10 Key Insights on Disaster-Related Psychosocial Supports in Alberta

- Every disaster has its own unique signature. This is shaped by community capacity and relationships, the scope and type of disaster, and location.
- Disaster response is most effective when individuals and communities are supported and in the lead.
- Communities move back and forth between stages of disaster recovery. These stages impact disaster response planning and recovery.
- Disaster response is influenced by previous experiences. This means valuing, supporting, and building on the existing skills and capacities within the community.
- Change takes time, it is a process. There is a need for resources beyond immediate disaster response and post-disaster five-year plans.
- Coordination and alignment of services is essential. This requires finding new ways of engaging existing relationships as well as an openness to new partnerships.
- How things are done is just as important as what is done. Delivery of evidence-informed psychosocial supports must be flexible, creative, and accessible.
- Build on what works. Establishing partnerships between researchers and practitioners creates a foundation for research and evaluation in disaster settings.
- Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR) fosters skills for every-day life. Ongoing use of SPR in disaster and non-disaster contexts can enhance resilience in individuals and communities.

There are two complementary paradigms in disaster response:

1. Disaster mental health
2. Psychosocial capacity building and resilience.