

Understanding Psychosocial Support

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Key concepts, components, and practical guidance for delivering effective psychosocial care.

1. What Is Psychosocial Support?

Aspect	Description
Definition	Integrated assistance that addresses both psychological (emotions, thoughts, behavior) and social (relationships, community, environment) needs of individuals or groups affected by stress, trauma, or adversity.
Goal	Promote resilience, reduce distress, and enhance overall well-being and functional capacity.
Target Groups	Survivors of disaster, conflict-affected populations, patients with chronic illness, children in schools, refugees, victims of violence, and anyone experiencing significant life stressors.

2. Core Principles

- Humanity & Dignity** – Treat every person with respect and empathy.
- Safety & Trust** – Create an environment where people feel physically and emotionally secure.
- Empowerment** – Enable individuals to make choices and regain control over their lives.
- Cultural Sensitivity** – Align interventions with local customs, beliefs, and languages.
- Participation** – Involve beneficiaries in planning, delivering, and evaluating support.
- Holistic Approach** – Address mental health, social connections, basic needs, and livelihood together.

3. Main Components

Component	Typical Activities

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- Active listening, counseling, stress management techniques (e.g., breathing, grounding).

Psychological

- Psychoeducation about normal stress reactions.
- Brief therapeutic interventions (e.g., Psychological First Aid, CBT-based tools).
- Reestablishing family and community networks.

Social

- Facilitating peer support groups.
- Linking to material assistance (food, shelter, cash).
- Community gatherings, cultural rituals, and memorials.

Community-Level

- Capacity building for local leaders and volunteers.
- Strengthening protective factors (e.g., schools, faith groups).

Protective Services

- Referral pathways to specialized mental health care, legal aid, or protection services.
 - Coordination with health, education, and protection sectors.
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4. Delivery Models

Model	When It's Used	Key Features
Psychological First Aid (PFA)	Immediate aftermath of emergencies	Rapid, non-intrusive support; focus on safety, calming, and connection to services.
Community-Based Psychosocial Support (CBPS)	Prolonged crises, post-disaster recovery	Trains community members to deliver group activities, safe spaces, and livelihood-linked interventions.
Task-Sharing / Task-Shifting	Low-resource settings	Non-specialists (e.g., teachers, CHWs) provide basic psychosocial care under supervision.
Integrated Health? Psychosocial Care	Chronic illness, humanitarian health programs	Embeds psychosocial screening and counseling within primary health services.
Digital / Tele? Psychosocial Support	Remote or pandemic-affected areas	Mobile apps, hotlines, and video counseling to reach isolated populations.
