

Your Employee & Family Assistance Program

# Supporting Employee Mental and Psychological Well-being During COVID-19

Adapted from World Health Organization—Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak

Healthcare workers and first responders experience unique challenges during episodes of disease outbreak and pandemic. Long shifts, infrequent breaks, societal pressure, new policies and procedures, decreased socialization, increased stigma, and fear of becoming ill, can all have an impact on one's ability to cope. These challenges can increase stress and anxiety. Here are a number of considerations that can support the mental health and well-being of healthcare providers and first responders.

## Employees

- Feeling stressed during times like these is normal. Make stress management and your mental well-being a priority.
- Use work breaks to rest. Take as much time to rest between shifts as possible.
- Look after your physical well-being. Maintain healthy eating and exercise patterns to boost immunity and resilience.
- Use stress reduction strategies which have been helpful in the past.
- Avoid unhelpful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs, as these can negatively impact sleep and mental health.
- Stay connected with family and friends. Consider using digital communication and connection to maintain safety and reduce fear in others.
- Connecting and talking with a colleague, manager, or other supportive people in your life is key to personal mental health care. If connecting with a colleague or family member isn't enough, seek assistance from a professional can help. [Your employee and family assistance program is available 24/7 to provide professional support.](#)

## Leadership

- This is a marathon, not a race. Protecting staff from chronic stress means they will have better capacity and focus to fulfil their role long-term.
- Encourage and initiate employee work breaks and healthy wellness practices.
- Keep employees informed by ensuring they received regular quality, accurate communication.
- Rotate staff from high-stress positions to lower-stress positions to reduce chronic exposure to high-stress situations.
- Partner inexperienced workers with colleagues that are more experienced and reduce isolation and risk for outreach workers by having them work in pairs. A buddy-system provides an opportunity for support, monitoring stress, and reinforcing compliance with safety requirements.
- Implement flexible work schedules or allow work from home for those experiencing increased stress due to having close family or friends considered at-risk with COVID-19.
- Remind employees of the mental health and psychosocial supports available to them.