

Emerging Minds.

Supporting infants, children and families in disaster response online course

Everyone, regardless of their professional background, can play a role in supporting infants, children and families during and after disasters.



About this course

Without adequate protection and support, the experience and impacts of a disaster can disrupt children's sense of safety and development, cause significant distress, and lead to long-term mental health difficulties.¹ However, with the right responses and support, infants and children who experience a disaster can recover and adapt well.²

You do not need to be a mental health specialist to limit the impacts of disaster on children's wellbeing and support their recovery. By completing this course you can increase your capacity to support infants, children and families, and positively impact their lives both immediately after a disaster and in the long term.

Why was this course developed?

Supporting infants, children and families during disaster response was created to give first responder workers and volunteers a foundational understanding of:

- the impact of disasters on children's mental health
- how children of different ages and developmental stages respond to disasters
- how to provide support using tools such as psychological first aid
- why it is essential to tailor support to children and families' needs.

It also highlights the importance of children's relationships with their parents and caregivers during times of crisis.

References

1. Royal Far West & UNICEF Australia. (2021). *Bushfire recovery (The children's voices report)*. Royal Far West.
2. Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health. (2020). *Australian guidelines for the prevention and treatment of Acute Stress Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Complex PTSD*. Phoenix Australia.

Who is this course for?

This course is for workers and volunteers involved in emergency response who may interact with infants, children, young people and their families during or immediately after disasters.

Learning outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

- understand how disasters can impact infant and child mental health and wellbeing, and the importance of their relationships with parents and caregivers during times of crisis
- plan how you will use psychological first aid to support infant, child and family mental health within the scope of your role
- tailor your support depending on children's age, development, relationships and responses
- safely support infants and children separated from their parents, and the reunification process, by providing reassurance, information and space
- set up family-friendly, low stress environments for infants, children and families to rest and play
- connect families to the right support at the right time
- recognise when you and your own family might need support during and after disaster, and take time to look after yourselves.

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