

Stories of the **Human Spirit**

Alliance Member Agencies Reach Out



Avital part of the community fabric, Alliance member agencies have been quietly strengthening families and communities throughout their history. They were there on September 11, supporting distraught families and survivors, offering comfort to shell-shocked rescue workers, standing beside Muslim Americans, finding shelter for those left homeless, helping children and their anxious parents make sense of this stunning tragedy. And they will be there in the months and years ahead, mending broken hearts, repairing shattered families, rebuilding devastated communities.

Individually and collectively, Alliance member agencies across the country have reached out to their communities, and to each other, to offer comfort, support, and strength. We can all take pride in the Alliance family of agencies. They have demonstrated the great good that can arise from terrible tragedy: the compassion, caring, and human decency that renew our spirit of hope.

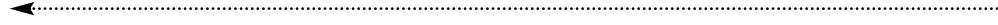
This is a crisis that has ripped our country apart in a time of great pain. Ours are the people that will help bring it together in a time of healing.

These are the stories of the quiet heroes.

* In all stories the names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.

C o n t e n t s

<i>story 1</i>	3	Agencies Deliver Immediate Crisis Response
<i>story 2</i>	6	Stabilizing America's Families
<i>story 3</i>	9	The Littlest Victims
<i>story 4</i>	11	Living With the Angels
<i>story 5</i>	12	Reaching Out to Arab-Americans
<i>story 6</i>	13	Ministering to the Caregivers
<i>story 7</i>	15	Helping People Get Back to Work
<i>story 8</i>	17	The Alliance for Children and Families Provides Connections
<i>story 9</i>	19	The Road Ahead



Agencies Deliver Immediate Crisis Response



story 1

Laura's best friend called family and friends from her office in the World Trade Center Towers to say she was okay. Her last words were to her mother. "The floor is falling!" she cried, and the phone went silent. Eight days after the Towers fell, Paul is obsessed with the idea that his missing friend is screaming for help under the rubble. Melinda survived the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and escaped the September 11th terrorist attacks. Many of her co-workers did not. Jean's husband had just been terminated from his job in the Towers, and had gone in only to pick up his things. He never came out again. Gary escaped from his 27th floor office, but can't stop thinking about the co-worker in a wheelchair who didn't want to slow down the evacuation and insisted he be left behind. Another co-worker refused to leave him alone. They are both gone, and Gary is both inspired by the courage of his friends and overcome with guilt that he survived.

"These are the people who are walking in here," says Rosemarie Marcus, trauma response coordinator at Children's Aid and Family Services in Paramus, New Jersey. "There has never been a tragedy like this."

Every light at the agency's counseling center in Ridgewood burned day and night for the entire week following the attack. A bedroom community for professionals working in the financial district, the town was hit especially hard. The agency provided immediate, free trauma counseling for anyone who walked in or called, 24 hours a day.



Joseph Bramer Photo

Immediately after the Pentagon was hit, the staff at Family & Child Services of Washington, DC, Inc. gathered together in a stress debriefing, held hands, and prayed together.

“We wanted to send a strong symbol that we are here for this community,” says Bob Jones, president and CEO. “The agency offered a calm presence, immediate availability, and non-intrusiveness.”

The agency’s counselors, trained in critical incident stress debriefing, provided individual and group counseling to numerous companies, and also made home visits to people who were too traumatized to leave their homes. One counselor visited a woman who had been watching television news coverage of the attack as she talked with her husband from his cell phone on the 95th floor of the tower. Before her eyes, the tower collapsed and the phone went dead.

Amidst the tragedy, there are wonderful stories, too, examples of human decency and kindness that remind us of what life is all about, Bob says. Volunteers from the community turned out in force to help the agency respond to the disaster, answering phones, delivering meals, anxious to do anything that was needed. The agency has received offers of help from Alliance for Children and Family member agencies across the country. “I don’t think any of us will ever be the same,” Bob says. “Not just because of this horrible act of hatred, but because it has created a new level of human connection, a compassion and a sense of caring, that will have a very lasting impact.”

The agency is now offering ongoing support groups for families of those who were killed, survivors, and others who were impacted by the terrorist attack. The services are provided at no charge. Surviving family members are sharing their stories, normalizing each other’s reactions, and bonding in their grief, Rosemarie says.

Long Island is another area that was disproportionately affected by the World Trade Center attack, with many residents working in the financial district and a large population of police and firefighters. The Long Island Counseling Center, part of Family and Children’s Association, immediately created a 24-hour telephone response system and provided walk-in counseling. Staff members also offered bereavement counseling at the Yankee Stadium memorial service for family members, and are now running bereavement groups for surviving family members.

Long Island Counseling Center director Lawrence Weissberger is working with the Nassau County Mental Health Association to offer community forums in the areas most affected. Counselors will help residents normalize their reactions, work through their grief, provide information about post traumatic stress disorder, and connect them with additional resources. If clients directly impacted by the World Trade Center attack do not have insurance to cover the cost of ongoing counseling, the agency is providing it at no cost.

