

Trillium research suggests increase in mental health assistance after hurricanes

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Posted: Oct 24, 2018 05:47 PM EDT

Updated: Oct 24, 2018 06:12 PM EDT



GREENVILLE, N.C. (WNCT) - Officials at Trillium Health Resources have been studying the impact of recent hurricanes on mental health.

Their research suggests a surge in the need for assistance following Hurricane Florence.

Trillium started looking at data after Hurricane Matthew hit North Carolina in 2016.

The research found the need for mental health resources for impacted community members increased 45 percent compared to the need before the hurricane.

It's a health issue Cindy Ehlers and her team are trying to tackle after Florence swept through the state.

"Because Florence was such a bigger storm and covered a much larger area of the state, and it moved so slow, we know we are going to have a dramatic impact," said Cindy Ehlers, vice president of Trillium Clinical Operations.

They're predicting the need for mental health assistance will increase to around 50 to 60 percent.

"So anytime a person is in that kind of distress situation, with lots of flooding or storm surge flooding, you end up with a lot of evacuations," said Ehlers. "And that creates an incredible amount of stress."

Ehlers said the increase can be attributed to more people remaining in shelters longer following Florence.

And a large portion of that need is in children under the age of 13.

"Driving in and out of your neighborhood every day, seeing all the contents of the houses on the streets and children seeing that every day, that's a really different impact on their, you know, ability to understand a safe community and a safe life," said Ehlers.

Ehlers said if a child is having trouble sleeping, maintaining their daily routing or starting to have performance shifts in school, it may all be signs of mental distress.

"It is possible to get beyond that," said Ehlers. "It is definitely not a life long illness but not getting treated can turn into that."

If you need assistance you can call their 24-hour help line at. 1.877.685.2415.

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