

# Collaborative model for post-disaster behavioral health recovery may serve as standard

22 June 2018, by Leslie Capo



Credit: Louisiana State University

Faculty in LSU Health New Orleans schools of Medicine and Public Health and colleagues report that a collaborative effort to build capacity to address behavioral health and promote community resilience after the 2016 Great Flood in Baton Rouge, LA successfully expanded local behavioral health services delivery capacity and that the model may be useful to other disaster-struck communities. The Case Study on the project was published this month in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Building upon previous disaster recovery work done by community and academic partners, the Community and Patient-Powered Research Network partnered with Louisiana-based disaster recovery experts, researchers, clinicians and community agencies to develop and implement a community resilience disaster recovery program, Resilient Baton Rouge. The first objective of the program was to improve the local ability to deliver care addressing post-disaster [behavioral health](#)

issues beginning with depression in adults. RBR expanded the local mental health infrastructure by supporting the hiring of new staff to provide direct services and training new and existing providers on evidence-based models of care.

RBR achieved the second objective of planning and coordinating service delivery by developing a training portfolio to support behavioral health practitioners, primary care providers, community health workers, other healthcare and social services providers, including support for medication management and clinical assessment, cognitive behavioral therapy, care/case management and health worker outreach, team-based and system support and component parts such as depression screeners and outcomes' tracking, as well as patient and provider educational resources.

To meet the third aim of supporting and developing partnerships to promote community resilience-building activities, RBR created an advisory council composed of stakeholders from state and local government, a representative of the major hospitals, mental health providers and community leaders involved in behavioral health in greater Baton Rouge. They advised on strategies for project implementation, promoting resilience and encouraging collaboration and engagement of flood-impacted communities.

The fourth objective was to create a national community resilience learning collaborative through which experts could share resources and best practices. RBR partnered with grassroots organizations and governmental agencies. It identified experts throughout the country to explore developing a National Resilience Learning Collaborative (NRLC) dedicated to sharing best practices for promoting disaster preparedness and community [resilience](#) and recovery relating to

behavioral health.

"The record-breaking 2017 Hurricane Season illustrates the need for coordinated, community-engaged disaster response," noted Benjamin Springgate, MD, MPH, FACP, Associate Professor and Chief of the Section of Community and Population Medicine at LSU Health New Orleans School of Medicine. "We hope that our lessons learned in Baton Rouge and the next steps such as our recent National Academies of Sciences-awarded Community Resilience Learning Collaborative and Research Network (C-LEARN) will help other communities plan for and respond to post-disaster behavioral [health](#) needs and recovery. Even now we have started working with additional partners in at-risk communities across the country such as Houston, Puerto Rico, and New York City to carry on this important work."

**More information:** Robin Keegan et al, Case Study of Resilient Baton Rouge: Applying Depression Collaborative Care and Community Planning to Disaster Recovery, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph15061208](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15061208)

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