



APA Public Interest Government Relations Office

Public Mental Health Emergency Preparedness Act

Public Mental Health Emergency Preparedness Act of 2007 (S. 1452)

Sponsored by Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Pete Domenici (R-NM)

The American Psychological Association urges Congress to enact the Public Mental Health Emergency Preparedness Act of 2007 (S.1452) to enhance national preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to address the mental health aspects of disasters and public health emergencies. This legislation would amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a National Center for Public Mental Health Emergency Preparedness (NCPMHEP) to address mental health concerns and coordinate and implement the development and delivery of mental health services in the event of bioterrorism or other public health emergencies.

Specifically, the NCPMHEP would:

- Prepare emergency health professionals across the United States to provide mental health services in the aftermath of catastrophic events that present psychological consequences for communities and individuals, including potentially vulnerable populations such as children, individuals with disabilities, those with pre-existing mental health problems, older adults, caregivers, and individuals living in poverty;
- Coordinate with existing mental health efforts of federal, state and local agencies, and governmental and nongovernmental disaster relief organizations;
- Coordinate with other youth serving entities to provide:
 - support services to those with mental health and substance-related disorders;
 - prevention and intervention services for mental health and substance-related disorders to youth; and
 - resources and consultation to address the psychological trauma needs of families, caregivers, emergency health professionals, and all other professionals providing care in emergency situations.

In addition, the Public Mental Health Emergency Preparedness Act of 2007 would:

- Create a nationwide registry of trained medical and mental health volunteers for deployment in the event of a public health emergency to identify health professionals who have been trained using the curricula approved by the NCPMHEP; and
- Establish and maintain a central clearinghouse of comprehensive information on public mental health emergency preparedness and service-delivery to enable emergency health professionals and other members of the public to increase their awareness of and capacity to address public mental health emergency preparedness.

