

SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF THE UTAH HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE DURING COVID-19



As a health care provider, you are likely experiencing additional challenges during the COVID-19 infectious disease outbreak. This may include concerns about your own health, your family's health, stigma from within your community, and managing the distress of people you support in your professional life.

We acknowledge the risks you take every single day. We recognize that with all the changes comes increased stress. We also recognize the increased risk and burden placed upon you and your family. If you are still needing to see people face to face, your duty to serve can put you at increased risk of getting sick and conflicts with your own safety. We thank you for showing up day after day, for your bravery and dedication to serving others every day, and especially during this crisis.

The intention of this kit is to provide resources to help preserve your own resilience and mental health, as well as that of your family. Additionally, it highlights areas you can monitor for yourself and your peers during this crisis, in order to seek help early in coping with the unique stress you experience. Many front-line health care providers are experiencing increased levels of depression, anxiety, insomnia and stress. You are not alone in these feelings, and there are resources to help you get through them.



myStrength is digital self-care technology that is meant as both early intervention and as a complement to current behavioral health treatment.



Health During Quarantine

Protect Mental Health - myStrength app offers tips to help protect your mental health during quarantine.



Cultivate Inner Calm

Find Inner Calm - Meditation and Mindfulness can help. The myStrength App has resources that can help.



Inspiration for Members

Stay Connected - Learn more with myStrength's interactive Stay Connected While Social Distancing resource.

Video: [Utah myStrength Introduction](#)

Sign up or download the app "myStrength" now

- Go to www.myStrength.com and click "Sign Up" in the upper-right hand corner.
- When prompted for an Access Code, enter: **UDHSguest33**
- Complete the registration to create your own unique myStrength homepage.



The content contained herein is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Resources for Health Care Workers

For Your Family

- If you need emergency child care you can contact 2-1-1 for resources or call your local Family Support Center to use their crisis nursery
- Help Me Grow Utah can help provide parents and caregivers resources to help their children.
- Utah Parent Center is available to help parents and caregivers find resources for any special need including mental health.

For Your Health

EAP(Employee Assistance Programs)- Ask your employer if you have an EAP for free, confidential assessments and short-term counseling for mental and emotional well-being. Many EAPs help with trauma and other emergency response situational.

Managing Stress and Sleep

<https://intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/topics/covid-19/2020/04/covid-19-managing-stress-and-sleep/>

CSTS (Center for Study of Traumatic Stress) - Provider, Leader and Family Resources

<https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-master-list/coronavirus-and-emerging-infectious-disease-outbreaks-response>

The American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/>

American Psychiatric Association

<https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/apa-blog/2020/02/coronavirus-and-mental-health-taking-care-of-ourselves-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks>

Physician Support Line-A Resource for US physicians, staffed by psychiatrists, and free of charge who can offer support to physicians (including residents) of all specialties and medical students who are in need of mental health help.

www.physiciansupportline.com

Utah Crisis Lines

Intermountain Health Care-Emotional Health Relief Hotline 833-442-2211

Caregivers available 10am to 10pm 7 days a week.

Utah Statewide Crisis Line, with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Call 24/7 to speak to a licensed crisis counselor if you or a loved one are having thoughts of suicide, are experiencing an emotional or mental health crisis, or are feeling overwhelmed and need support.

Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams (MCOT)

- Triaged and dispatched through the Utah Statewide Crisis Line by calling 1-800-273-8255, teams are available for dispatch in Salt Lake, Davis, Weber, and Utah counties, and the southwest region of Utah, including St. George and surrounding cities.

- Due to COVID-19, crisis counselors on the Crisis Line will ask health screening questions to determine if an in-person or telehealth response is most beneficial. MCOT staff may wear the CDC's recommended universal precautions to include goggles, masks, gloves, and gowns to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our community and health care workforce.

SafeUT (Crisis Chat and School Safety Tip app)

- The SafeUT Crisis Chat and Tip Line is a statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to youth (public K-12 and higher education) through live chat and a confidential tip program – right from your smartphone.
- Licensed crisis counselors are available 24/7 to respond to all incoming chats, tips, and calls by providing supportive or crisis counseling, suicide prevention, and referral services. Support is also available to parents and educators of students in public K-12 and higher education.
- Free and available for download from the [Google Play Store](#) and the [App Store](#).

SafeUTNG (Crisis Chat and Safety Tip app for Utah's Army and Air National Guard service members, family members, and personnel)

- As an extension of SafeUT, the SafeUTNG app provides a safe and confidential platform to communicate with a licensed crisis counselor 24/7. Users can text, submit a tip, or call to receive support.
- The app is operated and managed by the University of Utah Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI) in partnership with the Utah National Guard.
- Licensed mental health professionals can assist with a variety of issues including: emotional crisis, grief and loss, drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues, self-harm, suicide prevention, and safety concerns.
- Free and available for download from the Google Play Store and the App Store.

Utah Coronavirus Information Line: 1-800-456-7707

- This Utah Coronavirus Information hotline is a central resource for the public's questions about COVID-19 in Utah. Visit coronavirus.utah.gov for more information.

Disaster Distress Helpline, operated by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 1-800-985-5990

- A 24/7 national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people seeking emotional help in the aftermath of a disaster (to include public health emergencies).
- People can also access services by texting TalkWithUs to 66746

Recognize When You Need a Break

The fact that COVID-19 is human-to-human transmissible, relatively unknown, and potentially fatal may intensify the feelings of personal danger. It is important to understand types of stress so that you can recognize them in yourself and in others.

