

June 20, 2007

To: ESS Directors, Co-Directors and Alternates  
Mobile Support Team Members  
Volunteer ESS Regional Trainers  
pc: Local Authority Emergency Program Coordinators  
ESS Support Organizations  
PEP Regional Offices  
Provincial/Territorial ESS Directors

**Re: Emergency Social Services Update**

*Written/compiled by Maggie Grant*

*Emergency Social Services (ESS) Update letters are provided by the Provincial Emergency Program ESS Office as a support to local authorities and their ESS Directors who manage the more than 5,000 community ESS volunteers around the province. The topics are intended to keep ESS Directors up-to-date regarding provincial policies and training issues, as well as to share new tools, best practices and other valuable information that may help them in the development and maintenance of their teams.*

This issue of the ESS Update includes the following topics:

- a) **ESS Staffing**
- b) **ESS Rates Sheets for 07/08**
- c) **Billeting Invoice**
- d) **ESS Volunteer of the Year for 2007**
- e) **Ministry of Children and Family Development**

a) **ESS Staffing**

There have been a number of staffing changes in the ESS Office since the last Update Letter in November:

- In December 2006 **Jeff Cornell** started his new position at the Justice Institute of BC as the Program Manager for the PEP Academy;
- In March this year **Dave Scott** was confirmed in the position of ESS Specialist (formerly the Provincial ESS Coordinator position);
- In May **Bob Kennedy** was hired for a 5 month term to assist the ESS Office with flood preparations and to support the ESS Specialist in performing the Regional ESS/Recovery Coordinator duties for the Vancouver Island region;
- As of July 3, 2007, **Maggie Grant** will be employed by the Justice Institute of BC as a curriculum developer in the Emergency Management Division.

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Maggie's position will be filled as soon as possible. In the meantime, her duties will be covered off between Bob Kennedy and Dave Scott, with support from the Manager of Training and Volunteer Programs, Brenda Fox.

*Message to ESSDs:*

*I want to thank the volunteers and staff of BC's ESS community for seven fantastic years. I have said from the beginning that this was the best government job I ever had – and it's still true today, thanks in no small part to the volunteers I have had the privilege to work with.*

*I will truly miss the energy and spirit that you have shared with me over the years as we celebrated successes and worked through challenges together. In my new position I will now be more involved with the broader emergency management world, but my roots will always be in ESS! I look forward to crossing paths with many of you in the future.*

*Best Wishes,  
Maggie*

**b) ESS Rates Sheets for 07/08**

ESS Directors were sent a pad of new ESS Rates sheets in April. If you have not already done so, please place your order for an additional supply as soon as possible to ensure you have the most current information available for your next ESS response.

We would like to bring your attention to the following changes to the ESS Rates sheets:

- meal rates for both groceries and restaurant meals are increased, and
- lodging rate for additional youths (13-18) has increased from \$5 to \$10

**Important Note:** Due to a printing error, the ESS Rates Sheets, which were originally intended to be printed on green paper for this fiscal, have remained white. Please be sure to discard all previous Rates sheets to avoid any confusion.

The ESS Rates sheet may also be downloaded from the ESS website at:  
<http://www.ess.bc.ca/forms/PEP2395Rprint.pdf>

**c) Billeting Invoice**

As a result of the changes to the ESS Rates sheets, the Billeting Invoice found in your Reception Centre Operational Guidelines has also been corrected. In the event that you issue a Referral for billeting, please provide a copy of the attached Invoice to assist the supplier (billeting host) in making their reimbursement claim to PEP.

Please refer to the ESS Field Guide for additional information regarding billeting, if required.

**d) ESS Volunteer of the Year for 2007**

PEP recognized volunteers of the year from each of the five Public Safety Lifeline volunteer groups on April 28, 2007. We were pleased to recognize Alvina Berggren, from Fort Nelson as the ESS Volunteer of the Year for 2007.

Alvina has been involved with ESS and Red Cross for almost 18 years, following her own experience as an evacuee. She was fortunate enough to have escaped without damage to her home, and has devoted herself since then to helping others who find themselves evacuated from their homes.

