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Meta-Analysis: The Psychological Effects of Evacuations During Disasters

Evacuations protect lives during disasters but can cause significant psychological harm. This meta-analysis of ten peer-reviewed studies (2017-2024) examines mental health outcomes among displaced individuals. Results show higher rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression compared to non-displaced groups. Vulnerable populations, children, older adults, and low-income individuals, face greater risks, especially when displacement is sudden or prolonged. Key stressors include separation from family, poor shelter conditions, and disrupted medical or social support. Shelters may worsen trauma due to crowding, noise, and lack of privacy. Post-evacuation stress is often intensified by limited access to mental health services and economic hardship. This analysis highlights the urgent need for trauma-informed communication, integration of behavioral health professionals in shelters, and long-term recovery services. Emergency managers should adopt culturally responsive, family-centered approaches and build community partnerships to reduce psychological harm. Including mental health in all phases of disaster planning enhances recovery and resilience.

Presentation Theme: Psychological effects and public health.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: N/A.