscious prejudices. Facilitated discussions following the performances enhanced community well-being by promoting diversity and coalition building.

Direct Services Matter:

Increasing access to and the effectiveness of mental health service providers

Another barrier to receiving adequate mental health care is an overall lack of direct services. Issues of access range from too few highly-qualified professionals, to unavailable local services requiring travel for treatment, or insufficient training or resources for existing service providers.

The Foundation for the Mid South looked at ways to expand the traditional views of mental health providers and how services were already offered to residents. Typically, office visits to psychiatrists and therapists are top-of-mind when it comes to mental health care, but there are other ways to reach residents and improve their well-being, particularly in times of crisis. For example, Hurricane Katrina tested the public's reliance on first responders—police, firemen, and EMTs—and unequivocally demonstrated the importance of physically and mentally prepared and well-trained professionals. Furthermore, others such as teachers, school counselors, and caregivers are on the front lines everyday working with the public. These groups reach and serve people where they live and work, making them excellent candidates for identifying and addressing mental health needs.

The Foundation focused its investments in direct services on enabling a larger number of residents to access mental health services and improving the quality of the care and services being provided. The following stories share the efforts taken to support increasing the numbers of service providers, high-quality skills training for those responsible for our safety and care, and creating more comprehensive ways to provide services quickly and efficiently.

Training First Responders Like Lives Depend on Them

The Foundation for the Mid South partnered with the Mental Health Association to support its efforts to improve disaster response through intensive training and increasing the number of service providers on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The grant allowed first responders to attend the Association's Center for Community Resilience and receive high-quality training and additional education from trauma recovery experts.

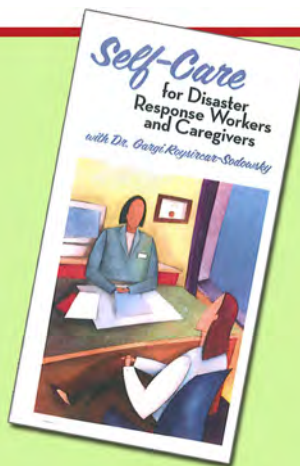
The Center also provides training and support to teachers, school-based mental wellness services, and mental health professionals, among others. Since Katrina, the number of certified school resilience trainers and first responders has increased. The partnership between the Association and the Foundation provided the following services:

- **230 Biloxi police officers** each received eight hours of resilience training
- **50 first responders** received training to, in turn, train other first responders
- **30 principals and administrators** and **312 teachers** attended various workshops on school-based mental wellness
- **22 educators** received training to, in turn, train other educators

Currently, the Center is furthering its work to increase the capacity of first responders by supporting the needs of resiliency trainers in outreach programs; creating a multi-county services booklet; and reducing the stigma associated with mental health in communities through public awareness campaigns.

Mental Health Association

Biloxi | www.msmentalhealth.org



ON THE FRONT LINES

In addition to receiving valuable mental health training, first responders and educators, in turn, were trained to train others; thus, increasing the number of highly-qualified caregivers along the Gulf Coast.

HELPING OUR HEROS

The 20 self-care workshops addressed the emotional needs of those serving others in times of need and crisis. In the event of another disaster, the program sought to ensure community "safety nets" were in place and ready to serve.

INVESTING IN WELL-BEING

Employees are more productive at home and work if they learn how to cope with stress and negative emotions. The City of Pascagoula recognized the importance of individual well-being and included mental care in employees' benefit packages.

Helping Our Heros Stay Healthy, Sharp, and Ready

Antioch University New England recognized the long-term importance of supporting the mental and physical health needs of those we rely on every day: first responders. Using an approach proven helpful following disasters in Mexico and Southern India, Dr. Gargi Roysircar conducted 20 Self-Care and Resilience Care for Caregivers workshops in several Mississippi Gulf Coast communities. Dr. Roysircar noted the importance of these self-care workshops, especially for first responders working in “under-served communities that are left with so few mental health resources when stricken with a disaster.”

The 200 disaster response workers and caregivers who benefited from the workshops learned how to integrate self-care practices into their daily lives. For many participants, it was a way to recharge their batteries and think about how they can better manage trauma while maintaining their own psychological and physical health.

Antioch University New England | Keene, OH | www.multiculturalcenter.org

The workshops empowered responders to develop skills in solving personal problems and working with others to affect policy decisions, improve quality of life, and enhance collective survival skills.