Trained counselors from KidsPeace National Centers, FEI Behavioral Health, and many other Alliance member agencies also provided on-site critical incident stress debriefing. Family Service of Westchester had teams throughout the metropolitan area just hours after the attack. They quickly lost count of the number of people they helped.



Joseph Brawner Photo

Staff counselors are helping survivors work through their grief.

“These are people who ran for their lives. They survived, and their friend at the next desk did not,” says Marjorie Leffler, vice president for program development. “We worked with family members of people who were lost. Witnesses who were in nearby buildings. You can see the Towers from virtually anywhere in Manhattan, and lots of people saw not just the fire, but horrific images they will never forget.”

The first teams responding worked more than 24 hours straight, and the agency pulled staff from virtually every program to respond to the disaster. The Alliance linked Family Service of Westchester with other member agencies who volunteered to help. “That was very supportive,” Marjorie says. “To say we were stretched to the limit is an understatement. Every morning I’d say, I don’t know what today is going to bring, but our staff has been heroic and always came through.”

Nancy Klem, a clinical supervisor with Family and Child Services of Washington, DC, provided critical incident stress debriefing to people affected by the Pentagon attack. Many were in the building and escaped, others witnessed the event or lost friends and co-workers. Nancy helped them process what had happened, normalize their feelings in a very abnormal situation, and provided them with additional resources.

Sometimes the counselors felt helpless to aid the families. Nancy recalls one woman who had escaped the burning building, but was having flashbacks and couldn’t eat or sleep. She refused to talk about her experience. Children of another survivor called, desperate to help their mother who had escaped physically unharmed, but hadn’t spoken a word since the attack.

The agency secured funding to provide outreach to those families who might not be comfortable coming in for counseling. “There are all sorts of people out there in shock. We just haven’t heard from them yet. We’re going to go out and find them and make sure people who need services are getting help,” says Faye Hegburg, director of the agency’s mental health unit.

Agency executives agree that the unsung heroes of September 11th are the staff members who worked tirelessly, when they themselves were stressed and exhausted, to help people in pain. “You just can’t give enough credit to these people who on a daily basis are holding the hands and looking in the eyes of families in need,” affirms Larry Shaw, chief operating officer, Northern Virginia Family Service. “They should be winning awards every day.”

Northern Virginia Family Service, too, was stretched beyond capacity. “The Alliance called that first day to see how they could help, and from Milwaukee they identified resources right here in our area that could help us respond to the crisis,” relates Larry. “The Alliance has stayed right by us through this whole thing, and I know I can pick up the phone any time and they’ll help us out.”

FEI Behavioral Health in Milwaukee provides employee assistance programs and crisis response to companies throughout the country. FEI activated its crisis call center for the U.S. Department of Justice immediately following the attack. Trained critical incident counselors from throughout the Alliance network pitched in to take 12-hour shifts on the crisis line. The toll-free number was broadcast repeatedly on all television networks, and the call center received more than 80,000 calls from around the world. Weeks after the event, the calls were still coming in.

Human service organizations have been building caring communities for decades, and on September 11th it all came together, says Bob Jones, “That whole infrastructure of human caring and compassion—it worked. It worked in New Jersey and New York, it worked in Washington, DC, and Arlington, it worked in Louisville and Milwaukee and San Francisco. We need to celebrate that.” ●



Stabilizing America's Families

A single parent living paycheck to paycheck, Lucia worked hard as a housekeeper at the World Trade Center's Marriott Hotel. The morning of September 11th, as she dodged the flames and falling debris, Lucia watched her livelihood crumble in a cloud of smoke. She walked more than 20 miles to get home to her two young children, wondering with every step how she was going to provide for them. Lucia's parent educator at the Andrus Children's Center offered immediate emotional support and helped link her to trauma treatment services and emergency relief funds which enabled her to pay rent and buy food for her children. Lucia escaped with her life, but it will be forever changed. Sadly, Lucia's is just one of the thousands and thousands of such cases Alliance member agencies have handled in the aftermath of September 11th.



Emergency aid to desperate families

The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) is one of the agencies charged with administering *The New York Times* September 11th Fund. The fund provides emergency cash for housing, food, clothing, medication, and other needs not covered through other public assistance funds. The agency is working to identify people affected by the disaster who have fallen through the cracks. It has also expanded its Public Benefits Resource Center to include information on disaster benefits. In addition to providing direct benefits counseling to victims and families, the agency is providing free training to personnel at other social service agencies in the area. David Campbell, CSS vice president for programs, estimates the agency will train at least 1,000 people in the weeks ahead.

The stories of the people the agency has helped are heart wrenching, says Mike Takacs, a CSS benefits counselor who has been working at the ground zero Family Assistance Center. The wife of a missing firefighter came in seeking funds to purchase a stroller for her baby. She had not only lost her husband: their apartment nearby the Twin Towers was destroyed, along with everything in it. Another couple requesting emergency funds were both maintenance workers in different towers of the World Trade Center. They were injured in their frantic attempt to escape, and for hours they didn't know if their spouse had survived. Now their jobs are gone, their mortgage overdue, medical bills mounting, and it will be months before worker's compensation and unemployment funds take effect. They left the Family Assistance Center with a check in their hands and referrals to other agencies for counseling and additional resources.

