

# The OSSRD Connection



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evaluation to policy  
and practice

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One Year After  
Katrina and  
Rita

Louisiana State University School of Social Work Office of Social Service Research and Development Phone: 225.578.4838

**One year after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the problems related to homelessness, affordable housing, mental illness and substance abuse in Louisiana are staggering.**

## The Problems:

### 1 Homelessness

Louisiana has lost at least 275,000 homes since Hurricanes Katrina/Rita. Although many of these homes were in New Orleans and the coastal areas, it has driven people to East Baton Rouge Parish for housing and services (LRA, 2005).

### 2 Affordable Housing

In HUD's recent Fair Market Rent Report (3/6/06), Baton Rouge was one of just 6 American cities whose rental property rates increased. Rental property in Baton Rouge has increased 25% since the storms.

### 3 Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Issues

The Tulane Department of Psychiatry conducted a Needs Assessment for the Louisiana Office of Mental Health (OMH) after both storms in 2005. The researchers estimate that over 260,000 Louisianans have already developed or will develop PTSD in response to Katrina/Rita. Additionally, they estimate that 67,971 youth (pre-school to 18 years of age) have developed or will develop PTSD. Finally, the study suggests that another 25,000 persons have developed or will develop sub-threshold PTSD symptoms that are sufficient to require treatment/counseling.

The Office of Addictive Disorders (OAD) estimates that 500,000 residents in the Gulf Coast were impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They also report that

25-30% of those individuals who were exposed to severe trauma will present with addictive disorder problems and 5-10% of those who were exposed to moderate trauma will present with alcohol and drug problems.

*The Louisiana Hospital Association reports that emergency departments are overwhelmed with the number of persons crowding hospitals with behavioral health problems, especially persons with substance use disorders.*

Both OAD and OMH report that the greatest period of need begins 6-9 months post disaster, which is March to June 2006. The Louisiana Hospital Association reported to the Public Mental Health Review Commission (PRMHC) that emergency departments are overwhelmed with the number of persons crowding hospitals with behavioral health problems, especially persons with substance use disorders. This has reached a critical stage because there are still 8 hospitals closed in the state, including two large public hospitals serving New Orleans. (PMHRC, 2006)

## The Solutions:

There are two grant applications aimed at helping hurricane survivors with housing, substance abuse, and mental illness that OSSRD has helped prepare. Grant award notification will occur in September 2006.

- ✓ **Development of Comprehensive Drug/Alcohol and Mental Health Systems for Persons Who are Homeless**
- ✓ **Family Centered Substance Abuse Treatment Grant for Adolescents and their Families.**

# One Year Later, TASC is Still Impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

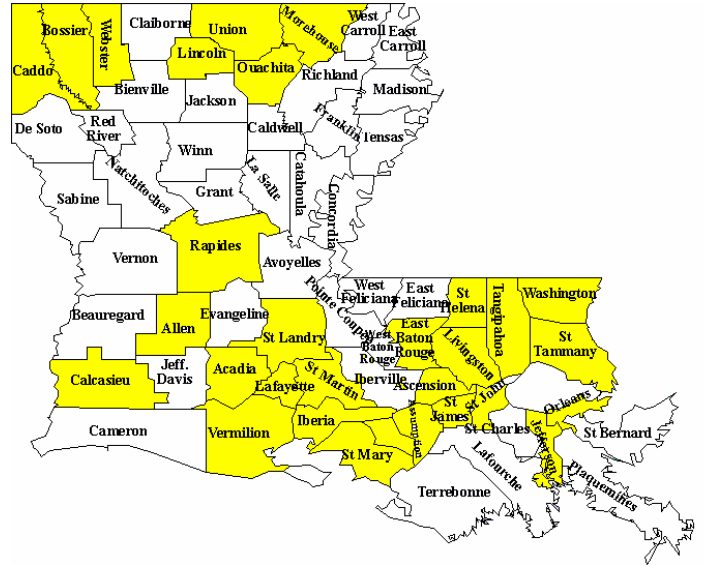
TASC staff around the state worked tirelessly to help their communities cope with the influx of new students and families evacuating from the hurricane affected areas. Many staff went to local shelters to help families fill out food stamp and disaster relief forms, provided crisis counseling and organized activities for the children. Other TASC staff partnered with local business and faith based organizations to provide clothing, food and supplies for the families. Still, other TASC staff helped school personnel register students, locate uniforms and find extra school supplies.

After many of the displaced children were registered in their new schools, almost 1,000 students (in Kindergarten through the 5th grade) were referred to the TASC program. More than half the children referred were identified as “high risk” in which case the TASC staff assessed the children, met with the parents, and developed a service plan to coordinate appropriate services for the family. Of the children that were assessed:

- ⇒ 37% had problems with educational issues
- ⇒ 30% had behavioral problems
- ⇒ 25% had physical health problems
- ⇒ 25% had problems involving basic needs
- ⇒ 24% had mental health problems
- ⇒ 17% had a parent or family member with mental health problems

TASC staff coordinated the following services:

- ◆ Counseling
- ◆ Mental health assessments
- ◆ Medicaid/LA Chip referrals
- ◆ Medical referrals
- ◆ Financial support services
- ◆ School Building Level Committee referrals
- ◆ Educational tutoring



**Other TASC News:**

The New Orleans TASC program (NOTASC) will be open in the near future with the Family Services of Greater New Orleans as the lead and fiscal agent. The LA Department of Education estimates that Orleans Parish schools will be operating at 50% (30,000 students) by mid year.

There are two new TASC programs being implemented this Fall including the 23rd Judicial District which encompasses Ascension, Assumption and St. James Parishes and the 33rd Judicial District including Allen Parish.

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Louisiana State University  
 School of Social Work  
 Office of Social Service Research and Development  
 311 Huey P. Long Field House  
 Baton Rouge, LA 70803