Dawn Leach
Workshop Consultant / Leader

Reaching People Where They Work and Live

“When the Jackson County Community Services Coalition approached the Foundation with a proposal to provide mental health services to all 275 city employees in Pascagoula, Mississippi, we were eager to help,” said Foundation for the Mid South program officer Necole S. Irvin. “We were looking for deep-impact opportunities, and this was an innovative and effective way to provide service to a large number of people carrying enormous stress and anxiety about rebuilding their community.”

The City Manager of Pascagoula, Kay Kell, recognized the growing post-Katrina mental health needs of the city’s employees—particularly in the fire and police departments—and asked for help. After partnering with the Foundation, the Coalition provided group interactive sessions over a 12-month period to all city employees and one-to-one sessions as needed. These *Emotional Wellness Trainings* (also referred to as “psychological first aid briefings”) provided individual and group sessions to address the trauma of the disaster and the stress from recovery.

To date, over 750 Gulf Coast residents have received *Emotional Wellness Training*.

This is helping people to rebuild their lives after Katrina and become better emotionally equipped to deal with the stressors of the 21st century pace of life.

James Yancey, Jr.
Executive Director, JCCSC

As a result, the City of Pascagoula started including the training as a part of its employee benefits package, making mental health a significant new addition to the overall health strategy for the City of Pascagoula. The tremendous success and demand for the project has garnered attention from other municipalities, like nearby Ocean Springs, interested in similar services for their employees.

Jackson County Community Services Coalition | Gautier | www.jccsc.org

ADDITIONAL DIRECT SERVICE GRANTS

Child Abuse Education Council Picayune

The Council provided direct service and community engagement through quarterly events near FEMA trailer parks in Pearl River County. In addition to food and entertainment, the events included workshops and activities designed to reduce stress and anxiety in both children and adults. Free medical and mental health screenings, after school services, and free transportation to events were also provided. Through direct counseling, the Council served nearly 500 residents by holding 169 individual counseling sessions, 24 adult group sessions, and 9 youth group sessions.

“This grant provided needed services to new community members and allowed us to leverage over \$150,000 to continue providing mental health and children’s services.”

Pam Cross, Executive Director
Child Abuse Education Council

Children’s Health Fund New York, NY

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Children’s Health Fund provided individual and group therapy sessions as well as motivational and inspirational sessions for low-income and displaced children. About 65 children attended the program’s 650 mental health sessions and 17 professionals received additional training in trauma counseling. With the aid of the grant, an additional social worker was hired to expand access to mental health services to more children and young adults.

“A teenage girl who received weekly mental health services on the project’s Community Support and Resiliency Unit missed several appointments. We later learned that she was living in her car, had dropped out of school, and was thousands of dollars in debt. We helped her find an apartment and connected her to a program to help with independent living. Thanks to this grant, more children and young adults are receiving compassionate mental health services.”

Karen Redlener, Executive Director
Children’s Health Fund



Coastal Family Health Center Biloxi

A grant allowed the Center to hire an additional nurse practitioner who specializes in family practice psychiatry and mental health. The additional staff member helped the Center provide mental health therapy and counseling for over 120 uninsured residents in the first two weeks of service. The Center now collaborates with the Mississippi Counseling Association to ensure patients’ continuity of care by providing all four Coastal Family Health Center clinics with counseling services two days each week.

Gulf Coast Women’s Center for Nonviolence, Inc. Biloxi

Funding from this grant provided attention and self-care instruction to the Center’s staff in the form of mini-retreats and workshops on stress and mental health. The Center recognized the importance of supporting the health and well-being of its dedicated staff members—storm survivors themselves—who consistently give so much of themselves to the community.

International Relief and Development US Gulfport

This grant enabled a local affiliate, the Gulf Coast Community Resource Center, to provide additional training in individual crisis counseling to more than 45 cases managers. In addition, the Crisis Counseling Resource Center, which serves as a resource to case managers from other agencies, received funds to expand in order to efficiently serve larger numbers of people during times of need.

Liberty Restoration Community Development Corporation Hammond, LA

The initiatives of the Liberty Restoration Community Development Corporation provide counseling and mental health resources to rural residents in and around Tylertown, Mississippi. The grant, initially proposed by local ministers, provided mental health counseling and support to families relocating into the area following the storm.

Memorial Hospital Foundation, Inc. Gulfport

Memorial Hospital, which staffs a free medical clinic for children in Harrison County schools, used grant funds to hire an additional school therapist in order to expand mental health services and counseling. The Memorial Hospital Foundation leveraged this support to attract other significant grants that have enabled it to continue and further expand services.

