



Jess Mercer and Jake Fender are part of California HOPE, a FEMA-funded program facilitated by Butte County Behavioral Health that has been providing mental health crisis care to Camp Fire survivors since the disaster.

ment, which experts say has contributed to measles outbreaks among schoolchildren.

## Feeling it out

Trauma and mental health care was spotlighted in Butte County this year, particularly in light of the Camp Fire. Local experts confirmed that many survivors are still struggling emotionally—a difficulty compounded for those who aren't able to meet their basic needs, such as water, food, clothing and shelter.

Crisis outreach workers with California HOPE—a Federal Emergency Management Agency-funded program facilitated by Butte County Behavioral Health—have been working to address these issues since the wildfire, and as of November, had provided nearly 6,000 individual counseling visits and over 46,000 group visits, primarily with children.

In addition, two Butte Strong grants—\$232,000 awarded in January and \$1.86 million awarded in June—supported trauma response, healing and recovery initiatives for all Butte County schools, including charter and private schools.

The Butte Strong Fund also provided a number of other, much smaller grants for several art-therapy projects.

Free mental health care services also were provided via a new non-profit called Medspire Health. The all-volunteer organization of medical providers focuses on offering free non-emergency health care to Camp Fire survivors, hosting several clinic days on the Ridge and making home visits.

## In full swing

Butte County has been a hot spot when it comes to the rate of painkillers prescribed per person, and has an above-average opioid-induced death rate. In its efforts to tackle the epidemic, Ampla Health launched its first clinic offering opioid addiction treatment early this year in Oroville—the clinic specializes in prescribing buprenorphine, an opioid medication used to treat addiction. The health care provider experienced such a demand that it sought and was awarded a \$200,000 grant from the California Department of Health Care Services' MAT Access Points program to expand its services. This year, it added more buprenorphine prescribers at its Olivehurst and Chico clinics and expanded those services in Oroville and Yuba City. Plus, four full-time opioid-use disorder counselors came on board for all four locations. □

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