

Creating a resilient organization for health care workers during a crisis

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Action steps taken by an organization before, during and after a crisis will reduce psychosocial trauma and increase the likelihood your workforce will cope or even thrive.

How physicians and other health care workers are supported during a time of acute stress impacts how they cope and whether they recover from the crisis, or alternatively, whether they will adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms and show signs of stress injury (burnout, insomnia, dysphoria) or even worse, chronic stress illness (depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse).

Effectively caring for the health care worker may decrease their risk of leaving practice or limiting their full-time effort. Successful organizations will take a systems approach and focus on becoming a resilient organization prior to times of crises, rather than limiting their efforts to a focus on individual resilience or only attending to the well-being of health care workers after crises develops.

Furthermore, resilient organizations will need to rapidly reconfigure their well-being priorities to meet the biggest new drivers of stress in a crisis setting.

This resource provides a 17-step process for activities before, during and after a crisis.

Download the Creating a Resilient Organization guide

Download the complete Creating a Resilient Organization guide (PDF) for details on the 17 steps.

Overview of steps for caring for health care workers (HCWs) during a crisis

Before: Creating a resilient organization

1. Appoint a chief wellness officer (CWO) and establish a professional well-being program.
2. Create a “Caring for the Health Care Workforce During Crisis” plan and coordinate with Hospital Incident Command System (HICS) leadership.
3. Develop a plan to support workforce needs for professional competency during crisis reassignments.
4. Establish a plan to suspend or reduce nonessential tasks.
5. Develop mechanisms to assess stress and needs within the workforce.

During: Supporting physicians and other HCWs during a crisis

6. Assess the current situation and evaluate the adaptability of the pre-existing plan to the current circumstances.
7. If necessary, develop new support and resources to meet needs specific to the crisis.
8. Emphasize and embody the importance of visible leadership.
9. Connect with other institutions; share and learn together.
10. Assess the needs and stress level within the workforce at regular intervals.
11. Adapt support plan to meet evolving needs.

After: Learning from a crisis to be an even more resilient and effective organization in the future

12. Debrief unit by unit as well as by profession.
13. Catalog what was learned and update the crisis plan for next.
14. Deploy an organization-wide approach for supporting the workforce after the crisis; identify new needs to facilitate recovery and restoration.
15. Honor the dedication, commitment and sacrifice of health care professionals.
16. Memorialize health care professionals that have been lost.

17. Resume efforts to attend to organizational and system factors that promote well-being and create a resilient organization.

Additional resources

| [Caring for our caregivers during COVID-19](#)