

National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) Terms of Reference

1. NAME OF COMMITTEE

National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC)

2. BACKGROUND

The National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) is a group that cross-cuts F/P/T, NGO and Municipal levels. It is a non-registered, non-governmental, non profit voluntary society which operates at 'arms-length' from government.

The group was originally brought together in 2007 by the Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Public Health Agency of Canada, as an interagency group to discuss the area of psychosocial response to emergencies. It was comprised of representatives from the federal, provincial, municipal, governments, volunteer associations, non-governmental organizations, and health associations.

The group was formed to facilitate coordination and information sharing. The purpose was to fill the gaps in policy, practice and knowledge between policy-makers, planners and responders within the health and emergency social services sectors. The first in-person meeting was held in November 2007 to review and prioritize the research and policy action that was required, and to develop a work plan.

Since 2007, the group has held teleconferences and in-person meetings, in order to move forward on work plan deliverables, such as the draft psychosocial competencies.

NEPAC is an evolution of the Inter-Agency Psychosocial Working Group, and was formed at the March, 2009 meeting.

At present, the National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) houses its materials with the Canadian Psychological Association which currently serves as NEPAC's secretariat. NEPAC currently meets bi-monthly via teleconferences that are supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).

3. MANDATE

NEPAC's mandate is to serve as a pool of expertise to advise, support, collaborate, champion and provide resources on psychosocial preparedness in an emergency or disaster to the public, communities, health professionals, administrators and decision-makers across all levels and sectors.

As a voluntary consortium of stakeholders with expertise and interest in emergency psychosocial planning, NEPAC is uniquely positioned to comprehensively examine the issue from a variety of perspectives.

The National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) represents front-line workers and health professionals, researchers, non-government stakeholders and government representatives.

4. SCOPE

NEPAC's focus is on psychosocial impacts/considerations, especially recovery, during emergencies, disasters and emergent events. Its activities focus on informing, identifying principals, providing guidance and advocating on the need for psychosocial planning, responding and recovery.

The consortium will focus its work on psychosocial emergency response as it relates to the pillars of emergency management being:

- Prevention
- Preparedness
- Mitigation
- Recovery
- Response

5. FUNCTIONS

NEPAC does not respond to emergencies; it serves as a collaborative resource and pool of expertise for front-line workers, health professionals, government representatives and non-government stakeholders.

To coordinate its activities, the consortium will develop a work plan for each calendar year. The work plan will be reviewed at the 6- and 12-month marks of the year.

In keeping with its current work plan, the consortium will focus its work on 5 key functions:

- Developing standards and competencies
- Obtaining and promoting evidence-based practice/information
 - To identify and address gaps
 - Serve as reference point for information for responders, researchers, decision-makers and the public
- Cross-over between research and response
- Networking
 - Responders
 - Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
 - Research
- Serving as a champion for psychosocial responding during emergencies

6. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- Voluntary participation
- All working group activities and statements will be made by consensus

7. MEMBERSHIP

- Members. The National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) is open to any front-line workers, health professionals, researchers, non-government stakeholders and government representatives who have experience, expertise or interest in fostering psychosocial care in emergency situation.

- Chair(s). The National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) will have two co-chairs. One of the co-Chairs will serve as the Secretariat.
 - Dr. Lisa Votta-Bleeker (Associate Executive Director, CPA) and Heleen Sandvik (Provincial Lead, Disaster Psychosocial Program of B.C., Provincial Health Services Authority, Emergency Management and Business Continuity) to be inaugural co-Chairs. In its capacity as co-Chair, the Canadian Psychological Association is also the inaugural Secretariat.
- Term
 - *Co-Chairs*. The Secretariat will serve as one co-Chair. Co-chairs will hold the position for a period of two-years beginning in March. New co-chairs will be selected from among the NEPAC membership at the end of each two-year period.
 - *Members*. There is no set term for members' participation in the consortium.

8. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Co-Chairs:

- The co-Chairs will chair all teleconference and in-person meetings.
- The Secretariat, in its capacity as co-Chair, will prepare meeting agendas with the other co-chair.
- The Secretariat will distribute all meeting materials (e.g. agenda, record of decision from past meetings) and facilitate meetings.
- Co-Chairs will review and approve all agenda items in advance of the meeting.

Working Group Members:

- Call in to conference calls regularly
- Attend in-person meetings
- Read and provide feedback, within required timelines as set out by Secretariat, on the agenda, minutes and correspondence
- Prepare a one-page summary/update on their community/organization's activities for each meeting (optional)
- Participate in discussion and decision-making
- Fulfill promised action items
- Promote work of the consortium

Secretariat:

- The Secretariat is responsible for the provision of administrative support, including the compilation of the member list, maintaining an up-to-date member list, coordination of conference calls, and distribution of agendas and minutes.

9. SUPPORT

- Secretariat (see "Duties and Responsibilities" for more information)
 - The CPA will serve as the secretariat to the consortium for a 2-year period, during which time it will evaluate the duties and responsibilities of the position.

- The Consortium will explore the possibility of setting up a SharePoint website in which agendas and minutes are posted; in the interim, CPA will send agendas and minutes via e-mail and will retain them.
- Agenda
 - In its secretariat capacity, CPA will circulate a call for agenda items and one-page activity summaries two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting and the agenda one week prior to the meeting.
 - Co-chairs will review and approve all agenda items in advance of the meeting.
 - Items not on the agenda may be added at the beginning of the meeting at the discretion of the co-Chairs.
- Minutes
 - Minutes will record issue of discussion, recommendations, actions to be taken and decisions made by the consortium.
 - Action items from previous meetings will be circulated via email with agendas for subsequent meetings (until such time that a SharePoint website may be set up as noted above).
 - All minutes will be stored electronically and will be archived on CD at the end of each calendar year. Minutes will be retained for their institutional memory and historical value.

10. SUMMARY OF CONSORTIUM MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

- Two weeks prior to each meeting, the secretariat will call for each consortium member to submit a one-page summary that highlights their activities since the last meeting, any current/new connections, and what recent disasters their communities have experienced or to which their organizations have responded. The one-page summaries will be circulated with the agenda one-week prior to the meeting. Completion of these one page summaries is optional but meant to act as a communication tool among the membership.

11. MEETING PROCEDURES

- The Working Group will meet every other month, via teleconference and once a year face-to-face (pending funding availability).
- Each member/local authority/organization present shall have one vote on the business of the consortium, including the co-Chairs, who represent their respective authority/organization.

12. POLICIES

The National Emergency Psychosocial Advisory Consortium (NEPAC) does not have written policies.

13. BUDGET

- The CPA will provide in-kind support for its 2-year term as secretariat.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) will continue to pay for teleconferences (held every other month), as well as cover expenses for one in-person meeting, per year, of the consortium members (pending funding availability).