



# NEWS



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## **McLean County Health Department to Hold Disaster Mental Health Conference**

*Promoting community awareness, preparedness, resilience and recovery*

**BLOOMINGTON, IL-** The McLean County Health Department in partnership with the McLean County Medical Reserve Corps and The Baby Fold, is hosting a Disaster Mental Health Conference Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup> and Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Astroth Community Education Center on the Heartland Community College campus in Normal. This year's Disaster Mental Health Conference will be divided into two parts:

**Day One is Mental Health First Aid for First Responders.** Geared specifically for first responders and other health care professionals, this course teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or crisis and to connect them with the appropriate care. The training class begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 5 p.m. Registration is \$10 for McLean County residents and \$40 for residents from outside of McLean County. Lunch is provided. CEUs are anticipated.

**Day Two is Disaster Mental Health.** A day of educational tracks addressing issues including functional needs, issues impacting children during disasters, and community recovery following disasters. Dr. Robert Lusk (The Baby Fold) will provide the keynote presentation and Mike Claver (Deputy Chief and Chaplain, Danvers Fire Department) will provide the closing presentation. Registration for the conference is \$50, with a \$25 registration fee for students and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers. Lunch is provided. CEUs are anticipated.

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The conference is designed for any emergency responder, either in a professional capacity or as a volunteer, as well as nurses, social workers and paramedics/EMTs. Often, emergency responders and volunteers have very little formal mental health training. Explains David Hopper, emergency preparedness and response coordinator at the McLean County Health Department, “First responders need to be prepared for what they will see at disaster sites. It’s important for them to understand the mental health needs of the people they’ll be assisting as well as realize what is important for their own mental wellbeing and the wellbeing of other responders. The conference is a way to help provide first responders, volunteers, and other emergency personnel with tools necessary to help assure their own and others mental wellbeing in a disaster situation.”

Space at the conference is limited. Interested individuals can register online at: [www.heartland.edu/communityEd](http://www.heartland.edu/communityEd) or by calling 309-268-8160. For more information about the conference or the Medical Reserve Corps, please visit the McLean County Health Department website at: <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov> or call 309-888-5987.

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