

Tips on Requesting Mutual Aid

- ✓ Mutual aid by definition is “assistance given without expectation of reimbursement.” (The issuance of a “mission number” by the Office of Emergency Services is not a guarantee of reimbursement for assistance rendered. It is possible that some costs may be reimbursed. If this proves to be the case, the “mission number” will be used to track reimbursable costs.)
- ✓ No jurisdictions (department, agency, school district or special district) can be forced to provide assistance. The master mutual aid agreement recognizes that a local jurisdiction’s first responsibility is to the health and safety of its citizens.
- ✓ As the requesting agency, you will be responsible for accommodating mental health personnel from responding jurisdictions.
- ✓ A flow chart for resource requests and resources is on page 3 of the “Emergency Managers Mutual Aid Guidance.” ([EMMA](#)).
- ✓ A step by step checklist for requesting mutual aid is on pages 5 and 6 of the “Emergency Managers Mutual Aid Guidance.” ([EMMA](#)). The guide also includes all of the required forms.
- ✓ The local mental health agency representative usually works in the Operational Area’s Emergency Operation Center (EOC) as part of the Operations Branch. Any request for mutual aid must be approved by the Operational Area EOC Director.
- ✓ If a request for mutual aid is approved by the EOC Director, it will be passed on to the Regional Mutual Aid Coordinator who will attempt to find the resources from within your immediate mutual aid region.
- ✓ If your request cannot be filled from within your immediate mutual aid region, it will be passed on to the State Operations Center where it will be passed on to other unaffected mutual aid regions.
- ✓ If unaffected mutual aid regions cannot fill your request for mutual aid it will be passed on to state agencies.
- ✓ If your mutual aid request is passed to the State, the Department of Mental Health will be responsible for processing and managing it.
- ✓ If at any time during the request for mutual aid, you feel the need for technical assistance you may call Gladys Mitchell or Shawn Ortiz of the California Department of Mental Health Disaster Services Section.

Source: Information in this document has been compiled from the Office of Emergency Services “Emergency Managers Mutual Aid Plan” and “Emergency Managers Mutual Aid Guidance.”

A Brief Example of Mental Health Mutual Aid Request

Event	Response	Notes
<p>9:00 a.m.</p> <p>A 6.3 earthquake strikes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local county mental health management reviews local emergency plans. 	<p>A 6.3 earthquake in an urban area will cause substantial damage depending upon these factors: The quality of residential and commercial construction, geography, durations and intensities of the primary shock and after shocks.</p>
<p>10:00 a.m.</p> <p>The operational area preliminary damage report suggests widespread damage, including the pancake collapse of two multi-story elementary schools. First responders report that several hundred children may have died in the collapse and several hundred may be injured.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Analyze all sources of information and try to anticipate if available mental health expertise is sufficient to meet known conditions. ✓ If projected needs exceed the available resources within your operational area, you may want to consider making a mutual aid request. 	<p>The American Red Cross chapter in your operational area will respond as part of their disaster plan. This response will include mass care and shelter and disaster mental health. They may be asked to open “Family Comfort Centers.”</p>
<p>11:30 a.m.</p> <p>Hundreds of concerned and grief stricken parents, family members and onlookers have gathered at the collapsed elementary schools making it extremely difficult for emergency responders to conduct search and rescue activities. The EOC Director asks the mental health agency to help staff a Family Comfort Center at a nearby high school, so that the crowds can have a place to gather and be kept informed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make a decision about requesting mutual aid. ✓ If the decision is to seek mutual aid, follow the checklist on pages 5 and 6 of the “Emergency Managers Mutual Aid Guidance.” (EMMA). 	<p>The family comfort center concept of operation gained favor following the TWA Flight 800 incident in 1996. The concept provides a dignified environment for friends and relatives to gather following the confirmation of the death of loved ones or serious injury. Grief counselors, crisis counselors and other behavioral and health professionals are also stationed at the center so that they are available to assist.</p>