Burnout describes a human response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stress at work signaled by exhaustion, cynicism, and work inefficacy.



Compassion fatigue is the resulting exhaustion from constant exposure to the same stressor leading to decreased compassion or empathy for others.

Resilience is the ability to adapt successfully in the face of trauma, adversity, tragedy or significant threat. Creating a stress resilience plan helps you fight against burnout and compassion fatigue.

Create a Stress Resilience Plan

1 Self-Assess

- What are my early warning signs of excessive stress?
- What do I do currently on a daily basis for self-care?
- What do I do on a weekly basis to improve self-care?
- What do I do when my stress level is unusually high?

2 Plan for the Future

- What can I add to my self-care routine?
- How will I make time for these new strategies?
- How often should I review what I am doing?
- What challenges do I expect to have with my plan for change?
- How will I know if my changes are helping?

3 Get Support

- Who can I turn to for support with my plan?
- How often should I check in with them?
- What professional support is available for me if I need it?

Stay Healthy!

Behavioral health workers, just like all those in healthcare, need to take care of their own health to be able to provide care for individuals in a high-stress environment. Workers must be able to stay focused on the job in the dynamic, crisis environment.

Pace Yourself

- Pace yourself, this pandemic is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Watch out for each other. Coworkers may be intently focused on a particular task and not take appropriate precautions to protect themselves.
- Be conscious of those around you. You might be exhausted, stressed, or even temporarily distracted, and that can lead to errors or irritability.
- Take frequent rest breaks. Mental fatigue, particularly over long shifts, can greatly increase workers' risk of injury and burnout.

Prioritize Your Physical Health

- Keeping a healthy routine, especially during uncertain times, will help curb stress.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise when you are able. Simply taking 20 minutes and going for a walk can help manage stress.
- Take breaks away from your workspace, or go out for fresh air, when possible.

Don't Ignore Your Mental Health:

As health care workers, you know how important mental health is, but often forget to watch your own mental health. Make sure you think about your mental well-being during this extraordinary time of stress. Some of the following may help:

- Keep in touch with friends and family: A simple phone call, text message, or video chat helps to manage stress and keeps you in contact with those close and important to you.
- Limit media exposure: Take some time every day to digitally unplug and get a break from all the media.
- Recognize and accept what you cannot change such as the organizational structure, complex work environment, waiting times, supply shortages, etc.
- Talk to people when you feel like it. You decide when you want to discuss your experience.
- Identify a buddy, ideally a peer, who understands your unique stresses, and check in often with one another. Try to process the difficulties of a shift or a day in the clinic, and then point out positive elements too. Lift one another up!
- Give yourself permission to feel upset or scared: you are in a difficult situation.
- Recurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks are normal—do not try to fight them. But, remember, if your sleep is so disrupted that it is hard to function, take time off and seek mental help. You cannot emotionally support others as well if you are having difficulties and not maintaining your own balance.

IDENTIFYING STRESS

Physical

Health care workers experiencing any of the following symptoms should seek IMMEDIATE medical attention:

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe pain
- Symptoms of shock

If health care workers experience symptoms over time or if they become severe, workers should seek medical attention.

- Fatigue
- Nausea/vomiting
- Dizziness
- Profuse sweating
- Thirst
- Headaches
- Visual difficulties
- Clenching of jaw
- Nonspecific aches and pains

Cognitive

If these symptoms occur on the scene, workers may not be able to stay clearly focused to maintain their own safety or to help patients in distress.

Health care workers may experience momentary cognitive symptoms; however, if symptoms are chronic or interfere with daily activities, workers should seek medical attention. These symptoms include:

- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Heightened or lowered alertness
- Poor concentration
- Poor problem solving
- Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people
- Memory problems
- Nightmares

Behavioral

As a result of a traumatic incident, health care workers may notice the following behavioral changes in themselves or coworkers:

- Intense anger
- Withdrawal
- Emotional outburst
- Temporary loss or increase of appetite
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Inability to rest, pacing
- Change in sexual functioning

Emotional

Strong emotions are ordinary reactions to a traumatic or extraordinary situation. Health care workers should seek mental health support from a disaster mental health professional if distress continues for several weeks or if they interfere with daily activities. Emotional symptoms include:

- Anxiety or severe panic (rare)
- Guilt/sense of failure
- Denial
- Grief
- Fear
- Irritability
- Loss of emotional control
- Depression
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Blaming others or self

MANAGING STRESS

Recognizing stress in yourself is important. Here are some things you can do for yourself to help you manage your stress:

Talk to your peers about the stresses of the day, jobs, and other worries you share. Place an emphasis on validating one-another's concerns without focusing on the grim. Help point out positive elements of the shift or day for one another.

Seek help from support systems available in the healthcare environment. Many systems have point people or resources to help with burnout, fatigue and other concerns. Having conversations about your worries can help reduce anxiety.

Self-care helps you stay strong in order to better help others. Self-care can be eating healthy, exercising and getting good sleep. Self-care may also include taking care of family, including children and others. Making sure you fill your own cup is just as important as pouring from it to serve others.

Stay in touch with older parents and family members you would normally visit. Connect by phone or video chat, write letters, or send supplies safely to their residence to maintain your connectedness.

Take things one day at a time - step back from the "sprint" mentality. Remember that this pandemic will not be solved quickly, treat it like a marathon.

Take mindful minutes. Slow breaths on the top of the hour, taking time to recognize all the small things around you, acknowledging them, and letting them go. Getting outside or stepping away from your workspace regularly.