

PART 1: Documentation – Study of Needs, Challenges and Strengths in the Chaudière–Appalaches Region during Major FLOODS

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ADAPTATIONsanté

HIGHLIGHTS . . .

- Need to improve prevention of physical and mental health impacts of flooding
- Need information for citizens, such as responders and municipalities, when a disaster occurs
- Intersectoral and concerted approaches involving CISSS and community resources must be strengthened and supported
- Promising practices in place or under consideration in the region to address flooding and climate change based on the experiences of citizens, communities, stakeholders and organizations
- Social support and mutual aid initiatives identified as community strengths to be maintained
- Take into account that resources may be scarce and that stakeholders may themselves be impacted by disasters
- Help, especially in mental health, must be proactive, as many are reluctant to seek support

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BACKGROUND

Floods have a considerable impact on people, living conditions and how individuals and communities function. This first component of the CASSSIOPEE project aims to document the needs, strengths and challenges for mental health related to flooding. A second component on heat waves will be added shortly.

These results will inform the other two components of the CASSSIOPEE project to map psychosocial vulnerabilities related to climate change and to develop a capacity-building and implementation plan to reduce psychosocial impacts within the context of EME (March 2022).

OBJECTIVE (PART 1: FLOODS)

Identify health needs (physical and mental), strengths and challenges in connecting and adapting health and social services to community resources during major floods in a climate change context.

METHODOLOGY

- Data collection:
 - Consultation day with key stakeholders in the Nouvelle-Beauce RCM in March 2020 (32 participants);
 - 44 individual interviews with key stakeholders in the Robert-Cliche and Montmagny RCMs in April and May 2020 (method modified due to the COVID-19 context).

Thematic analysis of needs, tie-in issues, strengths and challenges encountered based on the phases of a disaster: Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

- Limitations of the study:
 - Interview guide with broad questions that limit the ability to explore mental health issues further;
 - Change in methodology (consultation day for telephone interviews) limiting the ability to raise awareness of climate change and increase social engagement and solidarity.

Prevention (Always)

Needs

- *Better identify and understand vulnerable populations
- *Have access to sufficient financial resources
- *Improve collective knowledge of the risk, resources and services
- *Promote awareness of emergency response plans (ERPs)

Issues and Challenges

- *Working in silos is too prevalent in organizations
- *Involve community organizations and the CISSS more in preventing the impacts of flooding on physical and mental health (e.g., ERP)



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Strengths

- *Communication and citizen-alert system
- *Intermunicipal ERP (MRC Montmagny)
- *ÉcoRéussite project (MRC Montmagny)
- *Partnering system between experienced and less experienced citizens (proposal)
- *Creation of a volunteer system (e.g., list by municipality and resource sharing among communities)
- *Establishment of an intersectoral and interdisciplinary committee to address emergency preparedness and community mental health issues (e.g., MRC Robert-Cliche and Nouvelle-Beauce)

Needs

- *Practical help in preparing for evacuation (e.g., physical assistance, list of items to bring and provision of emergency kits)

Issues and Challenges

- *Resistance of some citizens to leave their homes in case of evacuation
- *Inadvisable behaviour of citizens (e.g., blocking certain exits from homes or breaching flood barriers)

Preparation (Before)



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Strengths

- Informal phone tree among citizens (MRC Montmagny)
- Door-to-door visits (proposal: interdisciplinary and intersectoral team including a social worker)

Needs

- *Facilitate access to communication methods (Internet and telephone) and transportation
- *Access to a daycare and shelter service
- *Maintain regular contact among key players (specific place and time for meeting)
- *Meet basic needs
- *Improve the organization, management and distribution of essential resources
- *Provide clinical support for stakeholders and consider their opinions
- *Be reassured and informed about the status of the disaster

Issues and Challenges

- *Rushed matches between stakeholders
- *Key stakeholders who may be affected by the disaster themselves
- *Lack of human resources and training for key stakeholders, increasing the risk of fatigue and burnout
- *Identifying people in need (processes)

Intervention (During)



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Strengths

- *Flood experience (MRC Nouvelle-Beauce, MRC Robert-Cliche)
- *Shelter and/or assembly centre
- *Proactiveness and versatility of responders and municipal employees
- *Alert system by relatives in case of communication gaps (proposal)
- *Support for local organizations and businesses

Needs

- *Facilitate access to social and medical services (e.g., sites, telephone lines, bereavement support, stress management)
- *Break the isolation
- *Be informed about the difficulties that may be faced the long term
- *Support in carrying out administrative procedures
- *Normalize and promote seeking help

Issues and Challenges

- *Reluctance to request assistance
- *Maintaining close and continuous collaboration among the stakeholders

Recovery (After)



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Strengths

- *Mobilization of schools (MRC Nouvelle-Beauce)
- *Gathering of disaster victims on social networks
- *Individual and group support activities (e.g., telephone follow-ups, support group among disaster victims)
- *Plan activities at specific times (e.g., first anniversary of the event or soon after the disaster)
- *Outreach approach