

Emergency Preparedness and Support Team

The family focal point and call center volunteer training and programme

The increased risk to United Nations staff resulting from malicious acts, natural disasters and other emergencies demands a proactive, comprehensive and coordinated support system for the survivors of such incidents, as well as families affected by the injury or death of a loved one in the service of the United Nations.

Emergency Preparedness and Support Team (EPST)/OHRM is mandated to enhance preparedness mechanisms for responding to mass casualty incidents in a consistent manner. In this context, EPST has rolled out a comprehensive training program to empower staff to assist in the event of emergency, in the roles of family focal point (FFP) and call centre volunteers (CCV).

Family Focal Point (FFP):

FFP volunteers provide important one-on-one support to families of staff who perish and staff who are injured while in service. They are the Link between the surviving family and the UN, providing guidance and navigational assistance through the maze of administrative procedures, relaying and obtaining information and documents for expediting payments, entitlements and compensation. They also ensure emotional support through psychological first aid and/or referrals as necessary. FFPs are activated by the local office for Human Resources Management or OHRM/NY when an incident results in mass casualties, and may be called upon to support single fatalities. Assistance to surviving families may be given at the location of the crisis and/or from an alternate location via telephone.

Call Centre Volunteer (CCV):

A Call Centre Hotline may be activated in response to the high volume of incoming calls related to an emergency event has taken place. The Call Centre is staffed by volunteers, CCVs, who are responsible for responding to callers promptly, with information on the incident, and referring them to other official sources for further assistance. The CCVs are the 'official voice' of the UN to callers seeking information, and responses must be sensitive, factual, and empathetic. In this role, it is important that established information protocols and channels of communication are strictly adhered to.

The duration of the training is 3 days, and the recommended number of participants per training is 20-25 persons. All participants must complete the 3-day programme to receive a certificate. Following is the programme outline:

- Day 1:** FFP role, responsibilities, partners, operational issues, mass casualty operations
- Day 2:** Communicating with families, developing empathy in crisis, responding to grief, building tele-crisis skills and other critical competencies;
- Day 3:** Call Centre Operations, basic principles for managing calls, managing challenging situations

Methodologies: Presentation, discussion, videos, exercises, role play and simulation.

Participants will develop useful life skills and develop the following knowledge, skills and competencies:

- Essential listening and empathy skills
- Open and empathetic communication skills
- Basic skills in effective response to crisis-related psychosocial reactions, appropriate for the FFP/CCV role
- Self-care skills - necessary for maintaining effectiveness in these roles
- Self-awareness
- Awareness of cultural differences in the manifestation of crisis reactions
- Knowledge of the Organization's Response Management System
- Administrative processes in mass casualty operations

Trained FFPs/CCVs will be added to the global database maintained by EPST/OHRM. Local heads of HR offices are required to establish and manage their respective volunteer programmes, and will be responsible for activating FFPs and CCVs in their locations when required.