

Psychological First Aid Overview

What is Psychological First Aid (PFA)?

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a community based model for providing peer support to those who have just experienced a crisis. It is not the same as psychotherapy or crisis debriefing.ⁱ PFA involves a series of interventions that are designed to increase stability and promote coping.ⁱⁱ Most members of a community can be involved in PFA in some way.

The Objectives of PFA are toⁱⁱⁱ:

- Establish a human connection in a nonintrusive, compassionate manner.
- Enhance immediate and ongoing safety, and provide physical and emotional comfort.
- Calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed or distraught victims.
- Help victims to tell you specifically what their immediate needs and concerns are, and gather additional information as appropriate.
- Offer practical assistance and information to help victims address their immediate needs and concerns.
- Connect victims as soon as possible to social support networks, including family members, friends, neighbors, and team members.
- Support adaptive coping, acknowledge coping efforts and strengths, and empower victims; encourage adults, children, and families to take an active role in their recovery.
- Provide information that may help victims cope effectively with the psychological impact of the trauma.
- Be clear about your availability and (when appropriate) link the victim to another member of the crisis response team, crisis debriefing services, mental health services, or relevant specialists.

Additional Resources/Supporting Documents:

ⁱ Comparison of Psychological First Aid; Crisis Debriefing (9.3)

ⁱⁱ Steps of Psychological First Aid (9.2)

ⁱⁱⁱ Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide, 2nd Edition. National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD. 2006, 6-7. Available online:

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//pfa_field_operations_guide.pdf