

CAREGIVER'S GUIDE

HELPING FLOOD VICTIMS

To better guide you



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The contents of this guide have been adapted from the “*Guide de l’aidant – Comment soutenir une personne qui vit des difficultés reliées à une perte d’emploi*” (Caregiver’s guide – Helping a person in distress following a job loss), produced by the Memphrémagog RCM in February 2006, as well as the “*Guide de l’aidant – Comment venir en aide à une personne qui vit des difficultés*” (Caregiver’s guide – Helping a person in distress), produced by the CSSS de Granit in June 2014.

Introduction

After the floods, people in trouble or distress naturally turn to you for help and support. These people, many of whom you know well, realize that you're not a health and social services professional. Nevertheless, they ask you for your advice and expect you to help them. Some even admit that they're having thoughts about suicide. They confide in you because they trust you.

Faced with this situation, you might wonder if you said the right thing, did the right thing, or even helped in any way. The caregiver's role is to listen to and refer people to existing resources.

In the pages that follow, you will find helpful tools and links to **help you help others**. For each topic, a list of services is provided to which you can refer a person in distress.

Remember that you can always contact the intake social worker assigned to the flood victims.



MESURES D'URGENCE ET SÉCURITÉ CIVILE

The flood team

Originating from the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Montérégie-Ouest, the team of professionals assigned to the flood victims is made up of social workers and community organizers whose job is to address the specific needs of the people affected by last spring's events.

Their role is to provide the victims with psychosocial support and refer them to available resources in order to help them deal with the problems created by the flooding.



Establishing contact

If you think someone is struggling and wants to talk about it, remember that it's not always easy to open up about your problems.

Intake

- Be warm and friendly.

Example:

“What’s going on?”

“You’re not doing well?”

When someone is dealing with a personal problem, simply knowing that another person is listening without judging can make them feel less alone.

Give a referral

- Refer the person to the resource that best meets their needs.
- Give them the name and contact information for the organization.
- If the person seems hesitant, offer to contact the organization on their behalf, because taking the first step is often the hardest part.

A few tips

- Break through the person’s isolation by identifying one or more key people in their entourage who can help them.
- Remember that talking about their problems and feelings helps the person to feel better, calm down, release tension and find solutions to their problems.



Reference:

Accueil dédié aux inondations

CLSC et Centre de services ambulatoires de Vaudreuil-Dorion

450-455-6171, ext. 70855

Listening and support



Let the person know how much time you have.

Example:

“I have fifteen minutes. Why don’t you tell me what brought you here?”



Reassure the person that your conversation will remain private. Express interest in the person’s situation.

Example:

“Don’t worry, this stays between us!”



Acknowledge that it’s not easy to talk about personal problems.

Example:

“I know it’s not easy for you to talk about your problems.”

“Talking to me is a difficult thing to do.”



Avoid preaching or suggesting ready-made solutions.

Example:

“If I were you, I would...”

“What you should do is...”



Encourage the person to express their emotions (crying, anger, sadness, etc.), which make them feel better. Talking about feelings doesn’t conjure them up—they already exist.

Example:

“How do you feel about what’s happening?”



Be clear with the person and state your own limits.

Example:

“I’m not a professional, so I can’t help you with XYZ problem, but I do know someone who can.”

Protecting yourself as a caregiver

Remember:

- You will likely get emotional or upset about other people's problems at some point.
- You will likely doubt yourself and your actions.
- You will likely have to say "I don't know."
- You will likely feel powerless.

Keep in mind that:

- The person asking for your help is the only one responsible for their decisions.
- You have your own limits when it comes to dealing with other people's problems.
 - **Limits on your emotions:** You might feel uncomfortable getting involved in situations involving suicide or violence.
 - **Limits on your time:** "I can only give you one hour; after that, I have an appointment."
 - **Limits on your abilities:** "I can't know everything."
- Do your best by listening to, supporting and reassuring the person who's asking for your help. There are some burdens that you can't carry alone. In that case, refer the person to the appropriate community resources. Tell them you'd be happy to talk to them again if needed.

Avoiding burnout

There are ways to avoid burning out while still helping people with their problems:

- Lead a healthy lifestyle (balanced diet, sports and exercise, etc.);
- Learn how to take care of yourself and allow other people to do the same. Accept help and encouragement, and talk to other people;
- Learn how to say NO—you can't please everyone.

You can always turn to a professional for support in your role as a caregiver. The resources in this guide are there to help you, too.

