

# FOR LEADERS: Promoting Well-Being During the Covid-19 Outbreak

During the Covid-19 outbreak navigating wellbeing in organizations will be particularly crucial, as your team will be at the front lines of an unprecedented public health threat. This will not be a one-size-fits-all proposition, and ensuring the well-being of yourself, your team, and your organization will be both a learning and a leadership challenge. It will require you to respond to an ever-changing context. Approaches that work well one day won't necessarily work the next. Seek input from both public health experts and your staff regularly, and change behavior and decisions to match the daily context.

Establishing order will be important, but also remind your staff regularly where stability and existing wisdom, strengths and resources are present. To do this well requires being more disciplined about regular check ins, support to staff, and seeking and giving guidance where needed. You can seek guidance from behavioral health and public health experts, but also make sure to talk with your team regularly about what is helpful for them from day to day.

To support your team, find ways to:

- Check in regularly with them about how they are doing.
- Circulate accurate and timely information about the outbreak.
- Facilitate access to benefits.
- Provide timely links to information about changes in policies and resources.
- Foster peer and leader support via email, text, or videoconferencing.
- Encourage staff to tell you whatever they wish to tell you about their reactions, preferences and their concerns.
- Give education about stress and coping strategies specific to the pandemic context.
- Keep an eye on possible stress reactions that may need extra support, such as:
  - Becoming more isolated from others and talking a lot less
  - Anger outbursts
  - Increased use of Substances
  - Making more mistakes
  - Worsening of chronic health problems

The primary messages you should be giving often and repetitively are:

- “We are committed to our employees’ health and wellbeing. Here is what we’re doing to keep you all safe...”
- “How are you doing? What do you need? How can we help?”
- “You have resources to help you through any stress reactions. A workplace peer, chaplain, and/or an EAP counselor can work with you to ensure that you get the help you need.”
- “We’ll make it through this together. We value you and the work you do.”



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Last but not least, leaders are often the last ones to get support in an organization. During this type of pervasive, unprecedented event, it is important to reach out to other people to get support for yourself as well. This may require you to network with other leaders who have similar positions in other locations, or even in other first responder settings. Or reach out to retirees, clergy, family or friends for wisdom and support. These conversations don't have to be lengthy but knowing that there is someone you can consult with about strategies and tactics, as well as checking in about your own well-being, can make all the difference in the world at a time like this. Make these check-ins a priority and don't be afraid to use formal mental health help as a "tune up" if your own stress persists.