

Session 9: Supporting the Emotional Well-being of Staff Caring for Residents during COVID-19

Key Takeaways:

- Many nursing home team members and leaders are reporting significant psychological and/or emotional stress related to the pandemic.
- In some cases, staff have cared for residents for months or years, and feel like they are ‘family.’ It is very difficult for staff when those residents become ill or pass away.
- Due to staffing shortages, there is often less time available to spend supporting one another during work time.
- There are approaches that leaders can take to assess and intervene to promote staff well-being and retention. These include communicating early and often, reinforcing key messages, listening attentively, and seeking input from staff.
- Frequent communication regarding trauma-informed care and support may be useful.

The following questions can be used to facilitate discussions and reveal opportunities across and within key members of interprofessional teams, residents, and care partners. Please consider using/adapting them in your next huddles or team meetings.

Resources and Questions by Content

Examples of Resources to Support Staff Well-being and Mental Health	<p>Some Suggested References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benzo RP, Kirsch JL, Nelson C. Compassion, Mindfulness, and the Happiness of Healthcare Workers. <i>Explore (NY)</i>. 2017;13(3):201-206. doi:10.1016/j.explore.2017.02.001. • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Exposure to stress: Occupational hazards in hospitals. https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2008-136/pdfs/2008-136.pdf. • Hobfoll, S. E., Watson, P. J., Bell, C. C., Bryant, R. A., Brymer, M. J., Friedman, M. J., et al. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. <i>Psychiatry</i>, 70(4), 283-315. • Lai, J. et al. Factors associated with mental health outcomes among health care workers exposed to coronavirus disease 2019. <i>JAMA Netw Open</i> 2020 Mar 23(3):3203976. doi 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.3976. • Morganstein, J.C. Inpatient notes: Preparing for Battle: How hospitalists can manage the stress of Covid 19. <i>Ann Intern Med</i>. 2020 April http://doi.org/10.7326/M20-1897.
Engage in structured and ad hoc conversations with staff about their well-being/mental health	<p>Do leaders/managers talk about trauma-informed care and post-traumatic stress syndromes? Who monitors staff for potential signs/symptoms of psycho-emotional stress, depression, anxiety? Are staff members encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings with one another, and are they respected and valued for doing that on a regular basis? When asked, would staff members say that they have opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings openly, in a safe space, and that they feel supported by leadership and by their teammates?</p>
Follow-Up Plan (monitoring over time)	<p>Does the nursing home use a ‘buddy system’ or similar pairing of staff members for mutual support? Are specific comments about stress and burnout noted during exit interviews and shared with leadership? Are actions taken to address feedback from staff?</p>
Improvement Concepts/Critical Questions for Leadership	<p>Is staff well-being/mental health addressed explicitly during daily rounds, huddles, morning meetings? Are staff members encouraged to share stories from their own experiences during group or 1:1 sessions? Do staff share best/better practices for their own well-being/mental health that have been effective?</p>
Key Concepts by Stakeholder Group	
What do CNAs Need to know and discuss with the team?	<p>Are CNAs encouraged to talk about their own stress, anxiety, challenges during the pandemic? Is there a safe, private space somewhere on each unit for staff to sit quietly, cry, talk with others, listen to music, re-center themselves? Do nurses and/or social workers make a point of asking CNAs about how they are feeling each day?</p>
What do DONs and nursing supervisors need to know?	<p>DONs must have a system for assessing and monitoring staff well-being, mood, stress level and sense of burden. How does the DON or ADON communicate with other relevant members of the team if they are concerned about a particular staff member, without violating privacy and confidentiality?</p>

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<p>What does the interprofessional team need to know?</p>	<p>Team members must know where to find information on how to support staff during COVID-19. Nursing Home policies should address staff mental and psychological health and should be accessible.</p> <p>Team members must consistently and reliably demonstrate that they document and report ideas or concerns to their supervisor or leadership in a timely manner.</p>
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