

Dealing with planned disaster

The Institute for Disaster Mental Health (IDMH) at SUNY New Paltz is collaborating with the Center for Deployment Psychology to host a two-day training in prolonged exposure therapy this week on the SUNY New Paltz campus.

“After more than a decade at war, our nation faces an unprecedented need to address mental health issues among our service people and their families,” said James Halpern, director of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health. “Fortunately there is more openness about this need than in previous conflicts; unfortunately the sheer numbers mean there is insufficient access to mental health professionals trained in treating members of this very specific culture.

The Center for Deployment Psychology specializes in training military and civilian mental-health providers to deliver deployment-related behavioral health services to military personnel and their families. The CDP offers education and training programs, as well as ongoing consultation to providers and supervision to trainees.

The upcoming training will prepare practitioners to use evidenced-based treatment with demonstrated efficacy in assisting people with multiple or prolonged exposure to trauma, including military personnel as well as disaster survivors. “We see this as a natural extension of the IDMH’s primary focus on assisting those impacted by disasters, as war is sometimes described as a ‘planned disaster’ and many of the consequences are shared,” said Halpern.