During those years, Alvina has served as ESS Director for Fort Nelson, regional volunteer ESS trainer for the Justice Institute, Canadian Red Cross trainer and responder, and Mobile Support Team Director. In addition to responding to local and provincial incidents, Alvina's response work outside BC has taken her to the Louisiana floods of 1995, the Puerto Rico floods in 1998, the New York 9/11 response, and most recently, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Alvina is highly respected for the work she does for ESS. PEP, the ESS program and the community of Fort Nelson are extremely fortunate to have a volunteer like Alvina Berggren, who is most deserving of this award as ESS Volunteer of the Year for 2007. Congratulations, Alvina!

e) **Ministry of Children and Family Development**

This note is included here as a reminder of the information recently developed by The Ministry of Children and Family Development for ESS workers with regards to managing unattended children and youth arriving at a Reception Centre. The package, which was distributed by e-mail during the recent flood response, also includes some recommended hand-outs for parents to assist them in better understanding and responding to their children's reactions following a disaster.

Please share this information with your team members and any other staff or volunteers working in a Reception Centre. If you have any questions, please pass them on to us through your Regional ESS/Recovery Coordinator at the PEP Regional Office.

MCFD has trained and committed staff in all regions of the province and has committed to provide significant support to local government ESS operations. If you do not have a current contact person at MCFD, please request that information through your RESSRC.

Sincerely,

*ORIGINAL SIGNED BY*

Jim McAllister/for Brenda Fox  
Manager of Training and Volunteer Programs

Attachments:   Billeting Invoice  
                  Guidelines for ESS Responders – Children or Youth Separated from their Caregivers  
                  Helping Adolescents Cope with Disaster  
                  Helping Pre-schoolers Cope with Disaster  
                  Helping Young Children Cope with Disaster  
                  Caring for your Children by Caring for Yourself



# BILLETING INVOICE

As a host providing accommodation to those in need during a disaster, you may be compensated for additional expenses incurred by claiming the billeting allowance. Please complete this invoice and attach it to the white copy of the ESS Referral form issued in your name. Submit both this invoice and the white copy of the Referral form to the Provincial Emergency Program address indicated on the bottom of the Referral form. Please keep a photocopy of these forms for your personal records and allow 6-8 weeks for receipt of payment.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ PEP Task # \_\_\_\_\_  
*(take from the top of the ESS Referral Form)*

Name of Supplier: *(your name)* \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: *(your address)* \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone Number: *(your phone #)* \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Representative: *(same name as appears on the ESS Referral Form)*

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Date of Accommodation provided: From \_\_\_\_\_

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Daily Allowable Rates:      \$30.00 for first adult  
   \$10.00 each additional adult and youth (13-18)  
   \$ 5.00 for each child 12 and under

Accommodation provided for:      \_\_\_\_\_ adults  
   \_\_\_\_\_ youths 13 – 18 years  
   \_\_\_\_\_ children 12 years of age and under

Please pay:      \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 for first adult      = \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10.00 each additional adult/youth      = \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 \_\_\_\_\_ x \$ 5.00 for each child      = \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Name: *(Please print)* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# CHILDREN OR YOUTH SEPARATED FROM THEIR CAREGIVERS

## Guidelines for ESS responders

In some disaster situations, children or youth may appear at reception centers or other locations unaccompanied by their parents or other caregivers. Under the Provincial Emergency Program Act, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) has the legal responsibility for unattended children (anyone under the age of 19). However, ESS volunteers will have the task of ensuring these children have appropriate supervision and care at the centre until they can be reunited with their family or until a social worker from the MCFD makes an alternative plan.

These guidelines are intended to protect both children and ESS volunteers.

### **In general:**

- In most larger evacuations, when reception centres are activated, a Ministry social worker will be assigned to the centre and responsible for making decisions concerning the safety and welfare of unattended children. Upon their arrival, the social workers are instructed to report to the Reception Centre Manager. In situations where no worker is on site, there should be a local Ministry number to contact. If not ESS volunteers should telephone the Ministry's 24 hour Afterhours Office for assistance – 310-1234 (no area code needed)
- All unattended children and youth should be registered with name, birth date, address, and name of parents or caregivers. The ESS File should be marked "Restricted" -- only social workers should be responsible for releasing information regarding unattended children.
- Whenever an ESS volunteer has doubts about a child's legal status or who is responsible for providing care for a child, a Ministry social worker should be involved
- If children or youth appear unduly distressed or disturbed by the disaster, a Ministry worker will assist in assessing their needs
- Some children or youth may have special needs and/or may be developmentally delayed. A Ministry social worker will assist in identifying who has responsibility for the care of the child or youth.

