

# PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH DISASTER RESPONSE NURSING

## A Call for Action

by Suzane Wilbur MS, APRN, BC Board Member at Large



**A**s this is being written, the American Red Cross (ARC) is mobilizing volunteers to provide disaster mental health services in the Eastern States that are threatened by hurricanes. It is important for us as psychiatric mental health nurses to familiarize ourselves with the requirements for local activities and national deployment by the ARC and the trainings that are available.

To learn more about the ARC, and to join as a volunteer, follow these simple steps:

1. Go to the Red Cross website – [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
  - a. On the Home page, you will find many links to information about the Red Cross and the services it provides.
2. In the center of the page near the top, enter your current zip code to find the chapter nearest you. You will find:
  - a. The address, phone number, fax number, and an e-mail address of a contact person.
  - b. There will also be a link to your local chapter's website.
3. Call the number or e-mail the contact person in order to express your interest in volunteering. Many of the things you need to do to become a volunteer are available online.

Once you have joined your local chapter, you can inquire about a training called “Foundations of Disaster Mental Health,” offered by the ARC to its Disaster Mental Health volunteers. The Red Cross requires that we have this training before participating in Red Cross DMH activities.. Upcoming FDMH courses will be held around the State and specifically in Santa Rosa (October 25), Santa Clara (no date set as yet), and Santa Cruz (no date set as yet). Remember, if you are a registered volunteer, you will receive information and you will have first priority for these courses. Those who are not Red Cross volunteers will be able to take the class only if there is available space. I will have flyers with details as they become available. Please contact me at [swilbur55@aol.com](mailto:swilbur55@aol.com) or 310-809-1563.

If you need help with information about the necessary paperwork, local versus national assignment opportunities, disaster mental health work and other classes, please contact me and I will find a contact person to help you. There is another training called “In the Eye of the Storm: Essentials of Disaster Mental Health,” taught by Diane Myers, RN, MSN, CTS. Although this course is not required by the Red Cross, I found it to be very helpful. For information, go to the California Disaster Mental Health Coalition (CDMHC) website [www.cdmhc.org](http://www.cdmhc.org).

Finally, stay connected to the APNA CA Chapter by attending meetings in your area, organized by your Area Rep., and by checking our website [www.calapna.org](http://www.calapna.org).