

## **Nebraska Psychological First Aid Training Program University of Nebraska Public Policy Center**

### Brief Overview

This training program is an adaptation of “Community-Based Psychological Support” developed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The purpose of the Nebraska psychological first aid program is to equip natural helpers to provide psychological support to survivors of critical events (e.g. disasters, conflicts, accidents, etc.). This training program is 8 hours long and designed to fit into the busy schedule of natural helpers and community responders. It is segmented into seven modules, each addressing critical skills that can make an immediate and lasting impact on a person’s psychological health following a crisis.

### The Modules

#### **(1) Psychological support – 1 hour**

Defines psychological support and provides natural helpers with ways to provide support to individuals following critical events. The module focuses on providing psychological support in disasters, but the approach is applicable and relevant to other contexts as well.

#### **(2) Stress and coping – 1 hour**

This module focuses on how natural helpers can help people manage stress. Basic information about stress and coping is provided along with simple intervention techniques.

#### **(3) Supportive communication – 1.5 hour**

Natural helpers may themselves in challenging situations, where feeling confident about how to communicate well with other people is vitally important. This module provides practical communication tips that can be used in many situations.

#### **(4) Promoting community self-help – 1 hour**

Module 4 explores how to engage individuals and communities in their own recovery process. Engaging people in their own recovery can reduce feelings of powerlessness which in turn may reduce the risk of developing more serious psychological problems later.

#### **(5) Populations with special needs – 1 hour**

Module 5 describes populations who are vulnerable to the psychological effects of a disaster or traumatic event. It explores the psychological needs of these groups, while recognizing the vital role they play in social and community structures.

#### **(6) Helping the helper – .5 hour**

Timely and adequate support for helpers is a prerequisite for providing quality care and relief to others. Helpers are affected both positively and negatively by the experiences they have caring for others. This experience is framed with information about how the helpers can care for your own mental health needs.

#### **(7) De-escalation – 2 hour**

This module focuses on working with agitated or angry individuals and the strategies that can be employed to assist them. Natural helpers are introduced to active listening, interviewing and empathy skills that are useful in helping others manage fear and anxiety.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2003). *Community-based psychological support Training manual*.

Zagurski, R., Bulling, D., Chang, R. (2004). Nebraska Psychological First Aid Curriculum. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.