### **Children under age 13 – see below....**

#### *Care provisions:*

- A separate space within the Reception Centre should be set aside for child care
- This space should be sufficiently open to allow outside observation
- At all times there should be a minimum of two adults providing care

- If children arrive under the care of a teacher or day care provider, these persons should be asked to remain with the children at the reception centre

*Release provisions:*

- ESS volunteers must only release children to their parents, adult siblings, foster parents or legal guardians, not to neighbours, friends of the family or other relatives
- Decisions about releasing children to persons other than immediate family or guardians are the responsibility of Ministry social workers
- When an ESS volunteer believes a parent or guardian may not be appearing, the Ministry social worker should become involved
- The social worker should also be consulted if the child has not been claimed after several hours
- Children may be released to their foster parents if the foster parents show documentation confirming they are Ministry approved foster parents. If the volunteer is in doubt, the Ministry social worker should be consulted.
- Children who are 12 and under should not leave the Reception Centre on their own unless their safety can be assured. While very young children can be physically restrained from leaving, older school aged children should not be physically restrained by a volunteer, and if the child's safety is a concern Ministry social workers should be involved.

**Youth aged 13 to 18**

Care provisions:

- Adult support is required, but ongoing supervision is not mandatory for adolescents
- When care is provided, this should be done in an area open to observation from outside the care area and there should be a minimum of two adults present at all times
- Youth may be encouraged to become volunteers, aiding in the operation of the reception centre
- If a youth is a client of the Ministry, a Ministry social worker should be involved

*Release provisions:*

- Youth are encouraged to remain at the reception centre, but if they are determined to leave, volunteers should not attempt to stop them.
- If a youth leaves the centre, volunteers should attempt to learn where they are planning to go and how to reach them.

In disasters, the Ministry will make every attempt to ensure a social worker is available to assist you in your response. In addition to the worker's mandated responsibilities for making custody decisions concerning children, this worker can assist in interviewing distressed children, help find child care resources to augment the reception centre's staff, or participate in on the spot training of volunteers dealing with traumatized persons.

MCFD is here to help.



## HELPING ADOLESCENTS (AGES 13 TO 18) COPE WITH DISASTER

Peer relationships are very important to adolescents. They support the youth's growth towards independence. In disaster evacuations these relationships may be threatened or lost, giving youth a sense of vulnerability and isolation. It is normal for adolescents to become temporarily more dependent upon their families, acting less mature and more child-like.

Their sense of loss may be manifested by sadness, anger, or a sense of helplessness. They may fear their reactions are abnormal and a symptom of mental illness.

The following are just some of the reactions adolescents may experience after a disaster. These reactions are normal and usually last for less than a few weeks and are a part of the normal healing process.

### *Common Reactions*

- Competing with younger siblings for parental attention
- Failure to perform chores
- Decline in school performance
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Sleep disorders, especially excessive sleeping
- Complaints of vague aches and pains
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies
- Tiredness
- Resistance to authorities which may result in lying or stealing
- Sadness
- Withdrawal from others

### *Some Ways to Help*

- Encourage and support contact with peers
- Encourage physical activity
- Encourage taking part in home or community recovery efforts (e.g., sandbagging, clean-up)
- Give additional consideration and attention
- Reduce expectations for school or chore performance temporarily
- Stop aggressive or self-destructive behaviours quickly, firmly but not punitively
- Encourage verbal expression of feelings
- Give reassurance that reactions are normal and part of a healing process
- Express optimism the situation will improve

Recognize that your teen's reactions are normal. When the situation stabilizes your teen should return to previous levels of achievement and control. If you do have concerns regarding your teen's ability to cope you should not hesitate to contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office.



