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Two Years After Dayton Tornadoes, MHRB Continues to Help People Cope
MHRB builds disaster-response readiness in response to Memorial Day tornadoes

SPRINGFIELD, OH (May 25, 2021) – Memorial Day weekend is a national reminder of those lost in the line of duty. Locally, it also bears reminders of other recent tragedies - including the Memorial Day tornadoes that touched down in Montgomery, Greene and Miami counties in 2019. As the area continues to heal, Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison (MHRB) is working to improve community readiness to respond to future events.

Thanks to the Ohio Disaster Response Project (ODRP), a state grant awarded to and managed by a partnership between Greene, Miami and Montgomery Counties, behavioral health providers are receiving training specific to addressing and preventing trauma, and also to become trainers themselves, boosting community resilience now and in the future.

“We applied for the ODRP grant to provide robust resources for people who experienced trauma as a result of the tornadoes and to provide resources for immediate crisis response, but also to increase our community’s capacity to respond to trauma,” said Dr. Greta Mayer, CEO of MHRB. “More care providers trained means more teachers and supporters, which allows more people to be trained throughout the community.”

Some of the trainings being offered to care providers and community members include:

- Trauma 101, which offers an introduction to the impact that trauma has on mental health and is designed to empower members of the general public to educate people in key community roles, such as teachers, healthcare workers, law enforcement and church leaders. MHRB reports that thirteen people now are certified to train others in this program, with an additional 15 signed up to be trained. Program coordinators aim to train 350 people by the conclusion of the grant.
- NOVA Crisis Response Team Training: The National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) provides caregivers with techniques to best deliver critical education, trauma mitigation and emotional first aid to victims, survivors and community members in the event of a mass-casualty or natural disaster. A NOVA Crisis Response Team is a group of individuals specifically trained to provide these services in the aftermath of a critical incident, either small-scale or mass-casualty. ODRP will fund training for up to 45 people, who upon completion of the program will be able to join a state-wide crisis response team.

- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA):** The ODRP grant is also allowing for 25 behavioral health providers to become certified Mental Health First Aid trainers. MHFA uses evidence-based models to identify and intervene when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis. Like other first aid skills, such as CPR or the Heimlich Maneuver, MHFA gives anyone the skills to help in an emergency until professional help can be found.

MHRB offers these trainings regularly and provides free customized trainings for businesses. The ODRP grant, however, gives the region a much-needed jumpstart on building capacity in preparation for future disasters and traumatic events.

“These trainings are fairly well-known, mainstream programs, but they’re also cost-prohibitive and time-consuming. It can cost a mental health provider thousands of dollars to get certified, so imagine how difficult it would be to get this training as a volunteer. This opportunity through the Ohio Disaster Response Project makes critical mental health and trauma services more accessible to more people,” said Carolyn Wright, assistant director of treatment and support at MHRB. “And because it’s a collaborative grant, it has provided opportunity for cross-training and collaboration with our neighbors. In 2019, everyone came together to support the affected community. That’s what we want the outcome to be – we want people to feel prepared to respond to where the need is.”

Most of the trainings offered this summer still have registration slots available. To sign up or learn more, visit the MHRB website at www.mhrb.org/events-training.

While regional agencies push to build trauma-support infrastructure in the region, Wright recognized that people who have experienced loss still need immediate support, especially on memorial weekends. She offered the following suggestions to help cope:

1. **Expect to have emotions arise.** “I’ve been a therapist the bulk of my career. Whenever we’re approaching milestones of loss, I think it’s important to just expect to have feelings. There’s no right or wrong way. Grief and loss feel different and look different for every person. Normalize the messy feelings. Let it happen,” said Wright.
2. **Be kind to yourself.** “Give yourself space to rest and ask for help,” said Wright. “Do something nice for yourself, take the day off and do something fun.”
3. **Find a way to mark the day.** “Whether it’s spending time with a loved one, writing a letter or volunteering, have an active plan to do something for that day. A lot of us try to avoid thinking about it and then it’s here and we don’t have a plan to deal with the feelings that come up,” said Wright.

Most importantly, said Wright, is to acknowledge the feelings that come up.

“We think if we don’t feel good there’s something wrong. But sometimes not feeling good is the best feeling because these things are tough and we’re not going to feel great. Expect to feel some sort of way about this milestone, but also have a plan of how you want to acknowledge the day. It doesn’t have to be written down. The important thing is to just normalize that what happened was not normal and you’re not going to feel normal,” she said.

If you need support, call any of the following free, 24/7 helplines.

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline - 800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line – Text ‘4HOPE’ to 741-741
- Clark Greene Madison Warmline - 937-662-9080

For more information about mental health and substance use resources in Clark, Greene and Madison counties, please visit the MHRB website at www.mhrb.org.

ABOUT MHRB

Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) assists partners, stakeholders, residents, and anyone at risk of mental health or substance use concerns in our three-county area, providing pathways to mental health and addiction services. In collaboration with more than 20 care providers, the board advocates for the mental health needs and facilitates delivery of quality care for all ages, regardless of income or ability to pay.

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