

MAIN ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTS FOR SHORT AND LONG TERMS

On February 6, 2023, an earthquake occurred in 10 provinces, its epicenter being Kahramanmaraş, resulting in direct and indirect negative impacts on many people. Unfortunately, there were people who lost their lives, as well as many people who were injured and lost their relatives and/or homes. The sudden and unexpected occurrence of the earthquake and the threat to our life safety resulted in a traumatizing effect on mental health. The aid provided after the earthquake is mainly aimed at meeting basic needs such as saving lives, treatment of physical injuries, shelter, etc. Meeting these needs is unquestionably of vital importance. However, considering the devastating effects of trauma on mental health, it is also crucial to identify acute and long-term psychological needs and organize intervention programs to address them. As a matter of fact, trauma-related psychological problems may persist even after the threat to life is removed.

Following the 1999 Gölcük earthquake, the Turkish Psychological Association started psychological support activities in the field and has been working in coordination with AFAD and other state institutions with our experienced psychologists since then (Düzce, Van, Elazığ and İzmir Earthquakes, Soma mining disaster, Muğla-Antalya Forest Fires, Kastamonu flood disasters). Currently, many volunteers from many provinces, especially the neighboring provinces of Kahramanmaraş, have applied to participate in psycho-social support activities. In this direction, our main goal is to quickly and accurately identify both acute and long-term needs and develop appropriate intervention programs for these needs. Having standardized psycho-social intervention plans to meet the needs, as well as having qualified human resources who have completed the necessary training, is of utmost importance for sustainable psycho-social support.

As mental health professionals, we know that trauma can cause deep wounds in our mental health. When left untreated, it causes many psychological problems both in the short and long term and can have threatening consequences for public mental health. For this reason, our project aims to contribute to public mental health by preventing the short and long-term psychological effects of trauma with qualified human resources and to implement a protective-preventive, sustainable model to work in the field.

Main activities planned

The aim is to provide acute and long-term psychological support to people directly and indirectly affected by the earthquake. Accordingly, acute trauma intervention will be carried out in tent cities in the first month.

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The Turkish Psychological Association has the status of an association working for the public interest..

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Before the intervention program, an analysis will be conducted to identify existing needs. This analysis will be carried out through tent visits and forms to be applied.

This intervention program is planned to be carried out with psychologists on a weekly and monthly basis. Every week, psychologists working in the field will be trained in trauma intervention techniques to increase their knowledge and skills before fieldwork. This training will be given by trainers with field experience on the days and durations determined. This training will also contribute to the formation of qualified human resources for possible future disasters.

After the completion of the training, the teams will start their work in separate tent areas. Intervention activities will mainly include psychological first-aid activities. These activities include providing acute intervention and psycho-education to individuals affected by the earthquake, organizing play groups with children, and workshops for families.

The next step of the team in the field is to provide therapeutic support to people suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms. It is planned to provide therapy support within our human resources to those who are assessed to be in need of therapy after the fieldwork and to those who reach our association through visibility activities. Reports examining the impact of the studies will be shared with experts working in the field following the completion of the studies.

We need support for the volunteer psychologists of our association to take part in the fieldwork related to the earthquake disaster in Kahramanmaraş and its surroundings (10 different provinces). We kindly ask for your support in this matter.

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