## **HELPING PRESCHOOLERS (AGES 1 TO 5) COPE WITH DISASTER**

Preschoolers are especially vulnerable to changes in routine and disruptions of their environment. Because they generally lack conceptual skills to understand what has happened, they are dependent on family members for comfort.

They may be affected as much by the reactions of their parents as they are by the disaster itself. It is important for parents to provide reassurance, comforting routines, and physical closeness.

The following are just some of the reactions preschoolers may experience after a disaster. These reactions are normal and usually last for less than a few weeks. They are a part of the child's healing process.

### ***Common Reactions***

- Resumption of bedwetting
- Thumbsucking
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Stomach aches or nausea
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Complaints of unexplainable pain
- Nervousness
- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Sleep disturbances
- Nightmares
- Hyperactivity
- Shorter attention span
- Fear of separation from parents
- Fear of strangers, animals, or noises
- Whining, clinging behaviour

### ***Some Ways to Help***

- Give additional verbal reassurance
- Give ample physical comfort such as holding and caressing
- Maintain comfortable and consistent bedtime routines
- Spend extra time with pre-bedtime activities such as reading or staying with your child until he/she falls asleep
- Provide warm beverages
- Provide opportunity and encouragement for child to express emotions, especially through play activities
- Maintain routines
- Permit child to sleep in parents' room for awhile

Recognize that your child's reactions are normal. When the situation stabilizes your child should return to previous levels of achievement and control. If you do have concerns regarding your child's ability to cope you should not hesitate to contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office.



## **HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN (AGES 5 TO 12) COPE WITH DISASTER**

For young children familiar routines and surroundings are very important. When these are disrupted by events beyond a family's control, children's senses of security and safety are shaken. They feel an increased need to be comforted and protected, just when you as parent may feel least able to provide that comfort and security.

Young children may particularly be affected by the loss of a prized possession or pet. At these times it is normal for children to regress to earlier levels of behaviour, to act younger than their age. This is one way they have of comforting themselves, similar to the kinds of younger behaviour they display when ill or over tired.

The following are just some of the reactions your young children may experience after a disaster. These reactions are normal and usually last for less than a few weeks. They are part of your child's healing process.

### ***Common Reactions***

- Increased competition with younger siblings for attention
- Clinging, crying, or whimpering
- Thumb sucking or wanting to be treated like a small child (being dressed, for example)
- Physical reactions such as headaches, skin rashes, or stomach aches
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Shorter attention span
- Separation fears
- Fear of situational reminders (e.g., fear of wind following a hurricane)
- Disobedient or aggressive behaviour
- Repetitive talking about the experience
- Sadness

### ***Some Ways to Help***

- Give reassurance to your child that they will adjust and that competency will return
- Encourage physical activity
- Maintain routines and assign your child structured chores
- Provide your child with opportunities to play with their friends and adults
- Provide play sessions with adults and other children
- Support your child's expressions of uneasiness by acknowledging your own concerns
- Allow your child to discuss feelings of sadness and loss
- Answer questions honestly and simply
- Avoid access to graphic television coverage of the event
- Maintain an aura of optimism that things will return to normal

Recognize that your child's reactions are normal. When the situation stabilizes your child should return to previous levels of achievement and control. If you do have concerns regarding your child's ability to cope you should not hesitate to contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office.

# Caring for Your Children By Caring for Yourself

If your children are reacting to a recent disaster, it is likely that you, also, have been impacted by the experience. Before you can properly care for your children, it is critical that you recognize your own needs and care for yourself.

The way you respond to your children's reactions is essential in helping them heal. If you are aware of how the events have affected you and how you are reacting to them, you are in a better position to provide a safe and nurturing climate for your children.

## Strategies

Following a disaster parents are concerned about helping their children. But here are some strategies for your own self-care:

- Use positive self-talk - for example, "My feelings are a normal reaction to an abnormal situation."
- Make use of social supports; reach out to friends, family and colleagues.
- If you are uncomfortable talking about your feelings, find another form of expression such as journal writing, hobbies, sports or physical exercise.
- Use stress-management techniques, such as those included on the back of this paper.
- Allow yourself time to grieve and cry if needed.
- Talk with others about your feelings and experiences, and don't be afraid to ask for support from family, friends, the church or community organizations.
- Be willing to listen to others who need to talk.
- When possible, resume normal routines.
- Eat healthy food and reduce your intake of caffeine, sugar, alcohol, or other stimulants.
- Take time for exercise and relaxation and make sure you get adequate sleep.
- Do things that make you feel good.