Mississippi Center for Justice Jackson

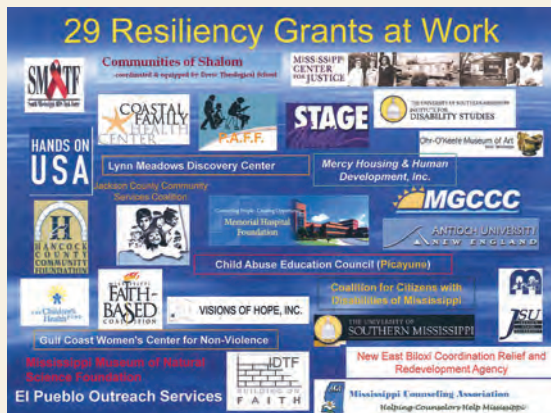
The Center hosted a number of activities with the funds received including “Spirit of Justice” retreats, which offered respite and support for caregivers and advocates engaged in long-term recovery work. Other activities helped increase access to mental health services for Katrina survivors, such as consumer guide materials, legal and policy strategies, outreach, and free legal clinics.

“Now, more than ever, it is clear that Gulf Coast recovery is not an event, but an historic movement of hearts, hands, and heads committed to building a healthy and resilient Mississippi Gulf Coast. The ‘long arc of justice’ requires human capital—including wisdom, love, relationships, and spirituality—as well as financial resources and political clout.”

Martha Bergmark, President
Mississippi Center for Justice

Mississippi Counseling Association Collins

By enabling the Association to place nine licensed mental health professionals in health centers along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, this grant significantly expanded access to mental health care to residents. The Association reported that the integration of services produced two key results: a reduction in stigma from receiving mental health services, and an increase in males seeking counseling—a shift from a much higher number of women accessing mental health services.



“Our biggest story is the welcome presence of medical professionals into the mental health care field. I don’t think this would have been possible 20 years ago. When we understand that mental health is fundamental for good physical health, optimal health and well-being can be achieved.”

Carol B. Jones
Director, Mississippi Counseling Association



“Many of our participants, including the president of the Mississippi Regional Housing Authority resident council in Lucedale, have reported using these skills to run better meetings, better understand the needs of others, and to improve communication with their loved ones, all leading them to experience greater productivity and peace in their lives.”

Laurel Kaufer
President, Mississippi Mediation Project

Mississippi Mediation Project Jackson

When people are well-equipped to solve problems and resolve conflict, they become less likely to be stressed and exhibit violent behavior. The Mediation Project used grant funds to teach communication and cooperation skills to over 100 residents on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Additionally, seven individuals were trained using the Project’s curriculum, *Essential Problem Solving Skills* (EPSS). The EPSS trainees, in turn, provided conflict resolution and communication sessions free-of-charge in their communities for 12 months. The program was so popular among city officials and housing authorities, many have requested EPSS training for their employees. Perhaps the most notable result of the project was the unprecedented partnering of a Habitat for Humanity and a public housing authority.

South Mississippi AIDS Task Force

Biloxi

The Task Force used grant funds to expand its support of case management sessions, counseling, social and recreational activities, cultural events, and transportation needs. The additional support led to a marked increase in clients taking advantage of the services. Clients also reported that both counseling and social interaction have improved the health and well-being of themselves and their families.

“This was the greatest grant for clients that we ever had. The impact was so positive and the timing was perfect to lift them from depression and see them laugh! We also sent someone to treatment, which allowed them to come back to our Transitional Housing Program—keeping another person from becoming homeless.”

Amanda Breckenridge, Executive Director
South Mississippi AIDS Task Force

University of Southern Mississippi

Hattiesburg

A grant enabled the University to train five graduate students who will provide mental health services to Katrina victims over a five-year period. The students, who all hail from the region, worked in school-based health clinics along the Mississippi Gulf Coast for a year while completing their Master’s degrees in Family Therapy. During their training, the students provided over 2,100 hours of mental health services to 826 youth and other caregivers impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