Countless families in the Washington, DC area are destabilized due to loss of income as a result of the Pentagon attack. Food pantries are depleted, and homelessness is on the rise. "The economy is really hurting here," says Charlotte McConnell, executive director of Family and Child Services of Washington, DC. "We have to provide emergency financial assistance to get them stabilized again. They never catch up once they get behind, and the tensions start to mount. We're already seeing an increase in our counseling services to address the family stressors arising from this crisis."

"Once one of the dominoes is affected in such a fragile system, the problems quickly multiply," agrees Larry Shaw, chief operating officer of Northern Virginia Family Service. The agency is helping through its eviction prevention program, and is partnering with other area agencies to provide funds for food, housing, and other emergency needs.

The disaster has had a major economic impact in the San Francisco area, according to Laurie Wishard, president and CEO of Family Service Agency of San Mateo County in California. United Airlines, the county's largest employer, announced a major layoff last month. The agency is part of a one-stop rapid response employment network that responds immediately when layoffs are announced, and use of the network has doubled in recent months. Laurie anticipates that counseling referrals will also increase.

Ongoing stress taking a toll

Counselors at agencies around the country realize that this is a crisis without precedent. Usually disasters happen, and then are over. People can begin to get back on their feet. This crisis is ongoing, with new worries added almost every day. Families everywhere are gripped by anxiety about the war in Afghanistan, the anthrax scares, and the continuing threats of terrorism. People are living with a heightened sense of awareness and feeling of vulnerability, and the ongoing stress makes it difficult to restabilize.

Larry Shaw believes it will be months before the long term effects begin to show up. The agency intends to closely monitor clients for at least six to nine months to be sure they don't miss an opportunity to help. "A disaster like this has tremendous potential to negatively impact a family's well being," Larry explains. "We don't want to just assume it was dealt with and then find, several months later, that they're depressed, or suicidal, or family violence has cropped up or alcohol is an issue."

CSS case manager, Jennifer

Antoine, interviews a client



Shattering a fragile equilibrium

For vulnerable individuals and families already struggling to maintain a delicate equilibrium, the catastrophe has had especially devastating consequences. Families dealing with previous trauma or violence, marital problems, drug or alcohol abuse, mental health issues, and other stresses prior to September 11th have been rocked by the catastrophe, says Rosemarie Marcus, trauma response coordinator with Children's Aid and Family Service in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

The wife of a man who had escaped from his office near the Twin Towers is typical of the people seeking help. Her husband ran for his life as the buildings collapsed, and is so traumatized that he is unable to function at work. His previous drinking problem is now out of control. The man refuses to go for counseling, and the couple's marriage is in jeopardy. The agency is providing individual counseling and strategic coping skills for the wife and linked her with AlAnon, but Rosemarie feels helpless to reach the husband who is experiencing so much pain.

Rosemarie and other counselors are also very concerned about families who moved to America seeking a safe haven from terrorist attacks. Their illusion of safety in America is shattered, and the trauma of previous exposure to terrorism, which was usually left untreated, renders them especially vulnerable now.

The long term impact will be overwhelming, but Alliance member agencies are more than up to the task ahead. "Where there's a need, we'll drop everything and run," says Marjorie Leffler, vice president for program development at Family Service of Westchester, New York. "That's what we did prior to September 11th. That's what we've been doing since September 11th. And we'll keep on doing whatever is needed in the community." ●

Families everywhere are gripped by anxiety about the war in Afghanistan, the anthrax scares, and the continuing threats of terrorism. People are living with a heightened sense of awareness and feeling of vulnerability, and the ongoing stress makes it difficult to restabilize.

Witness



Margaret dressed in her finest clothes and high heels for her citizenship interview. A Polish citizen, she came to the United States 16 years ago in search of freedom. Until September 11th, she felt safe here. That morning, as she was waiting for her interview in an office across from the World Trade Center, the building began to shake. Margaret can't forget the nightmare scene that greeted her on the street: the gaping holes in the Towers, the soaring flames, the people falling, the screaming fire trucks, the mad rush to escape before the buildings collapsed. She walked more than 10 miles to get home to her family and, even though her feet were so blistered she could no longer stand, she reported for work at the Andrus Children's Center the next morning because the children relied on her to make breakfast. Margaret is coping with the trauma of the terrorist attack, but says she will never be the same. Still, she will be proud to call herself an American.

The Littlest Victims



story 3

Katie, a 3-year-old from Ridgewood, New Jersey, was one of the lucky ones. Her “daddy” came home that day. Twenty-five other children from her community lost a parent in the World Trade Center attack. Katie’s father escaped from his office high in the Twin Towers, but during the long, anxious hours the family waited for news, little Katie saw the planes hit over and over again on television, the flames explode, the towers collapse. For weeks after her daddy made it safely home, Katie repeatedly asked him if he was on fire.

