

# HEALTHCARE PROVIDER RESILIENCY PREPARATION

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Preparing for a pandemic response includes anticipating the psychological impact on healthcare workers. Countries already affected by COVID-19 provide valuable lessons. Healthcare workers encounter unique stressors and must be particularly mindful to prioritize and practice self-care.

## HEALTHCARE WORKER UNIQUE STRESSORS

- Fear of becoming infected and ill
- Fear of infecting loved ones at home
- Prolonged high ops tempo, growing caseloads, longer work hours
- Colleagues falling ill
- Inadequate staff & supplies
- Working in bulky, awkward PPE, slowing work and creating barriers to connection
- Stigma of working with those ill from COVID-19
- Maintaining constant vigilance and PPE discipline
- Strict procedures reduce spontaneity and autonomy
- Keeping up with rapidly changing best practices
- Potential for 20-50% absenteeism for staff, vendors, contractors for multiple reasons
- Co-workers developing symptoms while at work
- Inexperienced co-workers re-purposed from their normal duties
- Critical vendors/supply chains becoming unpredictable

## IMPACTS

- Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, irritable, angry, exhausted, difficulty falling asleep
- Hypervigilance in self-monitoring own physical symptoms
- Feeling guilty that you may not doing enough, at home and work
- Long term – emotional withdrawal, fatigue, traumatic stress, degraded morale
- Burn-out – diminished self-care actions, pulling back from social support
- Some healthcare workers may refuse to come to work

## ACTION STEPS

- Use huddles to remind team about self-care: maintain healthy diet, ensure rest, limit caffeine/alcohol/tobacco, make frequent contact with people they trust
- We're doing best we can in these difficult times/circumstances
- If you feel overwhelmed: do not struggle alone. Reach out
- This is a marathon, not a sprint. Pace yourself
- Praise and express gratitude to your co workers
- Share frustrations and work things through together
- Respect different coping styles: introverts & extraverts need different things
- Check-in with every member of the team, regularly

## LEADER ACTIONS

- Regularly and supportively monitor members: ask about self-care actions
- Provide regular information updates, even if you don't have much
- Plan for long term work capacity with reduced staffing
- Rotate workers between higher and lower stress functions: paces and cross-trains team
- Partner inexperienced workers with more experienced
- Institute wingman protocol to support and monitor staff, and reinforce procedures
- Schedule regular work breaks
- Implement flexible schedules for workers directly-impacted
- Build-in time for colleagues to provide social support to each other
- Role model self-care, share what you are doing
- Engage, be available, be flexible
- All leaders and healthcare workers can promote the principles of Psychological First Aid to each other and patients: focusing on fundamentals of self-care – *hydrate often, eat healthy, recharge via sleep/rest, leverage connections with trusted people, and make time to exercise to burn off stress by-products*