Ferguson Unrest
Aftermath of Michael Brown’s Death & Grand Jury Decision

STRATEGIES AND LESSONS LEARNED
Community trauma & toxic stress (Concentrated Poverty, Lack of Opportunity, Criminal Justice Oppression)

Canfield Green is one of 4 large apartment complexes within square mile – Section 8 subsidies

Rapid demographic change since 2000 (Suburbanization of Poverty)

66% of population is African-American; 9% of police force is African – American

Income generated through municipal court is 2nd largest source of revenue for the municipality

Movement of concentrated poverty
Upon the shooting death of Michael Brown, his body lay where he died for almost 4 hours before removal. Incident ignited outrage and an "enough is enough" response – (collision of trauma, discrimination, and perceived oppression). Almost immediate “over the top” militaristic response exasperating fear, anger & lack of safety. Arrest injury, and detention of many innocent individuals, including media, adding to sense unfairness and a situation “out of control”. All of this repeated for months after the 11/24/14 announcement of grand jury decision to not indict Darren Wilson.
St. Louis City and County Resilience Coalition

- Initiated by DMH with DSS and DESE as lead partner state agencies – September, 2014
- Convened more than 30 behavioral health, social service & law enforcement agencies to coordinate support for affected individuals, families & communities
- Established four work groups – *Communications, Community Engagement, Resource Development, & community economic support*
- Multiple meetings with community organization, affected business owners, churches & schools to identify need and best way for coalition to provide support
- Worked with several school districts in the affected areas to address the needs of children, teachers, & administrators
Assisted with the provision of basic needs (food, clothing, diapers, etc.)

Collaborated with several churches in affected communities to develop “safe spaces” with mental health professionals on-site during protest

Collaborated with UMSL to provide specific trauma education & counseling

Community listening sessions provided to more than 1,000 community members at various locations

Coordinated efforts with the Office of Community Engagement, established by Governor Nixon
Listening Sessions

- Focused on the intersection of trauma, toxic stress, structural racism and emotional well being
- Provide opportunity for people to share their thoughts and feelings with another person
- Three fifteen minutes presentations – 1) trauma/toxic stress and impact on physical and emotional health; 2) vestiges and impact of segregated housing and other policies; 3) recommendations for self-care and assessment
- Dyads
- Debrief
Lessons Learned

- DMH Community Mental Health Center response needs to be better planned and coordinated
- Internal volunteer response is robust initially; keeping momentum over time is more challenging
- Difficulty recruiting younger audience base for listening sessions
- Preparation needs to be ongoing for this type of incident response; particularly identification and preparation of “first responders” who are ready
- Overall need to increase bench strength and competence
COMTREA

Andrea Cuneio, MA, LPC - Vice President IT
Community Treatment, Inc.

FQHC & CCBHO serving Jefferson County, MO
How we got involved

- 2015 & 2017 federal disaster declarations
- Jefferson County is surrounded on 3 sides by rivers, including Mississippi to the east and Meramec to the north
- Became involved at the request of MO DMH Office of Disaster Services
- Local city government asked for assistance in hard-hit area
- Participated in Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARCs) for county
- Joined in regional COAD/VOAD meetings quickly
- Jefferson County COAD was formed 6 months prior to 2015 disaster
  - New process to many in the county
Involvement

- Focus on helping survivors with behavioral health response to disaster as well as connecting to appropriate resources
- Completed door-to-door outreach in impacted areas
- Offered short-term support through Crisis Counseling grant as well as facilitated engagement with agency long-term supports as needed
- Involvement with community groups created for supporting survivors
- Shifted to education on Disaster Preparedness as recovery progressed
Survivor reactions

- **2015**
  - Many individuals impacted who had never previously been flooded; significant shock/surprise/disbelief
  - “Jeffco Island” - Most main roads connecting county to St. Louis were closed at one point
  - Timing of the disaster over the holiday added additional stress to the event
  - Anger over response of the city/utilities that compounded impact of flood
  - Community came together to support survivors and strong feeling of resilience

- **2017**
  - Many individuals had just recovered from 2015 and were re-impacted
  - Significant re-traumatization
  - Fatigue
  - Decrease in community support for survivors due to frequency
  - Continued feeling of resilience among survivors - “We got this”
Key Lessons Learned

- Involvement in community during blue skies makes response much easier.
- Be present and available. Being available for support has a huge impact on survivors, even if they don’t need your support in the moment. Get out in the community.
- Ask questions! Don’t be hesitant to ask for clarification with acronyms or processes when working with community partners.
- Educate others on what you and your agency can offer. Don’t assume everyone knows what you do or services you provide.
Tip to get involved

- Messaging within the community regarding the availability of support/services during a disaster
  - Anyone impacted by disaster was given priority intakes and/or 3 free sessions
- COAD - Community Organizations Active in Disaster
  - The more engaged of a participant you or your organization can be the more you will get out of this group
  - Volunteer to fill needed roles, such as secretary for the group
- Proactively train staff in disaster behavioral health response
  - Psychological First Aid
- Identify available resources for staff to use at the time of disaster so it is easily at hand when needed
HEALING JOPLIN: LESSONS LEARNED FROM Ozark Center’s MH Disaster Response

Vicky Mieseler, Chief Administrative Officer
How we got involved

SCHOOL BASED STATISTICS
Percentage of Participants by Category
Cumulative Through January 31, 2012

Counseling 14%
Observation 7%
Intervention 4%
Trauma 5%
Group Therapy 2%
Tornado Related 14%
Other Anger/Abuse 14%
Individual Activity 6%
Case Management 18%
Prescreen 29%
Survivor reactions

- Pre-Disaster: Warning, Threat
- Impact: Emotional Highs, Execute, Response, Survive
- Honeymoon: Community Cohesion, Heroic, Nurturing
- Disillusionment: Setback, Reevaluation, Grief, Loss
- Reconstruction: A New Beginning, Working Through Grief, Coming to Terms
- Anniversary Reactions

Phases:
- Up to One Year
- After Anniversary
Reactions of responders

- What’s the same?
  - Responders are most often survivors in large scale natural disasters.
  - They will have the same survivor reactions as those that aren’t responders.

- What’s different?
  - Increased guilt
  - Increased frustration
  - Extreme concern for family members
Key lessons learned

- A single agency local to the affected area has advantages because of existing relationships.
- Help is necessary and emergency credentialing is critical.
- Funding is imperative.
- Increasing what you already do isn’t what the community needs.
- Continue children’s routine.
- Education is critical to helping children deal with continued anxiety.
- It is critical to place yourself in the presence of experts.
- Take advantage of rebuilding.
- Education, awareness and prevention is imperative.
- Get creative
Tips to get involved

- Become involved with your local Community Organizations Active in Disaster.
- Become involved with your local Healthcare Coalition.
- Enhance treatment and services for children who have experienced traumatic events.
- Increase number of evidence-based practices.
- Think outside the box.
- Talk to survivors about what they need.
- Update your COOP and engage your staff in exercises annually.