

Field Psychologist (APS): Briefing Document

The Red Cross role

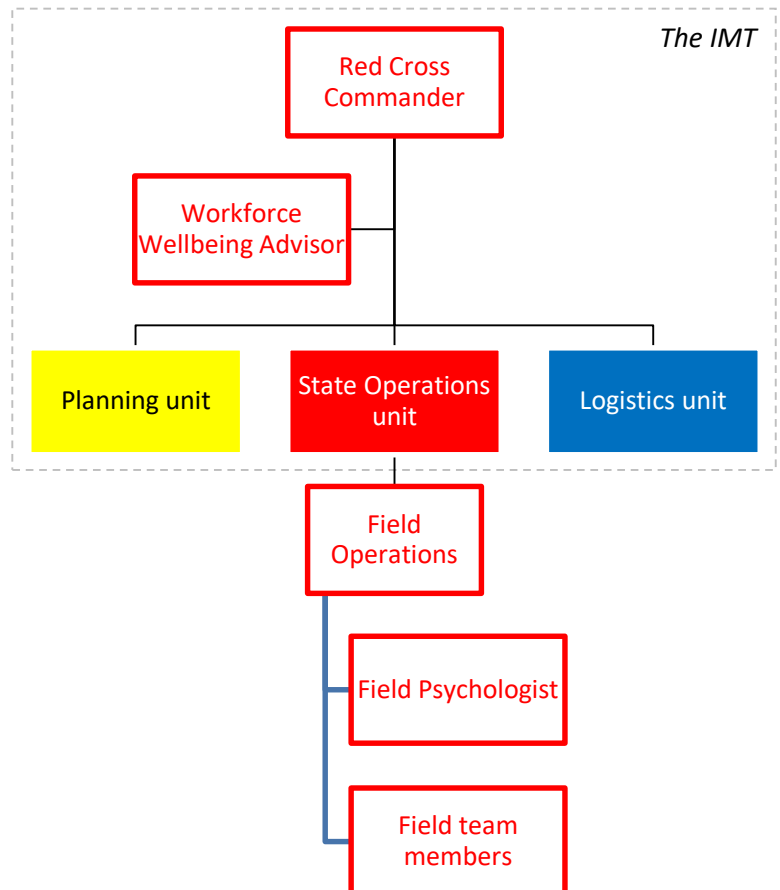
Following a disaster, the Red Cross is often deployed to provide PFA to the disaster affected community. PFA is a set of principles of best practice strategies to help people recover from disaster by promoting safety, calm, connectedness, efficacy and hope. People do not need to have psychological training to deliver PFA. All the Red Cross workers delivering PFA in the field will have been trained by the Red Cross in providing PFA.

Red Cross Incident Management Structure

Australian Red Cross uses the standardised Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). This system is used by all emergency services agencies across Australia.

One key element of the system is an established – but flexible – command structure. Specific roles are set out in the structure, however they may not all be required for a specific event. If a role is not activated, their responsibilities are merged with their supervising role. For example, if a dedicated Field Operations role is not needed, the State Operations role will carry out any relevant responsibilities.

On the other hand, if the State Operations role is struggling to manage all their responsibilities, they can activate the Field Operations role to delegate some responsibilities.



Role	Responsibilities
Commander	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Has overall responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Red Cross peopleShare issues of wellbeing concern they received directly or externally to the IMTAdvise on and approve escalations
Workforce Wellbeing Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide wellbeing-relevant messaging for briefingsCoordinate wellbeing referrals and escalations, under confidentialityAdvise on wellbeing-related issues (e.g. fatigue management for rostering, classifying the impacts of the response)
Field/State Operations Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Main link between the IMT and the field personnelMakes decisions on operational assignments
Field personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Will contact the Field Psychologist as needed

Escalation Line

The APS Field Psychologist role reports to the **Field Operations Officer role**.

As a Field Psychologist, you may be assigned to one specific Red Cross team or be a floating support available to a number of field teams. Either way, the Field Operations Officer will be your primary contact for any field needs – they can arrange transport, meals, local rosters and assignments.

They should also be approached if you have any concerns about local conditions (e.g. if a team is operating in a particularly high-stress environment, or if the provided accommodation is not allowing for sufficient rest for the workers).

The APS Field Psychologist also communicates regularly with the Workforce Wellbeing Advisor on the overall wellbeing needs of the workforce.

Any themes or wellbeing risks should be communicated to the Workforce Wellbeing Advisor in the State IMT. The Advisor can negotiate changes to overall strategy and decisions in the IMT, to better support wellbeing. If the Workforce Wellbeing Advisor role is not activated, please go instead directly to the Red Cross Commander.

If a Red Cross worker needs escalated support (e.g. requests one of the supports in the Wellbeing Framework, requests to be sent home, or you feel that they need to take a break), please contact the Workforce Wellbeing Advisor. The Advisor operates under strict confidentiality, and can arrange for referrals and logistics as required.

Red Cross Emergency Services Wellbeing Framework

Australian Red Cross Emergency Services has an established Workforce Wellbeing Framework. This framework outlines the prevention and mitigation strategies that Red Cross has in place.

Prevention Strategies	
Prior to an emergency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Recruiting sufficient capacity and providing appropriate role training- Self-care training- Leadership training and decision-making structures- Encouraging team cohesiveness and support
During an emergency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Providing supervision, leadership, logistics and resources to effectively support our people- Fatigue Management Standards: placing operating limits on shifts- Hardship Code categorisation: communicating the potential impact on physical and emotional wellbeing- Rosters that allow for effective handovers and rest- Clear Pre-Deployment briefings to encourage self-selection out of an activity that may impact personal wellbeing
Mitigation Strategies	
During the person's deployment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Workforce supporting one another with psychosocial support- Wellbeing roles to monitor, support and advocate for wellbeing needs- Fatigue Management Standards: placing limits on time-since-break and overtime- Providing opportunity to rest in field to reduce travel fatigue

After the person's deployment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent Wellbeing Check calls to check in on personnel wellbeing after activities - Access to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) expert counselling services for personal strategies (generally for chronic issues)
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DRN Field Psychologist FAQ

Do I have to be a registered psychologist to perform the field psychologist role?

