



**January 2010**



## **Special Issue – Response to Haiti 2**

"...we all have done this, we bang and bang on the door of hope, and don't anyone dare suggest there's nobody home."

From *Small Wonders* by Barbara Kingsolver

Dear VAPT Playmates,

As the crisis in Haiti has unfolded more information has become available. I have compiled the information here for your review. I know of one VAPT member who has volunteered to deploy. Let me know if you have plans to travel.

Playfully,  
Anne

### **Responding with Cultural Humility**

In the midst of Hurricane Katrina's relief effort we were reminded, sometimes harshly, of the critical importance of conceptualizing disasters and our response, in a culturally competent manner. The following messages and resources provide helpful guidance in this regard.

The information is located at a site from the Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities Through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) at the School of Education at the University of Miami. It provides articles related to understanding cultural beliefs while conducting disaster work and working with children and families in U.S. Haitian communities.



**CHALLENGING RACISM AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH ETHNOCULTURAL RESEARCH (CRECER)**

[http://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources\\_Haiti.html](http://education.miami.edu/crecer/resources_Haiti.html)

Special thanks to Kathy Dardeck, Massachusetts DRN, for forwarding this information. It was received from the APA Division 35 President, who is Haitian American.

### **Resources for the Haitian Community**

#### **Stress and Haitian-Americans: After the Earthquake**

The American Counseling Association is offering this podcast through the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org) (Look in the upper left corner of the page). The podcast has useful information for professionals and for the U. S. Haitian community. Please help us distribute them to U.S. Haitian

community organizations, newspapers, radio stations, blogs and other Haitian oriented media:  
Speakers: Cirecie A. West-Olatunji, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Florida and Shirley St Juste, doctoral student, Howard University, who translates in Creole for our Haitian American listeners.  
Host: Rebecca Daniel-Burke discusses the following topics with the presenters:

- Acknowledgement that being in the U.S. with family in Haiti is very stressful
- Key symptoms of distress
- Ways to mitigate symptoms of distress
- When to get help
- Where to get help

Running time: 48.27

## Additional ways to make a difference

### Church World Service

Church World Service (CWS) is asking organizations in communities to consider working together for assembling CWS Baby Care and Hygiene Kits. The CWS web site ([http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits\\_main](http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits_main)) provides all information needed on the assembling of kits. The group's message emphasized this call is a complement to, and not a substitute for, the continued need for cash donations for Haiti.

### Red Cross

If you wish to make a donation to the Red Cross to assist with relief efforts, you can text the word "Haiti" to 90999 from any cell phone. The Red Cross will automatically receive a donation of \$10, which will be charged to your cell phone bill, as promoted by the [Department of State](http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ha/index.htm) at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ha/index.htm>

### Sample Letter of Willingness to Deploy

I distributed the following email call for volunteers earlier and include it here with a sample response. In the sample response I note some ideas to consider as you think about your interest and availability to respond by traveling on-site. Remember there are many ways to be very helpful in your home community and that recommended practice is to travel in an *established group* with a *specific goal* and *sufficient resources* for their service and to *support their staff* and to be relevant and effective *at that time*.

**Subject:** Psychosocial and mental health experts needed in Haiti  
**Importance:** High

Dear Colleagues,

One of the UN agencies is putting a team together of psychosocial and mental health experts to go to Haiti and help ASAP.

They are seeking counselors and experts who are bilingual with French or Spanish to provide support in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. If you are able to commit to a length of stay of at least 2 weeks or longer and have the requisite experience in disaster work, please contact by email:

Henia Dakkak, MD, MPH  
UN Technical Specialist  
email: [dakkak@unfpa.org](mailto:dakkak@unfpa.org)

A VAPT member composed a letter of her willingness to respond to the UN call for assistance. I have included it here for you to use as a guide to decision-making about serving.

Dear Hennia Dakkuk,

I received the email (shown below) calling for volunteers to respond to the earthquake in Haiti.

(Note how you became aware of the person/organization. Some agencies have calls to respond to more than one emergency. This may also help divulge any misinformation, in case the agency did not issue the call.)

I would be glad to help in any capacity needed in Haiti.

(Note any limitations or grounded preferences here, ex. "If possible, I believe my expertise is a good match for working with young children and, of course, I am willing in working wherever placed.")

I am bilingual in Spanish, and can speak minimal French. I have traveled previously to both countries of Haiti and DR. I have intensive international experience in third world situations, having grown up and worked in Honduras, Central America. I am also trained in play therapy and the use of play-based interventions in crisis. I am member of the Virginia Association for Play Therapy.

(Note special skills such as language competency and international or disaster experience and clinical skills in working with children.)

I am a licensed mental health professional with previous training with the Red Cross in 1995 in Disaster Mental Health and recent certification in Disaster Children's Services. I am also signed up for renewing my disaster mental health training on 1/30/10.

(Note you discipline training, credentials/licensure and any disaster related professional training/certification.)

I understand that I would need to make a commitment of 2 weeks. I have an active clinical mental health practice but expect that I could work out a 2 week leave with some advance notice. If you expect that I might be called on, please let me know how much advance notice I might have so that I can prepare my clientele for this possibility.

(Communicate your understanding of the requirements (time, financial obligations, such as provide funds for your own travel). Briefly reference your current situation and how you have the ability to participate and any further information you need. Do make sure you have reflected on your professional and personal commitments and believe that this is a professional and ethical decision at this time. You may find it beneficial to consult with colleagues in this regard.)

Let me know if further info is needed.

Best to you,

Name, Credentials

(Note complete contact information, phone number, fax number, email and postal address.)