

# THRIVE Flood Disaster Response & Recovery Impact Report

## Organizing to Address Health Related Social Needs

Climate change-related natural disasters, including extreme weather events, such as intense storms, floods, and heat-waves, are increasing in frequency and intensity. These events are **profoundly affecting human health** locally and globally, challenging the ability of communities to prepare, respond, and recover. In this report we reflect on what we learned during the natural disaster and outline actions to carry forward.



THRIVE is the Accountable Community for Health (ACH) collaborative for the Barre health service area. We share in the aim to **address health-related social needs** by bringing together healthcare, public health, social services, and other local partners. The multi-sector partnership works to improve health outcomes and contain health care costs by identifying and addressing social determinants of health. Central Vermont Medical Center (CVMC) serves as the “backbone” organizational and fiscal agent for the ACH. On July 10 and 11, 2024, the one-year anniversary of previous disaster, our community was again impacted by severe flooding. **Throughout the region people lost their homes, businesses were damaged, water sources were contaminated, and mental health needs spiked. Local budgets were already stretched, burnout was widespread, the community faced low volunteer and donation engagement due to fatigue.**

Applying lessons learned from COVID and prior floods, THRIVE leaders acted swiftly to establish:

- **Communication channels.** A space for partners to share and assess immediate needs, facilitate quick connections, communicate safety information, identify mutual aid leaders, and execute a coordinated response. Additional stakeholders from the substance treatment and recovery group, Central VT Planning Coalition and the Housing Coalition were pulled in for additional collaboration on this response.
- **Resource grid.** A single source of truth document outlining local organizations, contact information, disaster-specific resources, and requests.
- **Tactical supports.** Food distribution, mental health resources, well water test kits, a tetanus clinic and first aid tent.
- **Weekly support.** THRIVE leaders held time each week to offer each other support, share updates and resources.

## What Did We Learn?

### THRIVE Operates Well During Crisis

THRIVE leaders are in tune with their communities. During times of crisis, THRIVE leaders are engaged and responsive, meeting the needs of the community. This was demonstrated in both live and asynchronous communication channels. THRIVE leaders communicated needs, share resources and offered support. This approach resulted in activating mental health resources, clarity about funding and resources available for immediate and long term needs, dissemination of personal protective equipment and water test kits and more. **THRIVE is developing a THRIVE Crisis Protocol** to support an even more streamlined approach for activating resources. Including: documentation about lead agencies, services and points of contact, organizing 211 data collection, and kicking off communication with mutual aid groups to evaluate needs and coordinate services.

#### THRIVE Communities Most Impacted by the 2024 Floods

- Barre City
- Fayston
- Middlesex
- Moretown
- Plainfield
- Waitsfield
- Waterbury

### Amplify Mutual Aid Groups

**Hyper local Mutual Aid Groups lead crisis response in their communities.** Following the recent string of natural disasters, these groups have proven to be well organized and lead a coordinated response with municipalities, State and non profits to address safety, shelter, food, equipment, donations and volunteers. During the first three weeks, Mutual Aid Groups asked THRIVE to document services being offered in real time, dates, times and locations. A need emerged, it was difficult to quickly direct funds to these Mutual Aid Groups. **THRIVE seeks to support a system where funds can quickly and efficiently be distributed to the Mutual Aid Groups** during a disaster.

#### Mutual Aid Groups Engaged during the 2024 Floods

- BarreUp (Barre City)
- Plainfield People
- Hope Coalition
- CReW (Waterbury)

### Anticipate Mental Health Needs

Our new normal is that we expect natural disasters. With this in mind, **THRIVE seeks to support best practices for timing of deployment and methods for Mental Health Care and support our partner agencies who deliver this critical care** both in the immediate aftermath as well as in long term recovery.

#### Health Related Social Needs (Social Determinants of Health) THRIVE Focus Areas

- Housing
- Food
- Employment
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Finance
- Safety
- Language
- Support (Family & Community)

### Operationalizing Donation and Volunteer

We have a **significant need for operational support, managing the solicitation and deployment of donations and volunteers.** During this crisis, there was marked low volume of donations and volunteers. THRIVE leaders tapped their networks for donors and volunteers while coordinating with the Mutual Aid Groups. This approach worked but in a landscape where natural disasters will repeat, we must have an efficient approach. An illustrative example, there were generous truck loads of donations that did not match the needs of the first weeks of a crisis, resulting in volunteer diversion to secure high capacity storage until distribution could happen. **THRIVE is recommending a review of resources, including SerVermont, to take a regional and statewide lead to operationalize donations and volunteers, draw from a larger pool, match volunteer skill with need and manage donations to better serve communities in crisis.**