Dealing with anger

At some point, you may have to deal with someone who is acting aggressively. Here are a few tips to help you feel safer in dealing with the situation:

- Keep a certain physical distance from the person; if you have to approach them, do it from the side rather than face-on, with your hands held out in front of you.
- Adopt the same position as the other person; if you're sitting and the person is standing, then stand up.
- Stay calm and use a neutral tone of voice, even if the person is shouting. Ask them to sit down and tell them that you are going to take time to talk to them. Give them a chance to express their frustrations, which can help them calm down. Escort them to a quiet place.
- Leave a free path between the person and the door, so they can leave whenever they want to. Make sure you can also easily reach the door.
- Demand respect; you do not have to tolerate unacceptable behaviour.



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Depression

Floods are an traumatic event for the victims, who not only lost their possessions but also experienced high levels of emotional stress and financial concerns. It's only normal for them to be left with feelings of sadness and anxiety. But when the symptoms persist for weeks or even months, and prevent a return to "normal life," that can be a sign of depression.

The signs of depression

- Difficulty falling asleep, not sleeping enough or sleeping too much;
- Feeling of fatigue or lack of energy;
- Loss of appetite or increased appetite;
- Loss of interest or pleasure in one's usual activities;
- Glum mood or feeling of hopelessness;
- Negative opinion of yourself, feeling of failure or powerlessness;
- Difficulty concentrating on reading the newspaper or watching TV;
- Agitation or nervousness causing more restlessness and fidgeting than usual;
- Urge to harm yourself in some way or thinking you would be better off dead.

If the person is showing several signs of depression that are affecting their ability to function, you can refer them to a doctor or to the CLSC intake desk assigned to flood victims.

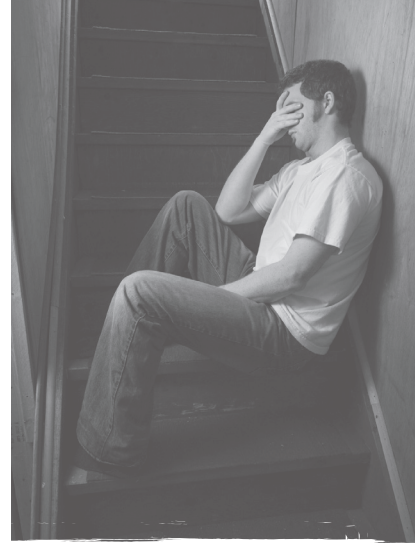
Reference:

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Suicide

Did you know that simply talking about suicide with someone who's having suicidal thoughts doesn't make them more likely to go through with it? Ask the person point blank if they are thinking about suicide. If the answer is yes, thank them for confiding in you, but tell them that you can't keep their secret.

Immediately call the suicide prevention centre, if possible while the person is still with you, and a professional will tell you what to do.



References:

Le Tournant – Centre de prévention du suicide
450-371-4090 or **1-866-277-3553**

In case of emergency | **911**

Alcohol, drugs and gambling

If the person mentions alcohol, drugs or gambling, ask them if they think these issues are problematic. You can refer them to the resources below.

References:

Centre de réadaptation en dépendance | **1-866-964-4413**

Foster Addiction Rehabilitation Centre (CRD Foster) | **1-866-851-2255**

Drugs: Help and Referral (alcohol, drugs and gambling) | **1-800 265-2626**

Gambling: Help and Referral | **1-866-767-5389**

Impact on couples and families

An unforeseen event, such as a flood, can be a source of conflict between couples and family members. There are professionals who specialize in dealing with this type of situation.

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When conflict turns to violence

When someone tells you they are being verbally, physically, psychologically, financially or sexually abused, you need to believe them. You can refer them to the resources below.

References:

Hébergement la Passerelle | **450-424-6010**

Via L'Anse | **450-370-3200**



Administrative management

Government financial assistance program

The *Programme d'aide financière gouvernementale* (Government Financial Assistance Program) aims to provide financial assistance for disaster victims that incurred damages or introduced temporary preventive measures during the flooding. The program is administered by the Direction du rétablissement of the Ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP).

Assistance from the Canadian Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross is providing direct financial assistance to thousands of households affected by the floods. A person whose main residence was damaged by the floods could be eligible for direct financial assistance.

In collaboration with the MSP, the Canadian Red Cross can also help a flood victim with the administrative management of their financial assistance file.

Municipal permits

As with all work, renovations on homes damaged by the flooding must comply with municipal by laws. The flood victim must apply for the necessary permits from the city's urban planning department.

References:

Ministère de la Sécurité publique (MSP) | **1-888-243-2433**

Securitepublique.gouv.qc.ca: see the Civil Protection/
Financial Assistance For Disaster Victims

Canadian Red Cross | **514-362-2930**

Redcross.ca: see How We Help/Current Emergency Responses section

Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values:

- Compassion;
- Collaboration;
- Commitment;
- Confidence;
- Consistency.



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