



## DEFENSE INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL OPERATIONS (DIMO)



### “Responding to the Unthinkable: Managing The Mental Health Consequences of Disaster” Expanded IMET (E-IMET) Mobile Education Team (MET) MASL D309018

**Background:** “Responding to the Unthinkable: Managing The Mental Health Consequences of Disaster” is a collection of presentations and exercises designed to help a variety of professionals to understand how disaster affects individuals and populations. The material is designed to stimulate discussion of culturally unique traits of individual groups and how these impact the manner in which disaster is experienced. Based on this understanding, the difference in preparation and response are discussed. Throughout the course, the concepts of resource management, civilian control of the military and human rights/military justice are interwoven.

**Program Scope:** The course begins with an introduction to the American perspective on disaster, based on the experiences that have occurred in the U.S. The cultural context is illustrated and serves as a precursor to the next phase of the course in which individuals discuss their own experiences with disaster and disaster preparation. This allows participants to become familiar with one another and to develop a common language or experience base for the remainder of the course. The second day focuses on disaster as it affects the individual, starting with basic discussions on stress, and moving through the phenomenology of stress disorders and their treatment in individuals. The day wraps up with a presentation on psychiatric triage principles in disaster to include an exercise designed to test the materials presented in the first two days. The third day of presentations changes focus away from the individual and looks at group interventions in trauma or disaster. It then goes further to explore population level understanding and intervention. Day four looks at culture again and how understanding of culture impacts the interpretation of trauma and informed intervention. Consultation to leaders follows this, to include presentations on coordinating the efforts of diverse groups that would not otherwise work together in peacetime. Military and civilian resources are included as two such groups and the importance of civilian control of the military is discussed using American standards and policies. The course concludes with a half-day exercise to incorporate the course principles and serves to solidify the lessons learned and put them into context.

**Course Duration:** 5 days; **Class Size:** Maximum class size is 50; **How Offered:** The course can be presented at any site in which a classroom setting is available.

**Intended International Audience:** The course is intended for a mix of professionals (military and civilian) to include psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists and other counselors. The material is also useful for leaders who are involved in designing disaster plans for large populations.

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