

Louisiana Spirit Crisis Counseling Program Helps Survivors

Release Date: janvier 27, 2017

BATON ROUGE, La. — As the recovery from August flooding in Louisiana continues, survivors can receive free disaster crisis counseling. To date, 23,000 survivors have met with counselors from Louisiana Spirit, a program administered by the state and funded by a FEMA grant.

Survivors who wish to speak to Louisiana Spirit counselors may call 866-310-7977. A counselor can provide an ear for listening, a symbolic shoulder to lean on and guidance for establishing normalcy.

More than 100 Louisiana Spirit counselors are working in parishes affected by the flood. Although they're not mental-health professionals, the counselors are trained to support disaster survivors and, in some cases, are survivors themselves. Typically, FEMA-funded crisis counseling programs throughout the nation are staffed by former school counselors, nurses and other professionals who have relevant experience.

Louisiana Spirit counselors can make up to five visits to survivors. If survivors want additional counseling, LA Spirit can make referrals to mental health professionals.

From August through December, survivors met with Louisiana Spirit counselors at FEMA's Disaster Recovery Centers. Now that the recovery centers have closed, the counselors are canvassing flood-affected communities throughout Louisiana.

Their outreach activities include informative door hangers in neighborhoods. The sky-blue door hangers contain the toll-free Louisiana Spirit Crisis Line phone number, business cards and advice for easing stress. Counselors also visit schools and community events. Not a mental health program, Louisiana Spirit is based in survivors' natural resiliency. For information, visit dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/201.



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Page 1 of 1