



Disaster Distress Helpline Launches New Online Peer Support Communities

Two New Groups Dedicated to Survivors of Mass Violence & Parents and Caregivers Impacted by COVID-19

First Group Continues to Support Healthcare Workers Impacted by COVID-19

NEW YORK, NY (October 25, 2021) – The national Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) today launched two new *Online Peer Support Communities* (OPSC). The program is offered online via private Facebook Groups, and is moderated by trained DDH Peer Supporters to provide a safe environment to members who may be experiencing emotional distress. DDH crisis counselors are also available to members 24/7/365 via a customized “Crisis Support Over Messenger” feature which can be accessed via the groups.

The first new Online Peer Support Community is dedicated to Parents and Caregivers Impacted by COVID-19, and the second focuses on Survivors of Mass Violence. These groups are in addition to the DDH OPSC for Healthcare Workers Impacted by COVID-19 that was launched in May 2021.

Peers who fit the criteria for the communities are able to request membership through the [DDH Online Peer Support Communities Facebook page](#), where links are available for each group under the “About” section. After clicking the “Join” button, potential members are asked three questions that they must answer in order to join. All DDH OPSCs are free and confidential.

“Peer support is often a key component to healing for those who are affected by a disaster. By connecting with others who were impacted by similar disasters, survivors can feel less alone through offering support to each other in coping with distress during recovery,” said Christian Burgess, Director of the Disaster Distress Helpline.

Trained DDH Peer Supporters, who have lived experience within each community (i.e. healthcare workers helping healthcare workers), engage with members and offer validation and encouragement. Peer Supporters also moderate discussions on important topics within each support community, and provide timely and relevant resources throughout the disaster cycle, including in the immediate aftermath of major disaster events and during long-term recovery.

Learn more about the DDH OPSC program by visiting StrengthAfterDisaster.org/Peer-Support.

About DDH Online Peer Support Communities

Healthcare Workers Impacted by COVID-19

The first DDH OPSC welcomes healthcare workers impacted by COVID-19 to join a safe space to come together for mutual aid, share trusted resources, and help one another cope and heal as the country recovers from the devastating pandemic. Healthcare workers are defined as any worker in a medical community care setting (e.g. hospital personnel, emergency responders, nursing professionals, physicians, behavioral and medical health care providers). If you are a healthcare worker and need support, please join our group by requesting to be a member [here](#).

Parents and Caregivers Impacted by COVID-19

DDH OPSC is offering peer support for parents & caregivers of children and youth, currently 18 years old or younger, who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents can engage with other parents who are experiencing challenges related to COVID-19, such as childcare, new return-to-school policies, unemployment, food insecurity, health concerns, working from home, returning to the workplace, and more. If you are a parent or caregiver and need support, please join our group by requesting to be a member [here](#).

Survivors of Mass Violence

DDH OPSC is offering peer support for survivors of mass violence in the United States. Survivors and loved ones who have experienced an incident of mass violence can connect with one another in a private group and provide emotional support to one another in the aftermath of a mass shooting or an act of terrorism, including how to cope with activating events and memorial dates, self-care strategies, and challenges with daily living. If you are a survivor or the loved one of a survivor of mass violence and need support, please join our group by requesting to be a member [here](#).

About the Disaster Distress Helpline

The Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) is the only national hotline dedicated to providing year-round crisis counseling to individuals experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. This multilingual crisis support service is available 24/7 via telephone and SMS to residents in the United States and its territories. Call or text 1-800-985-5990 to connect with a trained counselor. The Disaster Distress Helpline is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and administered by Vibrant Emotional Health. Visit disasterdistress.samhsa.gov and strengthafterdisaster.org. Follow the DDH on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About Vibrant Emotional Health

Vibrant Emotional Health is a non-profit organization that helps individuals and families achieve emotional wellbeing. For over 50 years, our groundbreaking solutions have delivered high-quality services and support, when, where and how people need it. We offer confidential emotional support through our state-of-the-art contact center and crisis hotline services that use leading edge telephone, text and web-based technologies and include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Disaster Distress Helpline, NFL Life Line and NYC Well. Through our community wellness programs individuals and families obtain supports and skills they need to thrive. Our advocacy and education initiatives promote mental wellbeing as a social responsibility. Each year we help more than 2.5 million people live healthier and more vibrant lives. We're advancing access, dignity and respect for all and revolutionizing the system for good. Visit vibrant.org. And follow Vibrant on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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