



Recommendations for Continued Support of Psychosocial Activities in the Baton Rouge Area

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Recommendations for supporting and strengthening local organizations:

- Overall guidelines for services: on-going, sustainable programming facilitated by local partners and continued improvement of coordination of services
- Where possible, partner outside organizations with local organizations to help provide resources and build capacity, and promote long-term, on-going partnerships instead of one-two week stints. Also advocate for local organizations to take the lead in these partnerships, or at least to have a plan in place where they will eventually take the lead and the outside agency will in time pull away.
- Advocate with donors to donate to local organizations (instead of trying to donate “stuff” or services to Renaissance Village or other sites), partnering with local organizations, and turn away the short-term service stints where possible. Make sure BRAF staff know how to direct them to local organizations, and advocate with LFRC to train the management companies (KETA and any others) to look for services that are sustainable and local.

Recommendations in terms of BRAF’s grantmaking work:

- Continue to maintain standards of accountability for grantees of the Katrina Displaced Persons Fund - - even though these are critical and fast-paced times, grantees and partners should still be held accountable to provide services for which they were funded and maintain quality of services.
- Provide follow-up and site visits (where possible) to agencies funded through the Katrina Displaced Persons Fund - - the needs of these evacuee populations and the circumstances surrounding the placement of services shift so quickly that agencies are sometimes overwhelmed and may need support and follow-up in providing services adequately. For example, agencies providing services at Renaissance Village face many obstacles (constantly shifting management priorities, lots of outside groups dropping in and duplicating an agency’s activities) and might need support in order to meet these obstacles and make sure these obstacles do not prevent an agency from providing needed services.

- Support outlying areas surrounding EBR - - some of the schools in outer parishes have few or no supportive services, and funding for counselors is being cut. Fund programs like Big Buddy, BG Club to move out to these areas, and/or advocate for City Year or Americorps to go out to these areas.

Recommendations for specific psychosocial/mental health activities:

- Supporting a two-pronged approach to educational services - - funding and support for improvements in the formal school system, but also funding and support for after-school programming and recreational activities. Long-term systemic change in the school system will take time - - in the short and long term, supportive outside-of-school activities can provide opportunities for youth that are not being reached by the school system. Don't stop funding them - these activities are both educational and psychosocial. Services provided by agencies such as Boys and Girls Club and Big Buddy offer an important chance for additional social interaction, ways to increase learning opportunities, boost self-esteem, and practice positive coping skills, all of which will help children thrive following Hurricane Katrina.
- Supporting mental health services that promote a preventive, psychoeducational approach and promotes social and community support. There will not be enough resources to go around to provide individual services to all those who may be in need long-term – so for maximum effectiveness resources should be directed at community-based methods for recovery. This could include PSA's on local radio/TV, parent support groups, stress management workshops, recreational activities and educational workshops through churches, etc.
- Supporting gaps in mental health services – some of the gaps I observed were people who don't qualify for services in the state mental health system, but can't afford private counseling, and thus have few options. I recommend that BRAF try to fund those agencies that do provide services to this in-between group (e.g. Family Services of Greater BR, Health Care Centers in Schools, I Care, BRCIC are some of the agencies I have heard good things about in meetings with partners). Additionally, there are not enough agencies providing mental health services and counseling for *adolescents*.