

Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak



WHO messages for team leaders or managers in health facilities

Focus on longer-term occupational capacity

Keeping all staff protected from chronic stress and poor mental health during this response means that they will have a better capacity to fulfil their roles. Be sure to keep in mind that the current situation will not go away overnight and you should focus on longer-term occupational capacity. Rather than repeated short-term crisis responses.

Ensure information and well managed working procedures

Ensure that good quality communication and accurate information updates are provided to all staff. Rotate workers from higher-stress to lower-stress functions. Partner inexperienced workers with their more experienced colleagues. Initiate, encourage and monitor work breaks. Implement flexible schedules for workers who are directly impacted or have a family member affected by a stressful event.

Provide support and be a role-model

Ensure that staff are aware of where and how they can access mental health and psychosocial support services and facilitate access to such services. Managers and team leaders are facing stresses and may experience additional pressure relating to the responsibilities of their function. It is important that the mentioned provisions and strategies are also meant for managers, who can be role-models for self-care strategies to mitigate stress.

Orient all responders

Orient all responders (including e.g. nurses, ambulance drivers, volunteers, case identifiers, workers in quarantine sites) on how to provide basic emotional and practical support to affected people using psychological first aid.

Increase the capacity of staff to support mental health

Manage urgent mental health and neurological complaints (e.g. delirium, psychosis, severe anxiety or depression) within emergency or general healthcare facilities. Appropriate trained and qualified staff may need to be deployed to these locations when time permits, and the capacity of general healthcare staff capacity to provide mental health and psychosocial support should be increased.



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