An estimated 15,000 children have lost a parent as a result of the terrorist attack. So many fathers were lost in one New Jersey town—five on one block alone—that the kids’ sports teams are in jeopardy. The coaches are all gone.

Other children were themselves involved in the attack, like 4-year-old Josh, who fled with his teachers from the day care center across the street from the Towers. Josh’s family is staying with relatives out-of-state while his mother decides if they can safely return to New York or should start a new life somewhere far from the city.

Emotionally fragile children most vulnerable

David, a 13-year-old in the Andrus Children’s Center treatment program, has a history of school phobia and anxiety about leaving his home. As his mother was driving him to the Center’s school September 11th, the World Trade Center was hit and they witnessed the entire event. He was terrified. “Here is a youngster who wasn’t directly impacted, but it’s another enormous layer of stress added on to an already very vulnerable child,” says Nancy Woodruff Ment, executive vice president and COO. “He’s going to need a great deal of ongoing, intensive support.”

Nancy and other counselors are especially concerned about the residual effects of the terrorist attack on already fragile children. Children who have experienced violence in the past are particularly vulnerable. “These children may already be suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome,” says Faye Hegburg, director of the mental health unit at Family and Child Services of Washington, DC. “This kind of violence brings up a wealth of memories and experiences.”

Working with the local mental health commission, Family and Child Services deployed staff to area schools, domestic violence centers, and other locations that shelter vulnerable children. For all their efforts, though, Faye predicts that record numbers of children will require intensive services in the months—perhaps years—ahead.

Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago is intensifying counseling and support to adoptive families whose children have experienced previous trauma. “This tragedy opens a lot of old wounds around anxiety and loss,” says Richard Jones, president and CEO. “There will be strong reverberations.”

Outreach to caregivers

Enabling children to overcome the emotional traumas of so staggering a disaster is an immense challenge. Children’s reactions to a traumatic event and their ability to overcome it

are strongly influenced by the response of their parents and other caregivers, and early intervention is critical. Agencies throughout the country are caring for the caregivers, reaching out to parents and teachers so they can better care for the children they love.

By the afternoon of the attack, Alliance member agencies were distributing materials provided by the Severson Center and FEI Behavioral Health to their area schools. Information included how to talk with children and help them cope with the disaster,



critical incident stress debriefing, normal and problematic stress reactions in children, and resources for further help. Children's Aid and Family Services, Leake and Watts Services, and Family Service of Westchester serve communities that were hit hard by the World Trade Center attack, and they sent counselors into the schools to work with teachers and parents.

The terrorist attacks happened in New York and Washington, DC, but children everywhere are affected, emphasizes C.T. O'Donnell II, president and CEO of KidsPeace National Centers, headquartered in Pennsylvania. "This happened at ground zero, and it happened in the heartland. Children everywhere see the horrific images, they hear about children who have lost a parent, children in one of the planes or in and around the Towers. It generates fear, regardless of where they live."

Immediately after the attack, KidsPeace National Centers drew on its vast resources of clinical experts to develop and disseminate public education materials. KidsPeace staff also did numerous interviews with national media outlets. The KidsPeace Web site for adolescents, TeenCentral.Net (www.teencentral.net) is monitored by trained clinicians and enables teens to discuss their fears and grief, share stories of overcoming problems, and obtain on-line clinical advice. Since the attack, the site has been inundated with the confusion, sorrow, and raw pain of teens confronting a tragedy unlike any they have faced in their lifetimes.

"I can't believe it, my dad is gone," one teen wrote. "He died in the World Trade Center plane crash I feel like killing myself. I can't live without my dad. Help!" ●

*An estimated 15,000 children
have lost a parent as a result of
the terrorist attack.*

Living with the Angels



story 4

Four-year-old Jason waited more than a week for his mommy to come home from work. Finally, after Jason's father, Rick, had lost all hope that his wife had survived the World Trade Center September 11th attack, he told Jason that mommy had gone to live with the angels in heaven.

"For days and days, the family waited for a miracle. A miracle that couldn't happen," says Sandy Richards, day care director for Children's Aid and Family Service in Paramus, New Jersey. Jason has attended the day care since he was an infant, and the teachers and staff are especially close to his family.

Shortly after the attack, parents began rushing to the center, panic-stricken, to pick up their children. By late afternoon, only Jason and another child remained at the center. Then they learned the devastating news: Jason's mother, Julie, was at the Twin Towers that morning—the one day a month she worked there. She called her husband after the plane hit the first tower, telling him that she was not in any danger. Rick never heard from Julie again.

"From then on, it just got worse," Sandy recalls. "We waited day by day for news. Here is this vibrant, caring wife and mother who gave so much of herself, and all of a sudden she's gone. She's just gone."



In the aftermath, Jason has been very angry and asks continually for his mom. Other children were anxious, too. One little boy insisted his mother stay with him in his classroom all day, because he was afraid she, too, would disappear if she went to work.

