



BP funded Project Rebound project coming to an end in 2014

By [Cassie Fambro | cfambro@al.com](mailto:cfambro@al.com)



Project Rebound. Courtesy of the project.

MOBILE, Ala.-- Project Rebound initially began after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill when BP funds were dispersed to various projects as recompense for the disaster. Geared toward mental health, [Project Rebound](#) was given \$10 million in August of 2012, and those funds have lasted until this year.

The program will come to an end Dec. 31, but keep its services in Baldwin County schools.

"We stretched it out, and it has lasted longer than we would have expected," state director Paige Rucker said.

That doesn't change that the program specializing in mental health counseling will leave a gaping hole in affordable resources in southern Alabama.

"People won't call you and ask for mental help. They call you because they need help with their utilities, their rent. We worked with available resources like churches and helped in that way," Rucker said.

Project Rebound isn't new. Typically funded by FEMA, the goal is to acclimate a community back to normalcy after a disaster by providing free mental health services.

Rebound didn't just help people find the financial help they needed, they reached out into the community.

"We lessened the stigma of mental health," Rucker said.

Rebound counselors met people outside of an office setting to check on them and even sit down and draft resumes. Counselors would journey to coffee shops, McDonalds and other venues without office walls.

They also kept people abreast of job openings in the area and used their website to connect employers with those affected by the spill.

Focusing on mental health, Rucker said that children were greatly impacted. As a result, Rebound has allotted their remaining funds to staying in Baldwin County Schools with the Roller Coaster program.

Roller Coaster caters to a tragic byproduct of the economic ramifications of the oil spill: divorce.

Children of divorce or separation are invited into a group counseling environment to help them learn coping skills.

"An estimated 36 percent of parents in Baldwin County are separated or divorced," Rucker said.

A major factor has been the economy, heavily hit because of the recession and the oil spill.

The eight-week program also aided with anger management and encourages new friendships with children going through similar struggles.

Rebound will also continue to pay for a counselor in Robertsdale at the alternative school there. There as not a counselor prior to the project, and it's made a huge impact in behavioral issues, per the director. The funding for that counselor will last until the end of 2014.

In total, Rebound will reduce its staff from 16 to 7.

As for what people who relied on Rebound will do now, Rucker says the phone number will remain active until March and help to redirect people to other resources.

Alta Pointe and Baldwin County Mental Health will assist and offer a sliding payment scale.

"We are also trying to get mental health services into the Alabama Free Clinic," said Rucker. "We see a lot of anxiety-driven illness, and it needs to be emphasized that mental health is as important as physical health."

For Rucker, the experience directing Rebound was sobering.

"It was an eye-opener," she said. "We had so many desperate, suicidal people and we have come a long way."

However, she points to the effects that the Exxon-Valdez oil spill had in 1989. "It takes five years for an impacted area to recover," said Rucker.

For anyone looking for information on where to find mental health resources after Rebound's closing, call 1-800-639-REBOUND.