

Mental Health Support for Healthcare During COVID-19

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 | Noon-1:00 pm

Participant list shared separately with this summary. Recording also available.

Discussion opened after welcome and an antitrust reminder. Spearheaded by ICSI's mental health working groups and open to all, this effort's focus is sharing learnings and implementation strategies in real time to provide mental health services and support to frontline healthcare providers and staff during the COVID-19 crisis.

Meeting Summary (notes below)

- Shannah Mulvihill of Mental Health Minnesota presented on their peer support services, including a warmline widely available to the community, and how they are supporting their certified peer support specialists during this time. **Warmline use has increased significantly in the last two months, and there is increased need to address social isolation.**
- Jodie Dvorkin of ICSI shared advice from health leaders in New York and others on how to support staff during the COVID-19 crisis. **Bi-directional communication – asking staff what they need and getting feedback what works, is critical.**
- Linda Vukelich of Minnesota Psychiatric Society updated on the COVID Cares mental health helpline for frontline health care workers. **Please post the flyer /share broadly with your employees as a resource.**

NOTES

Mental Health Minnesota

- Mental Health Minnesota offers several services run by people with lived mental health experience in recovery. One is a confidential helpline to help coordinate referrals, and they also offer online mental health screenings and connect people to a resource in their community. They are seeing a 20% increase in anxiety screening the last two months. More information available at: <https://mentalhealthmn.org/>

Minnesota Warmline

- Available 5-10 pm to broad community, and usage has increased in the last two months. Callers remain anonymous, which is a key benefit. Warm handoff to county crisis teams is done as needed.
- Run by peers in recovery, certified and trained through the state with additional training by MHM
- 1 in 4 callers have reported they would use crisis services or call 911 and go to ED if they couldn't reach the warmline

Connect Initiative

- Based on increased need during COVID-19, started this last week for individuals struggling with social isolation
- Anyone in the community can sign up to receive 3-5 social connection calls a week from a volunteer via a short form on the website or calling the helpline.
- Calls are done 3-5 times a week
- These calls started last week and increasing quickly

Supporting Staff during COVID

- Staff now working remotely. Using Google Chat to talk to and support each other
- Supervisor checks in individually with each peer support staff each day; program manager checks in with the supervisor to gather feedback.
- Holding frequent meetings to process difficult calls and talk about what it means to be a support specialist. And adding volunteer mental health specialists to help staff debrief calls and provide mental health support

COVID Cares

- New volunteer service from FastTrackerMN.org, MN Psychological Association, MN Psychiatric Society, Mental Health Minnesota; warmline provided by volunteer mental health professionals. Primarily, intended for health care workforce, essential personnel and first responders.
- Open daily, 9am-9pm, started on April 13th and up to 80 volunteers with more signing up
- Have not seen much traffic from the callers yet but people are doing a lot of downloads of the QR code. Visits to FastTrackerMN.org and COVID Cares on FastTrackerMN.org are up by 400%
- More information on services, how to schedule a call, sign up to volunteer available at: <https://fasttrackermn.org/>

Open Discussion

Health Leader Advice

Some tips from health care leaders nationally for other health care leaders on how they can support their staff during this time:

- Communicate with staff frequently (daily updates, virtual town halls)
- Saying thank you and often
- Remember your hidden heroes (e.g. engineering, lab, supply chain)
- Frequent and robust bi-directional communication tools
- Listening rounds with small, standard set of questions and having to document standards
- Create calm – the most important thing we bring to the team.

Polling question

How are you reaching out to staff to learn their needs during COVID?

- Informal reachouts 83%
- Department chairs 48%
- Organization wide survey 22%
- EAP 17%

Suggestion on other tools to reach out:

- All member wide meeting once a week.
- Smaller learning communities, individuals with same title and function to encourage open discussion and broader dialogue. These are peer led.
- All member survey

EAP follow up

Two organizations stated that EAP use was markedly down in March. One organization is exploring ways to increase EAP utilization by staff. One strategy is to have a meeting between EAP provider, human resources, marketing specialist and behavioral health leaders to understand the types of services provided by EAP and then use marketing to tease out benefits messaging to help spread the word to strategic leaders within the organization. This organization is hopeful that a more coordinated effort on spreading the word on EAP will be more successful than having it as a standalone service that people may not be aware of or know how to use.

Coming up:

- Call for Speakers: Please contact Tani Hemmila, themmila@icsi.org or Jodie Dvorkin, jdvorkin@icsi.org
- Next week, May 5th speaker: Essentia Health – Grief Support Services
- Next meeting will be Wed. May 20, and moving forward will be the first and third Wednesday of the month at noon.
- Resources Web Page: Please continue to provide feedback and resources and stories/vignettes that you think are particularly valuable to post. Link: [Mental Health Support for the Healthcare Workforce website](#)
- Next week ICSI staff Tani Hemmila and Jodie Dvorkin will present on this effort for the national Network for Regional Health Improvement, and open this conversation nationally