The entire agency reached out to Rick and his children, providing counseling and support to help him cope with the tragedy. "When something happens to a family, we all step in," Sandy explains. "This entire agency is geared toward helping families stay on their feet, to be better parents, and raise caring people. It's who we are."

Julie was such a vital part of the day care family, that Rick has decided to create a scholarship program for child care teachers in Julie's memory. "It was so important to Julie to know that she was leaving Jason in a very safe, caring setting," Sandy explains. "This lasting memorial will benefit young teachers, and will benefit other working mothers and their children for years to come."

Day by day, Rick and his children are learning to live this radically altered life. He recently took the children back to their beloved weekend house at the Jersey shore, a place that holds so many poignant memories for the family. Now it is only the three of them racing on the beach and building sandcastles together. But Julie taught them to delight in the simple joys of family life. Rick is determined to carry on that legacy. ●



Jason and his classmates are learning to cope in the aftermath of this tragedy.



Reaching Out to Arab-Americans

When the Arab-American mothers left their parenting class at Metropolitan Family Services in a quiet Chicago neighborhood on the morning of September 11th, they stepped into a new world. As one mother pushed her baby in a stroller, a truck driver pulled over and shouted at her. Bewildered, unaware of the terrorist attacks, she thought he must be yelling at someone else. When he spit in her face, she had no doubt that the rage was directed at her. Another mother stopped at the grocery on the way home, where customers shouted at her to go back to her own country. Not surprisingly, none of the Arab-American women showed up for the next parenting class that Thursday.

Baheia Ahmad, the clinical supervisor who runs the parenting class, understands their fear and confusion. She herself is an Arab-American, and with all her clinical experience, she is having difficulty reassuring her own children. And no wonder. Throughout the Arab-American neighborhoods of Chicago, angry crowds were carrying signs saying “Kill all the Arabs!” Children were harassed as they walked to school, and windows were shattered at mosques. One mother told Baheia that her children begged her not go out of the house with them, because if people saw her in her head scarf the whole family would be shot.

These women clearly needed counseling and support, but they were terrified to leave their homes. Baheia made home visits, taking information written in Arabic about how to talk with the children, resources for support and crisis intervention, information about reporting harassment, and offers of help from the Latino mothers in the parenting class.

The agency held a town hall meeting to let area residents air their feelings and discuss solutions to the racial tension, and is planning community forums to bring religious leaders and members of the community together. “We need to form and strengthen these linkages before a crisis occurs in a community,” explains Richard Jones, president and CEO.

Several weeks after the attack, Alliance president and CEO Peter Goldberg and Alliance member agencies in New Jersey met with Jim Smith, the state Commissioner of Human Services. Working in the schools to reduce prejudice, anger, and hate was identified as a critical need, Peter says. Alliance member agencies across the country have already intensified services in the schools, and expect this to remain a long term partnership.

As diverse as the Washington, DC area is, prejudice against Arabic families is greatly increased and tension is running very high, says Larry Shaw, chief operating officer of Northern Virginia Family Service in Falls Church. In the aftermath of the Pentagon attack, the agency established a collaborative relationship with the American Council of Muslim Women and a local community college to hire outreach workers who speak Farsi, Urdu, and other languages to better connect with families who don’t speak English.

“Our agency is a good resource to get out in the community and help people deal with their fears and their inappropriate prejudice,” Larry explains. “We need to help people remember that these Middle Easterners are our neighbors, our co-workers, and our friends. They’re victims, too.” ●

Ministering to the Caregivers



story 6

Police and firefighters refused to quit when their shifts ended because they couldn't leave their lost comrades behind. Teachers tried to calm their worried students, while they themselves didn't know if relatives were dead or alive. Counselors supported distraught survivors and families while coping with their own fear and anxiety.

"We're all traumatized people," says Kathy Sheridan, a program supervisor with Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago. "We're traumatized people helping traumatized people."

Rescue workers, counselors, and other responders are in a unique situation: they are providing care to others while they themselves are personally affected. Without emotional support, the level of burnout is high. Agencies realized immediately following the attacks that caring for the caregivers would be a high priority.

"Most of the firefighters and police officers lost friends or family members. One day last week, there were 20 funerals for firefighters. "How much can they go through?" asks Pam Clark, a clinical psychologist with the Family and Children's Association on Long Island. Pam worked on-site at ground zero and at Shea Stadium, where out-of-town firefighters were housed. "They're having trouble with the sights they saw. The fire and the smoke, these are things they deal with every day. But the falling bodies, the buildings collapsing—they all describe that as horrific," she says.

Pam quickly realized that, for many of the firefighters, the disaster brought to the forefront all the losses and issues they hadn't resolved from their past. Survival guilt is common, and many firefighters are feeling something they have never before experienced: fear. They trust in their skills, their training, and their comrades to keep them safe. Things like this aren't supposed to happen, and their sense of security is shattered.

