

Resource Guide for Families Effected by Recent Natural Disasters

As a school community, we are heartbroken over the recent natural disasters in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Florida and Texas. We know that many in our community, including our students have relatives and friends that are located in the storm's path. The severity of student's reactions will depend on their specific risk factors. These include exposure to the actual event, personal injury or loss of a loved one, level of parental support, displacement from their home or community, the level of physical destruction, and pre-existing risks, such as a previous traumatic experience or mental illness.

If your student is having difficulty processing the natural disaster and its impact, they may:

- Show a decline in school performance
- Have difficulty mastering new material
- Become more irritable, withdrawn, anxious, or depressed
- Become more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as substance abuse, promiscuity, reckless driving, and suicide attempts in adolescents
- Become focused on the event

Below are some suggestions from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) to help families support children who are in need

(Source: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/natural-disaster>)

Remain calm and reassuring. Children take their cues from adults, especially young children. Acknowledge the loss or destruction, but emphasize the community's efforts to clean up and rebuild. To the extent it is possible to do so, assure them that family and friends will take care of them and that life will return to normal.

Acknowledge and normalize their feelings. Allow your children to discuss their feelings and concerns, and address any questions they may have regarding the event. Listen, empathize, and let their questions be the guide.

Encourage children to talk about disaster-related events. Children need an opportunity to discuss their experiences in a safe, accepting environment. Seek the help of the school psychologist, counselor, adjustment counselor or social worker if you need help

Emphasize children's resiliency. Focus on their children's strengths and competencies. Help them identify what they have done in the past that helped them cope with challenging situations. Bring their attention to other communities that have experienced natural disasters and recovered (e.g., New Orleans, LA, or Joplin, MO).

Strengthen children's friendship and peer support. Children with strong emotional support from others are better able to cope with adversity. Children's relationships with peers can provide suggestions for how to cope and can help decrease feelings of anxiety.

Continue to follow Routines

Routines provide a sense of safety which is very comforting to children

Take care of your own needs. Take time for yourself and try to deal with your own reactions to the situation as fully as possible. You will be better able to help your children if you are coping well. If you are anxious or upset, your children are more likely to feel the same way. Talk to other adults such as family, friends, faith leaders, or counselors.

RESOURCES/SUPPORT LIST LOCATED ON BACK OF THIS SHEET

School Support

If your student is struggling to process recent events or if your family needs support, please reach out to the Durfee HS contacts below.

Grade 9	Cynthia Couto, Adjustment Counselor	508-675-8100 x41568	ccouto@fallriverschools.org
Grade 9	William Thran, Adjustment Counselor	508-675-8100 x41569	wthran@fallriverschools.org
Grade 10	Gretchen Creesy, Adjustment Counselor	508-675-8100 x41529	gcreesy@fallriverschools.org
Grade 11	Claudia Costa, Adjustment Counselor	508-675-8100 x41544	cicosta@fallriverschools.org
Grade 12	Manuela Rodriques, Adjustment Counselor	508-675-8100 x41525	Marodrigues@fallriverschools.org
Bridge Program 9-12	Jeff Pestatura, Adjustment Counselor	508-675-8100 x41900	Jpestatura@fallriverschools.org

Community Support

The organizations below can support your family in their time of need.

Organization	Number	Services	Language Support
Family Resource Center	508-567-1735	Hub to all community resources including: Food, Shelter, Counseling, parent training, etc	Spanish translation available
American Red Cross	1800-564-1234	Hub to resources including: Food, Shelter, Counseling, parent training, etc	Spanish translation available
Salvation Army	508-679-7900	Clothing, supplies, and other services	
Fall River Police	508-676-8511	Emergency services	
Citizens for Citizens	508-679-0041	Food Pantry	
CFC Family Planning	508-673-2400	Health Insurance, family planning	Spanish translation available
Fall River Housing Authority	508-675-3500 508-675-3595	Housing Needs	Spanish translation available
Department of Transitional Assistance	508-646-6200	Financial Assistance	Spanish translation available
St. Vincent DePaul Furniture Outlet Store	508-672-9129	Furniture	
United Neighbors of Fall River	508-324-7900	Food Drives, clothing drives	Spanish translation available
Hurricane Hotline check on family and friends in Puerto Rico	202-778-0710 877-976-2400	Connection to Puerto Rico	