The effort also brought about a partnership with Memorial Behavior Health that will provide unique training opportunities for students and ultimately attract qualified mental health professionals to the coastal counties of Mississippi. “We are grateful that the project facilitated the creation of this meaningful partnership,” said W. Jeff Hinton, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Southern Mississippi.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- ¹ RC Kessler, WT Chiu, O Demler, EE Walters. Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of twelve-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R). *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 2005 Jun; 62(6): 617-27.
- ² The World Health Organization. The World Health Report 2004: *Changing History*, Annex Table 3: Burden of disease in DALYs by cause, sex, and mortality stratum in WHO regions, estimates for 2002. Geneva: WHO, 2004.
- ³ Mental health data compiled for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi using The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation website state health status table generator (<http://www.statehealthfacts.org>). Kaiser uses data made available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data (BRFSS), 2007, unpublished data (<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.htm>).
- ⁴ 2009 grades on mental health systems for the United States overall and individual states are available on the National Alliance on Mental Illness website (<http://www.nami.org>). NAMI's grading system is based on the following categories: Health Promotion and Measurement; Financing and Core Treatment / Recovery Services; Consumer and Family Empowerment; and Community Integration and Social Inclusion.
- ⁵ RC Kessler, S Galea, MJ Gruber, NA Sampson, RJ Ursano, S Wessely. *Molecular Psychiatry* (2008) 13(4): 374-84. Epub 2008 January 8.

Dept. of Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School surveyed 1043 pre-hurricane residents of hurricane-affected counties/parishes in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama to track the prevalence of mental disorders. The baseline survey concluded on March 31, 2006 and a follow-up was conducted with the group in 2007.



The Foundation for the Mid South exists to improve lives by expanding knowledge. We support efforts that create high-quality education, initiatives that encourage physical and mental health, resources that promote financial security, and solutions that enable communities to grow and prosper.

WITH THANKS TO THE AMERICAN
RED CROSS FOR ITS GENEROUS
SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIP

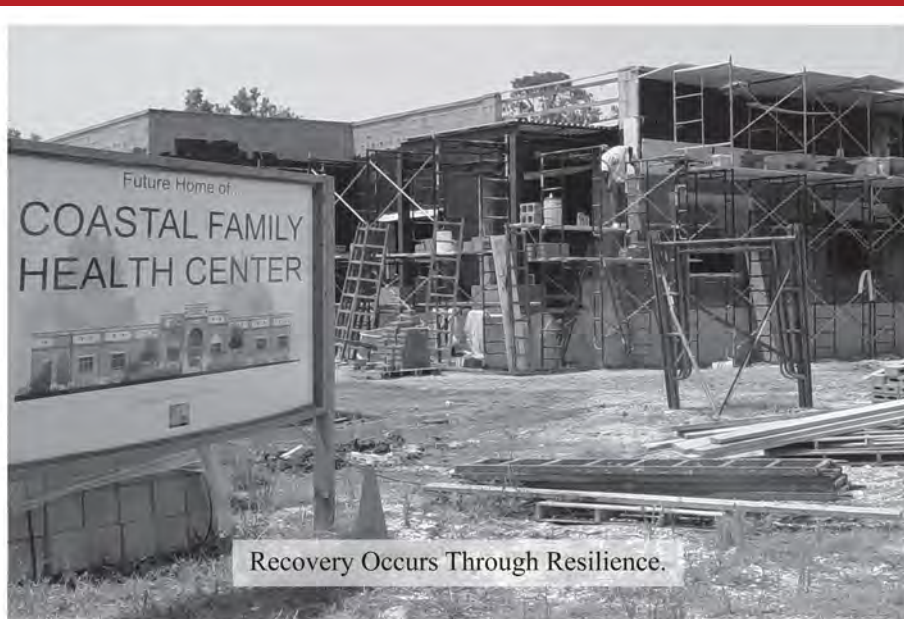


**American
Red Cross**

Hurricane Recovery Program

“The impact of Hurricane Katrina still greatly affects us all on a daily basis, either as we continue to struggle with our own rebuilding, the rebuilding of our individual communities, or simply the frustrations faced by the changed economy, traffic patterns, and conveniences taken for granted in other parts of the state and country.”

Sally Morrison, Executive Director, Gulf Coast Women’s Center for Nonviolence



Recovery Occurs Through Resilience.

While the effects of Hurricane Katrina were devastating, the progress that has been made over the past two years is a testament to the will, dedication, and *resilience* of the people of the Gulf Coast. The Foundation for the Mid South and the American Red Cross are continuing to partner to support recovery efforts. The Foundation for the Mid South is currently accepting grant applications from nonprofit organizations—including faith and community-based groups—that are working in hurricane-affected Mississippi communities to enhance the emotional well-being of children and adults. To view the Community Resilience grant guidelines, please visit the foundation’s website.

Go to www.fndmidsouth.org to find out more information about this Community Resilience grant opportunity.

Applications are due by September 5, 2007.



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