

## LW49 Monthly Coalition

8.29.23

**Present:** Tess Gelderloos, Laurel Desnick, Park County CCP, Sylvia Newman, Ben Frentsos, Ellie Martin, Greg Coleman, Hannah Wologo, Amanda Garant, Kacie Boteler, Maria Gotta, Lydia Easloss, Catherin Akin, Janella Johnson, Todd Wester

### **Intros . . . ways that June 2022 flooding is still showing up:**

Lots of people keeping conversation going, a lot of families are moving around due to the flood in Cooke and Gardiner in particular, more proactive movement to prevent flooding, working with the state on this year's disaster and still looking into 2022 recovery (long-term process), previous worked with business owners where revenue losses were impactful but not as much now, last remaining funds distributed and some talk about how this will inform how we deal with next disaster, preschool that shutdown has not reopened, increased awareness around disaster preparedness,

### **Kacie Boteler, Amanda Garant, Maria Gotta - Community Support Team, Park County Health Dept.**

FEMA funded, short term program to provide disaster counseling in response to floods

Focused in CC, Silvergate, Gardiner, Paradise Valley and Livingston

Strengths-Based program - working over last several months and wrapping up now

REVIEW IMAGE: Phases of Disaster Response - natural dip in emotions at one-year anniversary

Program normally starts in the first 9 months after disaster but the unanticipated delay allowed reflection

Conversation are natural, voluntary, confidential - no survey tool, free flow

Lots of listening

Asked for feedback about disaster response

166 conversation, 217 doors knocked

*Anonymity is important, so the team is telling their story instead of that of the individuals they spoke to . .*

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Amanda shared a personal journal entry about the experience of talking to so many people and being present to their stories . . . people often reflected on others having it worse . . . connection seemed important to people's experience - support from friends and family and coworkers and churches and other businesses

Maria reflected on lessons and themes:

- Each community unique
  - Financial impacts in closest YNP communities
    - Worried about themselves and others
    - Feel forgotten by county and state
    - Exacerbated by lack of internet etc
  - Livingston area had more damage to homes
    - At times felt alone and ignored since many didn't realize
- Go to people
  - Going door to door effective and put people at ease
  - People opened up quickly
- Communication matters
  - We need to use more methods - not just electronic
  - Many didn't know about activities and opportunities for support

- Mass mailing instead of emailin
- Impacts of compounding stress
  - Personal plus diaster - folks already tapped out
- Timing
  - It takes longer to recover than we may think

General feedback from impacted folks:

- It would be better if more service orgs knew what others were offering and were prepared to shar that info with people who need it
  - Example: SNAP benefits application with one org lead to connecting with HRDC
- Recognize the overwhelm of all the things that were offered, particularly in the beginning
- Not everything was negative - positive feedback, too

**The team is offering to meet with orgs one on one** - should act quickly as they are wrapping up soon!

Re: lack of resources and coordination - what would work better for people?

- Every avenue possible, word of mouth, hard copy newsletter - county is considering video screens at local grocery store so people know where to look
  - Example - gardiner and Cooke only half have internet, not everyone has cell phones
  - Food Bank in Gardiner is a good avenue - and Linda Gray there is a good connector
  - Mailers to everyone's mailbox
  - Some concern about scammers, so public education could be good

What lessons learned can help us in the future?

- Recognizing the timeline of the assistance programs can be helpful - look at how to extend the outreach over a longer period of time
  - People are often overwhelmed in the beginning and it can be hard to make all of the decisions within that immediate short timeline is hard
  - Local funds were key to helping people get through

What are the lingering needs that folks still have?

- Many people are still in displaced and out of their home and needing to finish repairs
- The biggest was probably that people just needed to talk about it
  - Business owners got attention, but not necessarily the staff below them
- Notice that people are really stressed now, so the next diaster will be even harder
  - Even just knowing that there's a preparedness plan would put people at ease
    - Greg reflected on how do we let people know what's available

The need for connection and support is high and ongoing

- Should we consider holding disaster resource gatherings more often/over a longer period of time?
- Addition of compassionate listeners into community disaster planning?

Shout out to LW49 for flagging this FEMA program for the County

- It had never been used in the state before, and now it will be a regular part of operations to request during qualifying disasters

What will the follow-up be after this project - how can we sustain?

- People are really used to only seeing, hearing from folks one time
- The team was up front with folks about the short-term nature of their work
- IDEA: a follow-up letter to each of them to let them know what the follow-up is in the community
- Suggestion for Organizations working in smaller communities . . .
  - Go slow and take your time in order to build trust for new programs

## Positives?

- Strong sense of community
- The organizations that did help provide specific support
- Ability for people to talk about their experience was helpful
- Some are seeing therapists or want to - access is hard

Important to notice the high turnover of people in YNP gateway communities - really impacts ability to build community - particularly for those who struggle financially

- Again, amplifies the importance of consistency and continuing to show up
  - Could be important for mental health services - particularly for Gardiner who reflected that there is no way to get support in Gardiner - for both clinical and mental health needs
    - Have to drive to Livingston, but many don't have cars
    - Mobile clinic?

If the team had a Magic Wand, what would they do?

- Medical and mental health clinic, at least in Gardiner
- Create the circumstances and resources for everyone to be engaged and involved in their community, for connection and support - all they'd have to do is show up
- Local organizations would be able to provide well-resourced coordinated, non-duplicative and accessible services and resources for folks

Question re: providing feedback for particular organizations responding to disaster would be welcomed . . . what can be better? What was duplicative? Or was duplication just the perception?

- Request to provide a report that can be shared for service providers and the community
- The team will also provide a presentation to the newly forming Park County COAD (Communities Active in Disaster)

How can we weave this into our work - individually and LW49?

- Education re: personal resiliency and positive stress, particularly with children
- Continue to create space for a listening ear
- Don't forget to ask folks in Gardiner as well