

# Nebraska Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team Recruitment and Application Package

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**Overview**

On August 7, 2008, the Governor's Homeland Security Policy Group gave the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) approval to move forward with the formation of a Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) for the State of Nebraska. BHERT consists of DBH State Policy, Risk Communications, Subject Matter experts, as well as state employees who can be deployed on short notice at the request of the Governor via the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). This document is limited to the recruitment of State Employees who may be deployed on short notice.

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## Overview Nebraska Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of the Nebraska Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) is to provide support and consultation to state personnel/teams or response agencies relevant to behavioral health needs that arise following a disaster. Nebraska BHERT provides:

1. Rapid deployment to local areas of behavioral health personnel who are experienced in disaster-related community needs assessment, coordination of resources, training, addressing behavioral health needs of staff or consumers, assisting in recovery activities, and related assigned tasks.
2. A resource for state-run facilities or operations impacted by disaster (such as Regional Centers or Correctional facilities).
3. A resource of the Governor in the event that behavioral health expertise is requested by another State's Governor through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Team members must opt in before EMAC deployment.
4. Training or consultation to local areas or state-run facilities during preparedness, response, or recovery periods. This will generally be handled on a case-by-case basis through the Division of Behavioral Health.

**Authorization:** The Nebraska Emergency Management Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. 81-829.36 to 81-829.75) provides statutory authorization for the formation and use of State Emergency Response Teams. The formation of a behavioral health emergency response team in Nebraska was approved by the Governor's Homeland Security Policy Group on August 7, 2008. BHERT is composed of state employees who work in the area of behavioral health. Thus, BHERT is considered a state resource. The team generally supports behavioral health functions referenced in the Nebraska State Emergency Operations Plan. For more information see NEMA Overview [<http://www.nema.ne.gov/administration/index.html>] and the State Emergency Operations Plan [<http://www.nema.ne.gov/response-recovery/emergency-ops-plan.html>].

**How to become involved:** You are receiving this packet now because you have been identified as someone who is eligible to be considered for inclusion on this team. There are three steps you must take to be considered for inclusion in BHERT:

Step 1: You must obtain approval from your supervisor to apply

Step 2: You must complete the application on-line

Step 3: You must complete the Nebraska Psychological First Aid training within the first year of involvement with the team

Step 4: You must complete four on-line courses (approximately one hour each) through the emergency management institute over the course of the next year.

In addition, you will be asked to attend yearly, in mid-July, a ½ day exercise followed by a full day conference (CEU's available for conference attendance).

APPLY ON-LINE AT: [https://unl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_aWr6NRmfSZ0XKV7](https://unl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aWr6NRmfSZ0XKV7)

## **Criteria for BHERT member**

All applicants must:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Be willing to travel across the state as needed
- Possess a valid Nebraska Driver's license
- Demonstrate knowledge of Nebraska behavioral health systems
- Meet minimum physical requirements:
  - Walk unaided
  - Lift 30 pounds
  - See and hear within a normal range (vision/hearing correction to normal range is acceptable)
- Be willing to complete all required trainings
  - ICS-100, 200, 700, and 800
  - Nebraska-model Psychological First Aid Training
  - Future required trainings as announced

Some team members may, at times, serve as clinical supervisors during a disaster response. Those serving as clinical supervisors must also:

- Possess full Nebraska licensure (not provisional) as a psychiatrist, psychologist, LIMHP, or LMHP.
- MD, APRN, RN, or LADC may be considered based on applicable experience.

Potential team members will be required to submit application materials and will be interviewed prior to being approved for team membership.

A background check may be required.

## **Key Characteristics & Abilities for BHERT**

Disaster behavioral health work is not a vocation suited to all people. Also, individuals who have qualities that make them thrive as responders immediately after a disaster may not possess qualities and skills required when providing services during the long term recovery stage. Once the community begins the long process of recovery, response personnel need different qualities and skills than were needed during the immediate response.

Overall, the key personal characteristics and abilities needed for disaster work are:<sup>1</sup>

- Mature
- Sociable
- Calm
- Knowledgeable about how systems work
- Flexible
- Tolerates ambiguity well
- Empathetic
- Genuine
- Shows positive regard for others
- Good listener

### **Immediate Response Phase**<sup>2</sup>

In the immediate response phase of disaster, an “**action orientation**” is important. Workers who do well with crisis intervention do well in this phase. Personnel who have worked in emergency services in a local mental health center or a hospital emergency room are frequently well-suited to this phase of disaster work.

### **Long-term Response Phase**

Long-term behavioral health disaster programs, covering the period from about one month to one year post-disaster, are different in nature and pace from the immediate response. During this phase, immediate services are beginning to shut down and locating disaster survivors becomes more difficult and thus mental health workers need to be adept and creative with outreach in the community. Additional qualities required by staff during this phase include:

- Patience
- Perseverance
- Tolerance for slow, non-immediate results of one’s work

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from: National Institute of Mental Health (2002). *Mental Health and Mass Violence: Evidence-Based Early Psychological Intervention for Victims/Survivors of Mass Violence. A Workshop to Reach Consensus on Best Practices*. NIH Publication No. 02-5138, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from: Myers, D. (1994). *Disaster response and recovery: A handbook for mental Health Professionals*. Rockville, Maryland: Center for Mental Health Services.

## **Expectations of BHERT Members**

Team members are identified and screened prior to being eligible for deployment.

Team members will be deployed to meet specific mission objectives, and will be briefed on the mission and objectives prior to deployment.

Team members are expected to:

- Participate in readiness activities including training, exercises, and team meetings
- Submit to a pre-deployment health screening when required prior to deployment
- Carry out duties as assigned by team leader during deployment.
- Document deployment activities on team-member activity report.
- Participate in post-deployment activities including operational debriefings and after-action reporting.