Remember, not all of these strategies are right for everyone. Choose only those that are comfortable for you. But do give yourself permission to care for yourself.

The most important challenge following a disaster is to reassure your children of their safety and security and to give them optimism that things will return to normal. Do not promise anything you cannot deliver. Let them know you will do everything you can to protect them. Restore normal and consistent routines as soon as possible at home, including reasonable homework, meal, and bed times. Schedule special times to discuss their questions and concerns about the traumatic event.

Whenever possible, anticipate with your children any upcoming reminders, such as memorials, anniversaries, and holidays that can trigger a recurrence of yours and their reactions. Your nonjudgmental acceptance of their thoughts and feelings, your capacity to answer their questions calmly, your ability to correct misperceptions gently and to set limits on frightening or threatening talk and behavior will reinforce their feelings of safety. Reminding them of times when they have successfully coped with new and scary situations will reassure them that they have the resources to do so again. Maintain communication with teachers and caretakers in order to monitor how your child is doing in school.

**Remember, emotional healing takes time for yourself as well as for your children. If, after one month, you continue to feel overwhelmed, you may want to consult a counselor or discuss things with your family doctor.**

## **Stress Management Techniques**

**Calming down** is a relaxation technique developed by Dr. George Everly that combines deep breathing with relaxing self-suggestion. It has been found to work as quickly as in 30-60 seconds. Try the following when you feel under severe stress:

1. Place your left hand over your navel.
2. Place your right hand comfortably over your left.
3. Begin to inhale and imagine that there is a hollow pouch lying internally beneath the point at which your hands are resting and that as you inhale the pouch is being filled to the top.
4. Slowly begin to exhale to empty the pouch and as you do, repeat to yourself the phrase, "My body is calm".
5. Repeat this exercise two times in succession.
6. Breathe normally for 5-10 successive breath cycles and emphasize the expiration of each breath as the point of relaxation.
7. You may repeat the entire process of 2 deep breaths followed by 5-10 normal breaths.

Practice this exercise 5-10 times a day. After one to two weeks of practice, steps (1) to (3) may be omitted. If at anytime during this exercise you should experience any discomfort, e.g., lightheadedness, stop at that point.

**Meditation** calms the mind and leads to a "relaxation response".

1. Choose a quiet room free from interruptions and distractions.
2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position – sitting comfortably in a chair with one's hands on one's thighs is one of the more commonly used positions. The goal is to remain restful but alert and not to fall asleep.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Do not worry about whether or not you will be successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation-just let go of your worries and allow relaxation to occur.
5. Deeply relax all of your muscles, beginning with the toes and progressing to the head.
6. Find something to focus the mind on. Breathe through one's nose and become aware of your breathing, especially the exhalation phase. As you breathe out, say the word "one", silently to yourself. Breathe freely and naturally for 10-20 minutes.
7. When you are finished, sit quietly for 10-15 minutes, initially with your eyes closed and later with them opened.
8. Wait another 5-10 minutes before standing.

For best results, it is recommended that you meditate once or twice daily but not within 2 hours after eating since the digestive process seems to interfere with the relaxation response.

**Imagery** is a relaxation technique which was first discussed by Paul Schilder: it is based on one of the best supported concepts in psychology which is that we feel and behave according to the images and thoughts in our minds. Hence, if we image a peaceful, relaxing scene, our bodies and our minds relax. This technique should not be used by persons who are very agitated.

1. Choose a quiet place free from interruptions and distractions.
2. Get into a comfortable position.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Deeply relax all of your muscles, beginning with the toes and progressing to the head.
5. Take a few deep, relaxing breaths.
6. Image the sensations of one of your favorite scenes, e.g., lying on the beach, listening to the waves and the wind in the trees. You are peaceful and happy. Life is worth living. Stay there for a few moments, leave slowly-you can return there to rest each day if you wish.
7. Try different scenes and find the ones that work best for you.

Practice this technique daily or as often as you like.