



Los Angeles Wildfires

Situation Report #6

March 26, 2025

Project HOPE's Emergency Response Team is implementing a school-based mental health and resiliency program to address the urgent mental health needs of children and caregivers affected by the wildfires.

Situation Overview

Over the past three months, Project HOPE has identified an evolving need for mental health and psychosocial support — including among frontline workers, children, and caregivers. Individuals who live through disasters face a heightened likelihood of developing mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. As such, rushed evacuations, rapid changes in fire weather, and the brutal destruction of neighborhoods are likely to have long-term, community-wide impacts.

For children, the abrupt upheaval of daily life, prolonged displacement, and the loss of a sense of safety can result in lasting emotional impacts. Adults, especially those who care for others, often face compounded stress as they manage both their own mental health and the needs of those they support. This responsibility is shared not only by parents and caregivers, but also by teachers, health workers, social service personnel, and other frontline workers. In addition, elderly adults often find themselves in vulnerable positions in the aftermath of disasters. Many experience isolation and/or have mobility challenges or health conditions that are exacerbated by psychological

Key Updates

- Project HOPE has launched a **school-based mental health and resiliency program** in response to the historic wildfires' negative impact on the mental health of children, parents, and teachers.
- Our team is **conducting volunteer workshops and distributing "Kids Kits"** designed to support Psychological First Aid practices to improve community-based mental health support.
- Exposure to disasters **significantly increases the risk** of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder — and the sudden disruption of daily routines and a loss of stability can lead to **long-term emotional distress** for children.

distress, the disruption of routines, and the breakdown of support systems. **Grief, confusion, and anxiety are also common, especially for those who have experienced prior trauma or loss.** Ensuring accessible, age-appropriate mental health support for older adults is critical to fostering long-term recovery and resilience.

In disaster contexts, historically marginalized communities — including racial and ethnic minorities and Indigenous communities — are often disproportionately impacted due to systemic inequities, language barriers, and limited access to services. These communities may already face elevated levels of stress and trauma stemming from ongoing marginalization. **Given these dynamics, culturally competent, community-based mental health support is necessary to adequately address unique needs, rebuild trust, and ensure that no one is left behind in the recovery process.**

Project HOPE is Responding

Project HOPE has launched a comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) initiative aimed at building the capacity of frontline workers while addressing the urgent mental health needs of children affected by disaster. In partnership with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, Project HOPE is providing direct support to children impacted by the fires — including those whose families have lost their homes.

With an eight-week curriculum that has been tailored to each individual school, **Project HOPE aims to help children understand their feelings, process trauma, and build coping skills through creative expression.** Children will be supported through play, storytelling, music, and art. In addition, Project HOPE is collaborating with parents, educators, and school administrators to identify and implement strategies that bolster mental health resources for teachers, caregivers, and school communities as a whole. **Project HOPE also continues to distribute “Kid Kits” to children impacted by the fires, which include creative and play items to support Psychological First Aid practices.**



Fire damage sustained in Altadena. Photo by Rezeta Veliu for Project HOPE, 2025.

Project HOPE is also providing workshops for volunteers supporting impacted communities. The focus of these workshops is an exploration of how trauma and chronic stress affect both helpers and survivors, as well as guidance for active listening and compassionate response. **Project HOPE aims to help participants build a personal toolbox for self-regulation to allow those supporting victims of the fires to maintain compassion while also supporting themselves.** These activities are expanding to

“The needs across the county remain extensive, with many individuals and families still facing significant challenges in the aftermath of the fires. Project HOPE is honored to support the most vulnerable members of the community as they navigate the path to recovery.”

*— Chessa Latifi, Deputy
Director of Emergency
Preparedness and Response*

multiple partners, including those who support families impacted by the foster care system, the Indigenous community, the LGBTQ+ community, the elderly population, and more. The team continues to work with local organizations, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Los Angeles County's recreation centers, and more in these efforts.

Project HOPE is also procuring 600 specialized Wellness Kits for children and families, which include books and resources focused on mental health and psychosocial needs, some of which will include Spanish-language materials to support members of Los Angeles' Hispanic population that have been affected. These kits will be distributed through local partners and organizations supporting children impacted by the fires.



Project HOPE distributes air purifiers and protective gear (including safety glasses, gloves, and masks) to protect residents in Topanga beginning the difficult process of cleaning fire debris. Photo by Rezeta Veliu for Project HOPE, 2025.

Since the beginning of our response, Project HOPE has reached over 17,000 fire-affected community members. The team has distributed essential supplies across Los Angeles County, prioritizing those directly affected and local organizations directly serving those impacted. Distributed items include:

- Nearly 3,000 family hygiene kits and hundreds of other hygiene supplies, including diapers, wipes, and other essentials
- Bottled water for hundreds of individuals living in shelters and/or communities without easy access to stores and aid services
- 150 family health kits including over-the-counter medicines and bandages
- Nearly 500 "Kid Kits" designed to support Psychological First Aid (PFA) practices
- 350 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits that include industrial-grade gloves, masks, and goggles for those re-entering the fire zones
- 5,000 surgical masks, 1,600 air purifiers, and extra air purifier filters
- Nearly 500 sets of sheets for families who lost their homes

Project HOPE also previously provided critical financial support to health clinics serving fire-affected communities to ensure access to care for uninsured, under-insured, and otherwise vulnerable community members. As the region continues to recover, **Project HOPE remains committed to supporting the long-term mental health and well-being of affected residents and the frontline workers who care for them.**