

## Report From the Field: HAP Post-9/11 Disaster Recovery Network

In the wake of the collective trauma that engulfed the nation after 9/11, EMDR HAP responded with an unprecedented organizational initiative: We built and funded an entire new arm of our organization. The Disaster Mental Health Recovery Network (now restructured on a national scale as the Trauma Recovery Network) was created to meet the needs of people in New York and Washington, DC who have ongoing emotional distress following the terrorist attacks.

Within weeks of 9/11, EMDR HAP set up a comprehensive pro bono referral network and we were linking people in need with therapists ready to help.

The need is great: a state-funded survey predicted that over half a million people in the New York metropolitan region would develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and 129,000 would seek treatment for it in the year following the tragedy. Those directly exposed and those experiencing personal loss were most at risk.

Some 500 EMDR-trained therapists have offered their services at no cost

The HAP initiative taps into the hundreds of professional mental health therapists in New York and Washington who have been trained in the EMDR method of trauma-focused psychotherapy and have personally seen the difference it can make. More than 500 of these therapists have volunteered to provide no-cost mental health services to people directly impacted by the attacks.

The Disaster Mental Health Recovery Network (now "Trauma Recovery Network")

took a two-pronged approach to disaster response:

1. Free referral of persons in need of mental health services to private, volunteer therapists, and
2. Training and support for therapists in the communities.

More than 300 clinicians took part in the training courses HAP coordinated in the aftermath of the disaster. The training arm of the initiative had several components:

1. Specialized training on the psychological consequences of terrorism and the application of EMDR for this population;
2. "Bridge" courses for therapists who want to update their EMDR skills;
3. Workshops focused on special-needs groups such as police, fire, and rescue workers, youth at risk, children, and people who have suffered personal loss;
4. In the hardest-hit areas, debriefing groups and peer networks to support therapists and encourage community building among the Network volunteers.

By the end of 2002, the Disaster Mental Health Recovery Network's no-fee referral system had connected more than 850 people seeking help to private, EMDR-trained mental health professionals. The therapists agree to provide up to five therapy sessions at no cost.

Most of the people treated with the EMDR method experienced significant resolution of symptoms in 2-5 sessions.

A follow-up study of 65 people who were treated through the Network found, on average, significant positive changes on all reported outcome measures, including a substantial decrease in standardized

measures of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms.

The success of the 9/11 program illustrates how strong and effective the EMDR network can be when disaster strikes right in our own backyard. Hundreds of clinicians have been newly trained or received specialized training to provide effective therapy for 9/11 survivors - clinicians who will now use their skills to help heal scores of others who will continue to need help.

"I have the great privilege of working with many excellent EMDR therapists and see firsthand the healing power that only EMDR can provide. I am no longer a skeptic. I am a disciple, a facilitator to help pass others along to this wonderful and powerful tool for healing mind, body and spirit."

The Rev Thomas E. Taylor  
Chaplain of the North Bellmore (NY) Fire Department  
who, in the wake of 9/11, referred many firefighters for EMDR therapy through the Disaster Mental Health  
Recovery Network