The firefighters and other rescuers also have the ongoing trauma of working at ground zero day after day. The knowledge that their fallen brothers are in the wreckage keeps pulling them back to continue their work.

Pam says she has never seen a group with such a tremendous level of camaraderie and brotherhood. While this very special relationship intensifies the magnitude of their loss, it is also key to helping the firefighters get through this crisis.

Rescue workers can be a difficult group to reach, because they traditionally build a wall around their feelings and often won't admit they are afraid or seek help for personal problems. Charlotte McConnell, executive director of Family and Child Services of Washington, DC, predicts that rescue workers and their families will experience high incidences of depression, marital discord, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse in the months ahead. The agency recently received a grant to hire a counselor and outreach worker to work specifically with rescue workers.

It's not just the rescue workers who are affected. Unlike other disasters, every person in the country was impacted by this crisis. Many agency staff members have friends and families who were directly involved; others are strained because of their personal reactions to the attacks and the ongoing stress of working with victims of the tragedy.

"It puts you in a different position. You're delivering the service, but you're part of it, too," says Larry Shaw, chief operating officer, Northern Virginia Family Service. "You have to be able to let go of some of your own emotions so you can help others in their trauma and grief."

Realizing that staff members couldn't be effective without addressing their own feelings

about the tragedy, agencies near the attack sites and many other agencies around the country offered critical incident stress debriefing for their staff. In many cases, counselors from FEI Behavioral Health and other Alliance member agencies supported colleagues at other agencies. The Alliance's Severson Center also provided agencies with materials on staff burnout.

Pam Clark derived a great deal of strength from her co-workers. "One of the advantages of working in an agency like this is that you can talk with your colleagues, people who understand what you're dealing with," she explains. "We're doing okay, but I don't think a day has passed that I haven't cried." ●



Agencies realized immediately following the attacks that caring for the caregivers would be a high priority.

Helping People Get Back to Work



story 7

It's back to work in New York City and Washington, DC, but it's not back to normal. Survivors and witnesses of the attacks are profoundly traumatized. Co-workers are gone forever. Those working near the attack sites are returning to scenes of unspeakable devastation. Employees of companies from coast to coast are afraid to travel by plane or train, frightened of working in a high-rise building, fearful of opening their mail, and anxious about where and when the next attack will occur.

The Alliance and its member agencies are helping America get back to work, providing a leadership role in crisis management. FEI Behavioral Health has trained hundreds of counselors from Alliance agencies across the country in critical incident stress debriefing. Crisis counselors from FEI, Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago, KidsPeace National Centers, and other Alliance member agencies provided critical incident stress debriefing to government agencies and hundreds of corporations through their employee assistance program contracts in the aftermath of September 11th. Many also responded to companies with whom they had no previous contact. And they pitched in to help each other, providing trained crisis counselors to their sister agencies that were stretched beyond capacity.

Vladimir Carvajal, assistant to the executive director at Leake and Watts Services Inc., in Yonkers, New York, worked with companies located near the World Trade Center in their first days back at work. "These employees saw the planes hit, the bodies falling and the buildings collapse. They ran for their lives in terror. They were in very bad shape," he says. "When they returned to work, they were frightened, anxious, angry, and having flashbacks and nightmares."

Like the hundreds of other crisis response counselors, Vladimir is helping people talk about their experiences, express their feelings, and understand that their reaction is normal, given a very abnormal situation. Only then can life—and the workplace—begin to return to normal.

"A major part of recovery is talking with people about what's going on in your head and your heart," says Larry Shaw, chief operating officer, Northern Virginia Family Service. With its staff already working double shifts, the agency responded to requests from all over the Washington, DC area. A call for help to other Alliance member agencies brought an overwhelming response.

The agency worked with one company that requires extensive air travel of its employees. Many employees did not ever want to get on a plane again, and felt unsupported by their co-workers who thought their fear was unfounded. Crisis counselors did a debriefing with the employees, helping normalize reactions and develop coping strategies.

Companies that never thought they would need employee assistance programs suddenly realize their value. Agencies predict the need for services will soar as employers juggle the need to support their employees with the need to keep their business on track.

The largest employer in San Mateo County, California, is a major airline, and its employees were dealing with their own fear about getting back on a plane. Laurie Wishard, president and CEO of the Family Service Agency of San Mateo County, distributed materials on critical incident response from FEI Behavioral Health and the Alliance's Severson National Information Center to pilot and flight attendant unions and other clients. "We circulated it among a very wide audience, and they say it's been very helpful," she says.

Trained crisis counselors at Family and Child Services of Washington, DC, responded to employees at companies affected by the Pentagon attack. They were overwhelmed by the demand, but quickly rose to the challenge. One counselor arrived at a site where a team had been assembled to find 2,000 employees waiting for stress debriefing. Undaunted, she took a deep breath and got to work.

"What's valiant is the commitment of these workers. For two weeks they worked double shifts and met every request for help," says Charlotte McConnell, executive director. "That's the untold story."

