

September 13, 2006

**WWS 591H: The Provision of Mental Health Services in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina**

Monday, 6-9 pm  
333 Wallace

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**Workshop client:** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Focus issue:**

A number of philanthropic organizations, including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, have committed resources to programs that will help deal with mental health problems resulting from Hurricane Katrina. These programs are targeted to specific groups of groups of people (e.g. those with PTSD) and philanthropies can sustain funding for only limited periods of time. A broad question is how mental health care systems that were weak even prior to Katrina can be rebuilt and possibly strengthened. The specific issue that the workshop is being asked to address is:

Can the post-Katrina mental health programs being supported by philanthropies help build a policy base for the redevelopment of the mental health care system in New Orleans?

The primary recipient of the report will be the Vulnerable Populations Group at the Robert Wood Johnson, which is handling Katrina mental health projects. We expect that the report will be valuable to other foundations as well as policy makers and practitioners who are working in this area.

## **Logistics**

We will meet in 333 Wallace Hall, usually from 6 to 9 pm. However, we may need to shift the time to accommodate the schedules of guest speakers. Dinner will be served whenever a guest speaker is coming in.

Readings for the first four weeks of the semester will be in folders on the Blackboard site. There are some additional articles on E-reserves and in the “Background” folder. As we move forward, we’ll use the Blackboard site to keep drafts of sections of the report, supporting documents, etc. Documents that students want to post should be sent to Debbie Nexon or (if she is not available) to Chris Paxson or Kerry Griffin.

## **Workshop Requirements and Grading**

### Workshop participants will be required to:

- Attend workshop meetings on a regular basis unless there is a pressing need to be away.
- Either serve as one of two student liaisons, or make a workshop presentation during the first half of the semester. Presentation topics will be discussed and assigned during the first class.
- Write a background memo on a topic that is relevant to the report. The memos will be circulated prior to the trip over fall break. We will make memo assignments around week 3 of the semester.
- Make substantial contributions to the final report and to the presentation of the final report to the client.

### Assessments of performance:

Participants will be assessed on the basis of their contributions to the report. The overall assessment (i.e. grade) will reflect the following information:

*Self assessment:* At the end of the semester, workshop participants will be asked to write a memo that describe and evaluates their own contributions to the workshop.

*Peer assessments:* Participants will be asked to provide information on the performance of their colleagues. The purpose of these assessments will be to identify students who made exceptional contributions to the workshop and (possibly) those who make few contributions. Peer assessments will be shared only with the directors, and will be anonymous.

*Individual work products:* The quality of individual work products (presentations, memos, etc.) will be assessed by the directors.

*Final report and presentation:* The overall quality of the final report will be assessed by the directors and the client.

Because different workshop participants will have different responsibilities, it is impossible to assign exact “weights” to each of these components. We anticipate that about 50% of a participant’s final grade will reflect the quality of the final work produce and the remaining 50% will reflect individual contributions.

More important than the grade, participants will be given detailed feedback on the quality of their work by the directors and the client.

**Week 1 (September 18): Overview of workshop; Disaster Response**

Agenda

- Introductions; discussion of student's backgrounds and expectations.
- New Orleans before the hurricane: demography, economics and health care (Chris Paxson)
- Responses to disasters: what went right and what went wrong during Katrina (Sue Hassmiller; 7 p.m.)
- Philanthropic responses to post-Katrina mental health problems. (Kerry Griffin)
- Logistics: Choose 2 student liaisons; discuss organization and communications issues; make student presentation assignments; discuss trip over fall break.

Guest speaker

Susan Hassmiller will speak on disaster responses. Dr. Hassmiller is currently a senior program officer at RWJF and is the chair of the American Red Cross Disaster and Chapter Services Committee.

**Week 2 (September 25): The structure of mental health care systems**

Agenda

- Marti Knisley: Models of service delivery for mental health care, and federal, state and local interactions in the provision of mental health care.
- The mental health care system in New Orleans, before and after the crisis (student presentation)
- Logistics: Finalize proposal for mid-semester travel (due October 2).

Guest speaker

Marti Knisley will speak on the delivery of mental health services at the Federal, State and local level. She is currently the Director of the Community Support Initiative at the Technical Assistance Collaborative. She was formerly the director of the District of Columbia Mental Health Department, where she developed new programs for homeless people with mental health problems. Ms. Knisley has also directed mental health system reform efforts in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

**Week 3 (October 2): Mental health and disasters** (Note: Tentative meeting time 4:30-7:30)

Agenda

- Evidence on the mental health effects of disasters
- Evidence on treatment options for individuals affected by disasters
- Current evidence on mental health problems in New Orleans (student presentation)
- Preliminary discussion of structure of report and assignment of responsibilities for background memos
- Trip planning details

Guest speaker

George Bonanno will speak on the mental health consequences of disaster exposure. He is an Associate Professor Psychology and Education at Columbia University. He conducts research on resilience and coping with grief and trauma, and has written on the psychological effects of the September 11 terrorist attack.

**Week 4 (October 9): Financing mental health care**

Agenda

- Public financing of mental health care: Medicaid, SSI/Medicare
- Employer/private financing of mental health care
- Current evidence on health care financing situation in New Orleans and Louisiana (student presentation)
- Preliminary discussion of structure of report and assignment of responsibilities
- Logistics: Trip planning

Guest speaker

Melanie Bella will speak on public funding of health care within states, with a focus on mental health care. She is Vice President for Policy at the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS). She was previously Medicaid Director for the state of Indiana, and is a member of the Medicaid Commission, established by the US Department of Health and Human Services to help guide efforts to strengthen and sustain the nation's public health safety net.

**Week 5 (October 16): Report and Trip Planning I**

Agenda TBD

**Week 6 (October 23): Report and Trip Planning II**

Agenda TBD

Background memos on each of the sections of the report will be turned in and discussed.

**Break Week: Trip to New Orleans**