The mission of any team will vary according to the disaster event(s). The details will be up to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) as well as the Division of Behavioral Health Director or designee(s) [such as the Chief Clinical Officer and/or Disaster Coordinator]. For example:

- It is possible one is deployed in the field for up to fourteen (14) consecutive days, and required to work 12 hours per day.
- BHERT was part of the five preliminary flood damage assessment teams that went to 60 counties the week of June 21, 2010 to gather information on the magnitude of damage to homes, property, businesses, and public infrastructure. These state behavioral health employees supported the teams, assessed the behavioral health needs of people impacted by severe storms and floods and provided “psychological first aid” to people they came in contact with along the way.

## Personal Preparedness Expectations

BHERT personnel should be prepared to respond to a mission on **short notice** (such as within a few hours of receiving an assignment). Once on duty, BHERT personnel could be on an assignment for time periods lasting **up to 14 days**.

BHERT personnel should have a deployment pack containing necessary personal clothing, equipment, and supplies readily available for immediate mobilization. This should include appropriate clothing for the environment, personal hygiene items, medications, and protective items such as sunscreen and insect repellent. It should be contained in 1 or 2 personal packs at most. It is advantageous to be able to split the personal gear so that a small carrying pack of personal necessities can remain with the member at all times, while the gear not needed during transport or at the areas of operation can be left at a central location.

It is recommended that for space reasons, Team members pack seven days of clothing and underclothes. Laundry service or field washing may be necessary to complete the remainder of the time deployed.

Although not required, up-to-date tetanus and hepatitis B vaccination is recommended due to common disaster hazards encountered during disaster response.

## Personal Pre-Departure Checklist

Before departing for deployment, make sure to take care of personal business and family matters:

- Arrange caretakers for children/other dependents
- Stop the mail/newspaper
- Board pets
- Cancel meetings and appointments (work, school, church, etc.)
- Ensure access to home voice mail
- Forward office phone and/or email
- Notify family
- Provide emergency contact info to work and family
- Get current prescription medication(s)
- Copy current immunization record
- Gather current identification/credentials
- Inventory supplies prior to deployment
- Secure your home

## Recommended Packing List

The following list suggests minimum requirements to provide the self-sufficiency necessary during mission operations. This list may be modified by Team management based on deployment location and weather conditions. Team members should adjust this minimum inventory for the specific requirements of the mission.

- Incident Response ID card with Lanyard (issued at deployment briefing)
- Drivers License
- Large Back Pack
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Laundry Bag
- Appropriate clothing (for 7 days)
- Cell Phone & Charger
- Clock (Manual Alarm)
- Watch
- Multi-tool / pocket knife
- Small Flashlight with Spare Batteries / Wind-up flashlight
- Small First Aid Kit
- Rain Gear
- 2 Weeks of Prescription Medications
- Toiletries/personal hygiene:
  - Tooth Brush, Tooth Paste, Travel Shampoo, Soap, Wash Cloth, Towel
  - Aspirin, Roloids, Tylenol, Etc.
  - Razor & Shaving Cream, Deodorant, Sunscreen (UV), Baby Wipes, Detergent, 2 Rolls Toilet Paper, Q-Tips, Insect Repellant, Hand Sanitizer, Foot and Baby Powder
  - Several large plastic zipper bags to put these items in to keep dry.
- Copy of immunization record
- Health alert bracelet/chain or laminated card with allergies, medications
- Spare Glasses/ Contact supplies
- Ear plugs
- Surgical Gloves/Heavy work gloves
- Incident management references
- BHERT Manual (electronic and/or hardcopy versions)

Team members may also be expected to bring 24 hours worth of food and water. This will be stated along with other expectations at the time a member is notified for deployment. Food should be of a type that can be easily carried in your pack and is resistant to spoilage.

## **Application form: Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team**

**on-line at:** [https://unl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_aWr6NRmfSZ0XKV7](https://unl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aWr6NRmfSZ0XKV7)

Please provide the following personal contact information:

First Name

Last Name

Home Address

Address 2

City

Zip Code

Email Address

Home phone

Cell phone

The following contact information for your employer is needed in the event you are mobilized as a State Asset in response to a disaster or large-scale emergency. Your employer will not be contacted unless you are asked to be part of a mobilized team.

Employer (Dept or Agency)

Division (if applicable)

Address of work site

Address 2

City

Zip Code

Your position or role

Name of Immediate Supervisor or Department Chair/Head

Email of person above

What is your employment setting?

(e.g., in-patient, corrections, etc.)

Please provide the name of someone you wish to be contacted if an emergency arises while you are being trained or deployed as part of the risk communication cadre or the behavioral health emergency response team.

Emergency contact phone number

Please tell us of your general area(s) of expertise (check all that apply)

Risk communication (Please indicate if you are a Public Information Officer)

Clinical skills (list general areas of competence, e.g., children, elderly, substance abuse, etc)

Administrative skills (list general areas of competence, e.g., FEMA Crisis Counseling Program, facility management, etc)

Trainer (list general areas of competence as a trainer, e.g., Psychological First Aid (PFA), hotline, etc)

Please list any Professional Licenses or Certifications you currently hold in Nebraska

NIMS courses completed (check all that apply)

- 100
- 200
- 700
- 800
- Other

Have you completed the Nebraska Psychological First Aid Course?

- Yes
- No

Have you completed the State Defensive Driving Course?

- Yes
- No

Thank you! Nebraska Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team (N-BHERT) members with current Nebraska professional licensure should also register with the Department of Health and Human Services Medical and Health Volunteer Site:

<https://volunteers.ne.gov/ESAR-VHP/faces/jsp/login.jsp>