Marjorie Leffler, vice president for program development at Family Service of Westchester, New York, believes the real aftermath is only just beginning to set in. The depression and the long-term grief work will place an ever greater demand on social service agencies. Companies that never thought they would need employee assistance programs suddenly realize their value, and Marjorie anticipates the need for services will soar as employers juggle the need to support their employees with the need to keep their business on track.

"In most crisis, you deal with the pain and move on. In this situation, however, what's difficult is that nobody knows what might happen next," explains Vladimir Carvajal. "Is it going to be safe again? We don't know. All we can do is help people manage their fears. No one can predict the future." ●



...the need for services will soar as employers juggle the need to support their employees with the need to keep their business on track.

The Alliance for Children and Families Provides Connections



story 8

In the midst of one of our nation's greatest tragedies, Alliance member agencies met the monumental challenges with skill, grace, and compassion. And they found that when they belong to a network of 350 other agencies, they are not alone. "That is the true value of belonging to the Alliance. You know you've got colleagues in other organizations that understand what you're going through and want to help," says Larry Shaw, chief operating officer, Northern Virginia Family Service.

The Alliance and dozens of sister agencies offered Larry their support. With the assistance of debriefing counselors loaned from other Alliance agencies, Larry says they met every request during that first chaotic week. More than 12 Alliance member agencies offered additional staff to help the agency get through the next few months.

"There's a whole system of family and friends that hold you up while you're trying to live through an event like this," Larry says. "They offer from their professional resources and from their hearts to help."

As soon as the Alliance received news of the attacks, Peter Goldberg, president and CEO, and Tom Harvey, senior vice president of member services, called all the agencies near the attack sites to make sure they had the resources to respond. They then began networking the membership to ask how they could help if these agencies required assistance. Peter and Tom were gratified—but not surprised—at the level of support. "The response without exception was compassionate and generous. In every case, they said they would do anything that was needed," Peter affirms.

Family Service of Westchester, New York, hasn't turned down a single request for help, and the staff was stretched almost to the limit. The Alliance helped connect the agency with backup at member agencies. "We knew we had other agencies to count on if we needed help. That was very supportive," says Marjorie Leffler, vice president for program development. "One of our sister agencies in Connecticut offered to help, and I kept their phone number right next to my phone. Just knowing they were there helped us get through."

In the days and weeks following the disaster, the Alliance also collaborated with agencies outside its network. When the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services headquarters on Wall Street was temporarily closed, the Alliance acted as a conduit between COA staff and member agencies. This enabled Family and Child Services of Washington, DC and numerous other agencies to keep their reaccreditation process flowing smoothly. "The role the Alliance normally plays as a central information source for member agencies was heightened and served us well in providing needed information and resources," says Faye Hegburg, director of the agency's mental health unit.

Immediately following the attack, the Alliance's Severson Center and FEI Behavioral Health both distributed a wealth of information on critical incidence response, helping children cope with the tragedy, grief counseling, and post-traumatic stress. Many agencies not only used the materials themselves, but shared them widely with their clientele, the media, and other community agencies.

David Campbell, vice president for programs at Community Service Society of New York, drew on the support of his colleagues. “Alliance staff and many other Alliance members have helped me think through some of the challenges I’ve faced here,” he says. “The emotional support from our friends and colleagues, the offers of volunteer crisis counselors, and the intellectual energy of Alliance members has been so generous.”

David and the Alliance are currently working on a collaboration with Safe Horizons, an agency in New York unaffiliated with the Alliance, to harness the expertise of the many Alliance members who have offered crisis debriefing assistance.

The immediate ability of the Alliance to support its network was crucial to the agencies’ ability to respond, says Richard Jones, president and CEO, Metropolitan Family Services in Chicago. “The mission of the Alliance is to help build the capacity of the membership to develop stronger communities and stronger families. This immediate crisis response says we are a premier child and family network and we can provide critical services during a crisis.”

“All of the values of the Alliance—the people, the connections, the support system—those values worked,” agrees Bob Jones, president and CEO, Children’s Aid and Family Services in Paramus, New Jersey. “There is a spirit of sharing, compassion, and human decency the likes of which I’ve never seen.” ●

“All of the values of the Alliance—the people, the connections, the support system—those values worked. There is a spirit of sharing, compassion, and human decency the likes of which I’ve never seen.”

— Bob Jones

California Company Adopts New York Agency

When a California company was looking for a social services agency to “adopt,” the Alliance made the connection. Terri Lyngso, a board member of Family Service Agency of San Mateo County, told agency president Laurie Wishard that her employees wanted to help a small, community-based agency helping people affected by the World Trade Center attack who might be overlooked by some of the larger aid programs. Laurie contacted the Alliance, who suggested agencies in the New York area, and the employees voted to support Community Service Society of New York. “The employees of Lyngso Gardening Supply place a strong value in helping others in communities around the world,” Laurie explains. “When there are earthquakes, floods, or other critical needs, these employees find a way to give.”

