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**HOTLINES, FREE PUBLICATIONS HELP IN COPING WITH EMOTIONAL
AFTERMATH OF TORNADOES**

A number of free publications to help Oklahomans deal with the emotional impact of the damaging tornadoes that struck last week are available from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

The department also operates two hotlines that can provide emotional support and referral to other services. They are the “Reachout” Hotline, 1-800-522-9054, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and “Teenline,” 1-800-522-TEEN (8336), in operation noon to midnight daily.

Additionally, the department is applying for emergency federal funding that would allow crisis counselors to provide mental health outreach to people needing emotional assistance during this very difficult time for so many people, said ODMHSAS Deputy Commissioner for Mental Health Services Rand Baker.

“The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is dedicated to providing mental health services to Oklahomans in need,” Baker said. “Just as we did with ‘Project Heartland’ after the May 1999 tornadoes and the Oklahoma City bombing before that, we want to help out now however we can.”

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Baker said the publications available through the department's Oklahoma Prevention Resource Center cover a range of topics, from anxiety to grief to post-traumatic stress disorder. Some of the available brochures are as follows:

- *We Can Cope: Having Normal Reaction to an Abnormal Event*
- *Coping with Disaster: Emotional Health Issues for Victims*
- *Life After Trauma*
- *Helping Children After a Disaster*
- *Warning Signs of Trauma-Related Stress*
- *What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?*
- *After Disaster: Understanding Traumatic Grief*
- *After Disaster: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*

These and other booklets provide information on emotional symptoms that may develop in the aftermath of a natural disaster, such as a tornado, or man-made disasters such as the Oklahoma City bombing or the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The publications note that when losses occur suddenly and traumatically, feelings of grief may be intense, long-lasting and emotionally disabling. Traumatic grief is especially severe among those who are directly exposed to a disaster, said Baker. Also, some signs of emotional trauma may not appear for weeks after a triggering event.

Coping styles of children and adults also are addressed, along with information on reducing the symptoms of PTSD and speeding recovery, helping others, and handling loss.

Publications are available by stopping by the agency's Oklahoma Prevention

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Resource Center, located in Suite 82 at Shepherd Mall, 2401 N.W. 23rd St. in Oklahoma City, by calling 405-522-3810, or by e-mailing njanssen@odmhsas.org.

Some publications also are available on the ODMHSAS website, www.odmhsas.org/publications.htm, as is a list of links to several disaster-relief agencies.

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