



SNAPSHOT



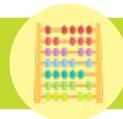
COVID-19: Self-care for Staff in the Addiction and Mental Health Sector

Self-care during a pandemic is new for most of us. Our work may have changed significantly; some of us may be working from home, others may be working in our usual location but without our colleagues, some may have experienced lay offs, and others may be in crisis mode in a hospital. Our clients' needs during the pandemic may be difficult to meet. All of these changes create stress and our usual sources of support, such as our colleagues, may not be present as before.

The stress may initially be hidden as we prioritize the needs of others over our own needs. In our work, we often go beyond the call of duty. Maintaining the balance between our own well-being, the needs of our clients and the needs of our family and friends is an additional stressor.

The uncertainty about the length of the crisis and whether there will be multiple waves can take an additional toll on our well-being and coping skills. But we are on a marathon, not a sprint.

To help support staff in the mental health and addiction sector, this Snapshot is devoted to self-care resources.



THE NUMBERS



In a recent (April 2020) survey of **578 healthcare workers** by the Canadian Public Health Association, **47%** felt they needed mental health support. In response to questions about their current work situation, healthcare workers described feeling anxious, unsafe, overwhelmed, helpless, sleep-deprived and discouraged.

(CPHA, April 2020)



A survey of **1,257 healthcare workers** in Wuhan, China found participants reported symptoms of depression **50.4%**, anxiety **44.6%**, insomnia **34.0%**, and distress **71.5%**.

(JAMA, 2020)

LOFT

MODEL FOR DEALING WITH STAFF ANXIETIES

[LOFT Community Services](#) used a five point framework created by Tait Shanafelt et al ([JAMA 2764380](#)) to help address and alleviate staff COVID-19 related anxieties. The framework, called *Caring for Our Carers* (Hear me, Protect me, Prepare me, Support me, and Care for me) is updated regularly and all resources are available to staff on a digital platform. Among the issues addressed: employee fears and specific responses. [View it here.](#)



DEALING WITH STRESS

[Coping with stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

[Join a virtual support group for healthcare workers.](#)

[Mental health tips for working from home.](#)





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FRONT-LINE MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION WORKERS

1 Consider the stressors in your own work life. How can your colleagues and supervisors support you?

2 Assess whether your usual sources of support have changed. If so, negotiate changes so you can feel supported.

3 Given the changes in your work, are your expectations realistic? Consider how you are affected by client setbacks related to COVID-19. Reflect on what will help you adjust to new work dynamics.

4 Make self-care a discussion topic in staff meetings. What can your organization do to facilitate self-care?



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

The well-being of healthcare providers depends not only on their stress levels and coping skills, but also on the degree to which they feel supported by the organization in which they work. (BCCDC, 2020)

1 Assess the needs of your staff. [Consider this audit tool and online survey for staff.](#)

2 Make self-care and well-being a topic of staff meetings. Consider the discussion starters in the Resources list below.

3 Consider new strategies for supporting staff. The strategies that worked before may need adjustment. Consider virtual town halls so staff can express their concerns and plan together.

4 Get ready for new policy planning opportunities. Support for staff in pandemics and other extreme events is a very specialized area. Mental health and addiction professionals are well positioned to influence public policy as the next stage in COVID-19 planning gets underway.



RESOURCES

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is providing access to mental health and addiction supports for healthcare workers in need of support who might be negatively impacted by COVID-19.

- [Mental Health and COVID-19](#)
- CAMH also offers a [Digital Mental Health Training Center](#).

Ontario Medical Association video for health care providers coping with COVID-19:

- [Four Things to Know About Coping With COVID-19](#)

Mount Sinai video on how to cope with stress:

- [Three Steps to Coping With Anything \(including COVID-19\)](#)

The psychological needs of healthcare staff as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic:

- [From the British Psychological Society](#)
- [From the BC Centre for Disease Control](#)

Integrate virtual care into your work:

- [Joule COVID-19 Learning Series](#)
- [Canadian Medical Association](#)

[ECHO Coping with COVID](#) is designed for healthcare providers and residents responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants are invited to join ECHO sessions virtually through multi-point videoconference technology to share and learn about ways to build resilience and overall wellness.

[Big White Wall](#) is a free online mental health support network coordinated by the Ontario Telemedicine Network for Ontarians aged 16+ experiencing mild-to-moderate depression and anxiety.

[BounceBack](#) is a free, guided self-help program offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association for Ontarians aged 15+ who are experiencing mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression.