The Road Ahead



story 9

Nonprofit human service organizations have never been more relevant or more necessary in a world struggling to cope with unspeakable human tragedy, war, apprehension about the future, racial hatred, and economic uncertainty. These quiet agencies are a crucial—if invisible—element in the national response to September 11th. Child and family service organizations, long a vital part of the community fabric, have been responding to tragedies and disasters since their very existence. And they will continue to respond to the changing needs of their communities long after the international disaster teams move on.

“We have to view terrorism with alarm, but it inevitably gives us indicators of where we should point with pride,” says Tom Harvey, Alliance senior vice president for member services. “The strength of our service base isn’t experienced by the general community except during a tragedy like this.”

While the crisis may entail a new emphasis on specific service areas, Alliance member agencies agree that it has only reinforced their mission. “The family service movement is about building on the strength of families and communities and the assets that are already there. Our job is to reach out and support that,” says Bob Jones, president and CEO of Children’s Aid and Family Service in Paramus, New Jersey.

Profound long-term consequences

Agencies anticipate that families will require mental health services in record numbers in the coming years. Faye Hegburg, director of the mental health unit at Family and Child Services of Washington, DC, has researched the impact of a disaster on communities, and predicts dramatic increases in the rate of family violence, suicide, divorce, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and other mental health issues. “All of the negative social indicators of mental health skyrocket after a disaster, not just for the people directly affected, but for members of the community as a whole,” Faye explains. “And that’s exactly what we anticipate in the aftermath of September 11th. It won’t be an immediate response; it will show up over the months and years ahead.”

The demand for services has already soared at agencies throughout the country as people affected by the attacks are beginning to move out of shock and experience the long-term consequences associated with post-traumatic stress syndrome. In addition to counseling services, agencies are experiencing an increased demand for referrals, workshops, employee assistance programs, diversity education, and critical incidents response training. Many Alliance member agencies are seeking funding for additional staff and programming to respond to the long-term effects of the disaster.

Agencies are concerned about funding to support the intensified demand for services. Contributions to charitable organizations have reached unprecedented levels in the aftermath of the attack, from donors of every ethnic

Nonprofit child and family service agencies will be there to strengthen families and communities as we face the road ahead.

group, income level, and religion. However, the bulk of this money is going to international disaster relief agencies and funds specifically targeted to victims and their families. As the focus begins to move from the events of September 11th to its long term consequences, agencies hope that the public outpouring of generosity will support them in meeting the challenge ahead.

Crisis preparation and partnership at the forefront

C.T. O'Donnell II, president and CEO of KidsPeace National Centers, believes that the terrorist attacks have underscored the need to redefine and improve the entire industry of crisis response. "It's a whole new context now," he says. "We have to learn a lot more about the effects and treatment of crisis and post-traumatic stress syndrome, develop more and better interventions, and train more human service professionals. This has to be put on a front burner."

The terrorist attacks have also emphasized the flexibility, expertise, and resources that agencies need to be able to respond quickly after a crisis. Alliance member agencies across the country have already begun training additional counselors in critical incident stress debriefing. Agencies are also calling for a greater collaboration between social service organizations.

"The terrorist attack has brought to the forefront how nimble we must be, how rapidly we have to deploy to meet the changing needs of the populations here," says Larry Shaw, chief operating officer of Northern Virginia Family Service. "The agencies in our community realize we can no longer have barriers between us. We've got to increase our ability to work together so we can respond immediately and professionally to the families of this community."

In the aftermath of the attack, family service agencies have solidified their role as a vital part of the community infrastructure. Lawrence Weissberger, director of the Family and Children's Association Long Island Counseling Center, believes that the public now sees community services in a new light. People who have never before sought help from service agencies are recognizing their value. They see not an institution or a bureaucracy, but compassionate individuals who are there for the long term, reaching out on a human level to strengthen their communities.

He anticipates that family service agencies will be a much more visible community partner in the years ahead.

The tragedy of September 11th has broken our country's heart, but it has also created a greater spirit, a stronger resolve, and new opportunities for caring, compassion, and service. These nonprofit child and family service agencies will be there to strengthen families and communities as we face the road ahead. ●

"I think people have incredible recuperative powers. Certainly the human spirit will bounce back."—Laurie Wishard



Thank you

The Alliance for Children and Families thanks all of the agencies who shared their experiences about the tragedy of September 11th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the many staff members and volunteers who were personally affected. The work of our member agencies has never been more crucial. Individually and collectively, we are a strong force to help our nation heal.

Patricia Winsten is an award-winning writer specializing in marketing communications and public relations for not-for-profit, corporate and business-to-business clients. She is owner of Miller Winsten Communications in Hartland, WI.



The Alliance for Children and Families is a nonprofit membership association representing more than 350 child and family service organizations in the United States and Canada. Member organizations provide an array of community-based programs and services to all generations, and serve close to 4 million people each year in more than 6,700 communities. Motivated by a vision of a healthy society and strong communities, the Alliance's mission is to strengthen its members' capacities to serve and advocate for children and families, and the communities in which they live.