

# COVID-19

## Homeless System Response: Supervisors Promoting a Culture of Self-Care

In the potentially high-stress work environment caused by COVID-19, the dedicated staff serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness need to practice self-care more than ever. As a supervisor, you have the opportunity to identify early-stage burnout, vicarious trauma, and other signs of overwork in your team.

### ***What resources can I provide my staff during supervision or team meetings?***

Remind staff of any organizational policies or resources that support self-care, such as leave policies or employee assistance programs. Inform staff if there are any wellness resources provided by your organization's health plan. Here are some additional resources to promote wellness:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Healthy Living](#)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [Prevention and Wellness](#)
- Kaiser Permanente: [Wellness Resources](#)

### ***How can I support a staff member who is having a challenging time?***

Acknowledge that working with individuals and families experiencing homelessness is challenging. Ask if they have any ideas about what they can do to maintain their physical and mental health. Even if what they propose is not possible or practical, reflect back to them what you have heard. If they are struggling to come up with ways to take care of themselves, ask them what advice they would give to a client experiencing a similar level of stress.

### ***Are there special considerations for supporting staff with health, mental health, or substance use problems?***

We may be better at recognizing behavioral health concerns in clients than our staff. If staff approach you to discuss challenges involving their physical or behavioral health, including substance use, follow your organizational procedures for addressing these issues. It is important to protect staff privacy, and you might need to discuss with HR or your own supervisor how to accommodate a disability through medical leave or reasonable changes to the working environment. The following resources may prove useful:

- ADA.gov: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Technical Assistance
- Job Accommodation Network: [Mental Health Impairments](#)
- Job Accommodation Network: [Drug Addiction](#)

### ***How can I support staff with family caregiving responsibilities?***

To the extent that is possible and consistent with your HR policies, offer flextime and time off so staff can fulfill their caregiving responsibilities without sacrificing their own self-care. Staff members who are in direct contact with people experiencing homelessness or other high-risk groups should be provided personal protective equipment and encouraged to practice handwashing and other practices that reduce the risk to themselves and their families.

### ***How do I model self-care during these stressful times?***

- Practice what you preach and set aside time for yourself.
- Set a time after which you will not answer emails and should only be contacted by phone or text in case of emergency—then stick to it. Let staff see your email auto-response or hear your outgoing voicemail and encourage them to do the same when they are not on-call.
- Encourage people to explore new ways to reduce stress. Do not assume, however, that they will find the same things helpful that you do. During staff meetings, ask staff to share what they do to relax.
- Free resources: [Yoga Class Online](#), [Streaming Workouts](#), [Meditation Apps](#), [Sleep Apps](#).