Yes, you are required to be a registered psychologist to do the role of field psychologist. According to the APS ethical guidelines, you cannot call yourself a psychologist if you are not registered.

Will I be working as a psychologist on deployment?

Yes, you will be working as a psychologist, using psychological skills and knowledge, but in a non-clinical or counselling setting, and doing this work *pro bono*. Your primary role as the Field Psychologist is to support the Red Cross workers on deployment in the field. You will be using your professional psychological capacities like active listening, patience, respect, and other relationship/micro-counselling skills. You may also use some basic problem-solving and other self-care strategies e.g., self-soothing/relaxation; (re)accessing social connections and support; behavioural activation/promoting positive activities; promoting helpful thinking.

Your role as the field psychologist mainly involves providing support for the other Red Cross workers delivering PFA to the disaster affected community. This could include informal checks on their wellbeing, helping them to monitor and manage their stress and wellbeing, helping them to think through how they best provide psychological first aid in a non-intrusive, caring and helpful way. You might also assist Red Cross personnel with assessing, managing or de-escalating complex situations with members of the public, or advising about referrals for mental health care for more distressed people.

You will most likely **not** be providing a clinical service or doing therapy. Disaster affected people do not need therapy in the immediate post-disaster phase. This is the time when they need Psychological First Aid. Some people may need to be referred onwards to mental health services and the Red Cross have systems in place for organising this. However, whilst the intention is that psychologists do not provide a clinical service or therapy, you could be drawing on your clinical skills in the case of more complex situations, for example, if a Red Cross worker or member of the public became particularly distressed and you were involved in helping them to calm down.

What skills or training do I need to have in order to perform the field psychologist role?

Psychologists are expected to have knowledge and skills in Psychological First Aid, and a comprehensive understanding of the roles of psychologists in a disaster context.

The APS Disaster Practice Certificate is a useful online training which DRN members are able to access at a subsidised price. The APS will also offer disaster training sessions each year to provide APS members with the necessary skills set to perform the Field Psychologist Role and other roles within the disaster/emergency sector.

What do I say to Red Cross workers about the role I am performing?

According to our APS ethical guidelines, it is important that psychologists communicate clearly about the role they are performing. When you are volunteering with the Red Cross as a field psychologist you are engaged as a registered psychologist to provide psychological support for the Red Cross personnel. You could say something like "I'm Susie. I'm a psychologist, from the Australian Psychological Society, and I'm here just to provide support and a bit of back-up if needed for the Red Cross workers who are caring for the public".

Will I be identified in the field as a psychologist?

The APS is having an ongoing conversation with the Red Cross about whether we would wear name tags identifying us as psychologists in the field. Until now, we have decided not to do this, for a few reasons. Our role as field psychologists is to provide psychosocial support to the Red Cross personnel. However we want the Red Cross workers who have been trained to deliver PFA to feel confident in their own skills, and not defer to us because of our psychological training. We thought we could be a bit more subtle if we weren't wearing badges

announcing that we're psychologists. We also don't want members of the public to especially seek us out because of our psychological training. The Red Cross volunteers are trained to be able to promote comfort, safety, help, efficacy, connectedness and hope, which is primarily what the public need at this stage. We are there in the background, looking out for people's wellbeing, a resource if needed, but not to be put up on a pedestal. However, working out the subtleties of this relationship is a work in progress!

Who am I working for?

You are working as a psychologist doing pro-bono work for the Red Cross. When deployed with Red Cross, APS Field Psychologists must still adhere to the ethical principles/guidelines and professional standards of a psychologist.

When deployed with Red Cross your client may be Red Cross volunteers or staff, the Red Cross as an organisation, and in some circumstances could be a member of the public. Where you may be working with the public, this will be made clear in your briefing.

DRN volunteers working as pro-bono psychologists alongside Red Cross are expected to commit to the Red Cross Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, Universality.

Am I insured for this work?

You will need to be covered by your own professional indemnity and personal accident insurance. It is a good idea to phone your insurer to let them know when you are working outside of your usual role, to ensure that your cover can extend to this different setting.

Is there any payment involved?

No, when you are working as a Field Psychologist you are working pro bono for the Red Cross and you will not be paid.

Where travel is involved, Red Cross will pay for your flights to and from the site, cover accommodation, and will reimburse other travel costs to and from the airport if you provide them with receipts. During your time in the field, Red Cross will also provide meals or food vouchers (at or near the accommodation).

What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality is addressed by Red Cross with all staff and volunteers upon deployment. Record of contacts are retained by Red Cross.

When talking with Red Cross personnel, you may need to remind them about the limits to confidentiality that we are held to according to our Code of Ethics.

Part of your role as a field psychologist may be to give feedback to Red Cross Operational teams about how you think particular Red Cross personnel are coping. This feedback shall be kept high-level and focused on the person's wellbeing, without sharing any private information. For instance, a recommendation might be made that someone needs to go home early because their deployment is impacting their wellbeing. The exact reason for this impact does not need to be shared (whether it's health, family, stress, operational issues, or other).

Wherever possible, recommendations such as this should be discussed with the affected person first, to get their approval to share. However, from time to time a Red Cross person may choose to ignore their personal impact over a desire to help. In this case, a discussion can be had with the Red Cross Operational team about next steps.

If in doubt about a confidentiality issue, consult with another psychologist/APS DRN liaison contact person.