

# Harvey Survivors Can Access Free Crisis Counseling Services This Holiday

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Charles Smith, Executive Commissioner  
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AUSTIN – The Texas Health and Human Services Commission is working with local providers to offer free, confidential crisis counseling services for Hurricane Harvey survivors in 18 counties through a \$2.8 million Federal Emergency Management Agency grant.

The services are available through Jan. 24 as part of the FEMA Immediate Services Program grant, awarded Sept. 17 through the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

"The holiday season can be a stressful time for people who have been affected by disasters like Hurricane Harvey, and that stress can take a toll on mental health. We're continuing to reach out to communities about services available near them," said Sonja Gaines, Associate Commissioner for HHSC Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Behavioral Health Services. "Trauma and uncertainty are natural responses to a disaster, and sometimes survivors need to talk to someone who understands and can help."

Through the program, called Texans Recovering Together, local providers are visiting homes and community settings to offer counseling, information, resources and stress education to help Harvey survivors cope with disaster-related trauma. In addition to empowering affected families and individuals to move forward, the grant aims to enable mental health resiliency among those who were left displaced, jobless, homeless, impoverished or faced with stress and other normal responses to trauma. The grant is for Aransas, Bee, Brazoria, Calhoun, DeWitt, Galveston, Goliad, Harris, Jackson, Kleberg, Lavaca, Liberty, Montgomery, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Walker and Victoria counties.

HHSC also recently applied for a FEMA Regular Services Program grant, which would enable HHSC to extend these crisis counseling services and offer services in an additional 12 counties. That grant announcement is anticipated by January.

**How to learn more about services:** Harvey survivors can learn how to access local, free crisis counseling services and find other disaster behavioral assistance resources at [hhs.texas.gov/disaster-assistance](https://hhs.texas.gov/disaster-assistance). Residents in the 18 counties currently served through the program can dial 2-1-1 to be routed to a local provider.

## FACT SHEET

**WHAT'S HAPPENING?** The Texas Health and Human Services Commission is working with trained local providers and outreach workers under the Texans Recovering Together program and a \$2.8 million FEMA grant to provide Hurricane Harvey survivors free crisis counseling services.

**WHERE?** Counseling services are currently provided in the following 18 Texas counties: Aransas, Bee, Brazoria, Calhoun, DeWitt, Galveston, Goliad, Harris, Jackson, Kleberg, Lavaca, Liberty, Montgomery, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Victoria and Walker.

**WHAT KIND OF SERVICES?** Counseling services may include helping people learn and practice stress management and coping mechanisms, and connecting survivors to disaster-relief resources. Many Texans affected by Hurricane Harvey are accessing these free services, offered in home and community settings rather than in an office. Harvey crisis counselors have logged **37,000+** survivor encounters, exceeding the estimated number by nearly 35 percent.

**STAT:** 70 percent of all adults experience a traumatic event in their lifetime.

**STAT:** 25 percent of all children will experience trauma before age 18.

Re-adjusting to new circumstances and beginning to rebuild lives after a disaster is a phase that may not set in until **up to one year** after the disaster, and can last **three years**.

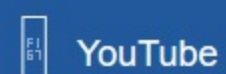
A total of **888,302** Texans had registered for other FEMA assistance as of Nov. 14, 2017.

People experience events like Hurricane Harvey differently and may show signs of stress and other expected physical and emotional responses in different ways.

- **What to look for in adults:** Eating or sleeping too much or too little, pulling away from people and things, having low or no energy, feeling helpless or hopeless, excessive drinking, smoking, or drug use (including prescription medications), worrying, feeling guilty without knowing why, thinking of hurting yourself or others, difficulty readjusting to home or work life.
- **What to look for in teenagers and children:** Withdrawing from playgroups and friends, competing for attention, being unwilling to leave home, being less interested in schoolwork, becoming more aggressive, more conflicts with peers or parents, or difficulty concentrating.

**HOW TO HELP:** Connect survivors to resources and people who can help. Encourage them to get help, listen to them, remind them they aren't alone, and reinforce their positive stress management and coping skills.

**HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SERVICES:** Harvey survivors can learn how to access local, free crisis counseling services and find other disaster behavioral health resources at [hhs.texas.gov/disaster-assistance](https://hhs.texas.gov/disaster-assistance). Residents in the 18 counties currently served through the program can dial 2-1-1 to be routed to a local provider.



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