

Long-Term Impact of 9/11: Ongoing BH Services Needed

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“Through 9/11, we gained a heightened sensitivity to the importance of our members being ready to provide services and other support to their communities following man-made and natural disasters. It underscored the tremendous value that mental healthcare and addiction treatment providers offer in helping people to cope immediately following a tragedy, as well as over time,” Dr. Wentz said. “We are proud of our members who are the front line service providers, creating a safety net for New Jersey residents of all ages and from all walks of life.”

Events such as the 9/11 attack and natural disasters contribute to mental illnesses – due to the profound impact on individuals’ emotions and even their brains as they struggle to cope with both the initial shock and the long-term impact – and substance abuse disorders – as alcohol and drugs may be seen as an escape from the emotional pain. In addition, for individuals who have had these types of illnesses, the tragedies can exacerbate these health conditions. Such catastrophic incidents, as well as other life issues (e.g., loss of loved ones, unemployment), as well as illnesses that may not be related to any specific experience, clearly indicate the paramount importance of unrestricted and timely access to behavioral healthcare services. Barriers continue to exist, preventing the majority of individuals in need of mental health care and/or addiction treatment from receiving the services they need. “Funding restrictions, excessive and burdensome regulatory requirements, and stigma are the main obstacles, which NJAMHAA aims to dismantle through its ongoing advocacy on behalf of service providers. NJAMHAA’s efforts ultimately benefit individuals with mental illnesses and/or addictions by working to ensure they have prompt access to the most appropriate care that meets their unique and changing needs in any and every situation,” Dr. Wentz said.