

Providing Support to Decision Makers

By keeping the overall response in mind, the TSW is in a unique position to provide support to decision makers. The TSW can:

- Advise on the deployment of Disaster Psychosocial Services (DPS) or Emergency Social Services (ESS) volunteers to assist on-scene first responders and the public
- Coordinate the deployment of volunteers to provide psychosocial support on-scene
- Provide psychosocial support in difficult or no-win situations by discussing trade-offs
- Help to manage stress related to making high risk, high consequence decisions

Team Support Worker Self-Care

It's important to remember that the TSW is experiencing the same events as EOC members. There is a need to ensure psychosocial support for the TSW as well through self-care and other supports.

TSWs should practice the same things they encourage EOC members to do, such as taking regular breaks outside the EOC, eating nourishing food, and staying hydrated. After the shift is over, doing something enjoyable for oneself is another good strategy for self-care.

Post-Event Debriefing & Continued Support

Psychosocial care shouldn't end when the disaster response is over. A TSW can facilitate a post-disaster debriefing that would provide information on:

- The major events that may have increased stress
- Possible stress responses
- Coping techniques
- Additional resources available in the short- and long-term

Psychosocial support should be ongoing, with follow-up in the days and weeks after the event. In some cases, it could take months, years, or even longer for the disaster event to be fully processed by those involved in the response.

Setting up a system of continued support for EOC members is beneficial – this could be structured or unstructured – and should take into consideration the different resources available for uniformed and non-uniformed EOC personnel.

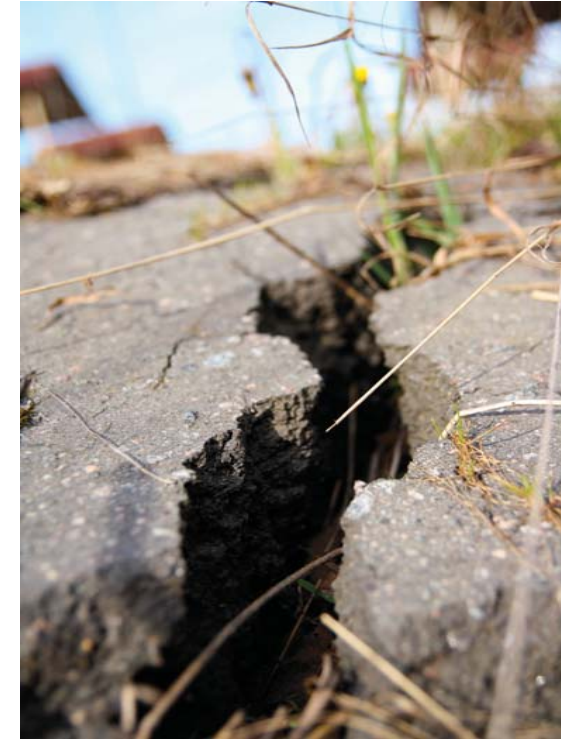
A TSW can make sure the proper information and resources are available after an event, such as, brochures or referrals, or they can let team members know to expect a follow-up, whether by phone or in person.



One of the most difficult challenges for health care providers is to maintain some kind of balance between the demands of the emergency and the needs of our own families. Keep lines of communication open.

Incorporating TSWs into the Emergency Operations Centre is a vital step in creating an understanding that all responders, including EOC members, are not immune to the impacts of stress and trauma. Integrating TSWs into EOCs is a proactive step towards providing the psychosocial support that will allow EOC members to continue doing their jobs effectively for a long time to come.

Black Fault Training Video Outline



Strategies for including a Team Support Worker in an Emergency Operations Centre

During a disaster response, EOC members are often exposed to increased levels of stress. This can result in EOC members experiencing an array of physical and psychological responses that could affect their work and day-to-day activities, and could lead to longer-term psychological symptoms. It is, therefore, important to offer psychosocial support from the initial stages of a disaster.

A Team Support Worker (TSW) can provide psychosocial support within the EOC, utilizing various strategies to:

- Build trust and credibility
- Provide psychosocial education
- Provide psychosocial support
- Provide support to decision makers
- Provide post-event debriefing and continued support



Role of a Team Support Worker in an EOC

A Team Support Worker (TSW) is someone who has received training in providing psychosocial support to those responding to a disaster, usually a psychologist, social worker, or counsellor.

A TSW can:

- Provide education about the causes and impacts of stress and psychological trauma
- Share coping strategies
- Provide psychosocial support to EOC members
- Provide support to decision makers when faced decisions

- Advise on the deployment of additional psychosocial supports to front line responders and affected civilian populations

Building Trust and Credibility

In order for TSWs to be as effective as possible, they will need to build a relationship with EOC teams.

Including TSWs in training and exercises before a disaster occurs is an important strategy for building trust and credibility. It allows:

- EOC members to better understand the need for psychosocial support and lets them become familiar with the role of the TSW
- TSWs to show team members what they can bring to the functioning of the team in regards to reducing stress and anxiety
- TSWs to practice their skills in a non-crisis situation

During a disaster, the TSW will be in the EOC to help and the EOC Director can greatly facilitate this by introducing the TSW in a positive, accepting fashion and by explaining his/her role within the EOC.

Providing Psychosocial Education

A key role of the TSW is to identify “teaching moments” when they can provide information to EOC members about the physical and psychological symptoms and impacts of stress and anxiety. For example, the TSW can point out times when the impacts of stress are likely to be felt.

Some of the strategies for TSWs to share information about stress during a disaster include:

- Making information on stress available in a break room
- Handing out “stress tip” cards or brochures
- Hanging posters on stress management

During particularly stressful or emotional events, such as a line-of-duty death, the TSW can work with the EOC Director to encourage acknowledgement of the event and its potential impacts. The TSW can suggest appropriate action such as taking a moment of silence, to recognize the contributions of the first responder to his/her community.



Providing Psychosocial Support in the EOC

There are a number of things TSWs can do to provide psychosocial support within the EOC. The TSW can:

- Encourage members to eat nourishing food, stay hydrated, and take regular breaks
- Assist the EOC Director to problem solve ways to reduce stress
- Identify and address issues that might arise within the EOC, such as when a team member is having difficulty coping

Anywhere the TSW can provide a greater sense of control for individual members or the team can help reduce stress within the EOC. Encouraging activities that promote routine, such as holding regular briefings, can create a sense of control.