

Getting Help

If you feel you need additional information, you may find this list of resources to be helpful.

SAMHSA Resources

Information Clearinghouses

Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC)
(800) 308-3515
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac

National Mental Health Information Center (NMHIC)
P.O. Box 42557, Washington, DC 20015
(800) 789-2647 (English and Español)
(866) 889-2647 (TDD)
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)
P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345
(800) 729-6686 (English and Español)
(800) 487-4889 (TDD)
www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

Treatment Locators

Mental Health Services Locator
(800) 789-2647 (English and Español)
(866) 889-2647 (TDD)
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
(800) 662-HELP (4357) (Toll-Free, 24-Hour English and Español Treatment Referral Service)
(800) 487-4889 (TDD)
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(800) 273-TALK (8255)
(800) 799-4889 (TDD)

Other Federal Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Mental Health
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/>

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
<http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/factsheets.html>

Federal Occupational Health Employee Assistance Program for Federal and Federalized Employees
<http://www.foh4you.com> or
(800) 222-0364
(888) 262-7848 (TTY)

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/topics/katrina.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Employee Assistance Program
(202) 690-8229
HHSEAP@hhs.gov



Managing Stress During A Crisis



A Guide for Supervisors



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

NMH06-0235

A Life in the Community for Everyone
SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Promoting a Positive Workplace Environment

A proactive stress management plan focuses both on the environment and the individual. A clear organizational structure with defined roles and responsibilities for linestaff responders, leads, supervisors, and managers reduces the potential for staff stress. An effective manager is familiar with the many facets of worker stress and takes a wide range of steps to integrate stress management strategies in the workplace.



As a supervisor or manager you must assume shared responsibility for promoting a positive and healthy work environment, and not rely exclusively on workers initiating their own self-care practices. You should address the following dimensions when designing a stress management plan that prioritizes environmental and organizational health:

- Effective management structure and leadership
- Clear purpose, goals, and training
- Functionally defined roles
- Administrative controls
- Team support
- Plan for stress management.



Managers today face the challenges of supplying energy and passion, promoting a positive attitude, and creating an environment in which people feel connected to their work and their colleagues. Managers can boost employees' perception of strong management support through feedback, open communication, and high visibility—that is, through a dynamic and supportive leadership style, one that engages others so as to raise each other to high levels of motivation.



The following are principles of leadership that you can apply in the ordinary course of your daily life: meet challenges head on; be curious and daring; create a culture where failure and error are looked upon as steps toward success; and demonstrate personal courage to galvanize a team or organization that lacks resolve. The most inspiring opportunities for courage come when you face the longest odds.

Minimizing Stress in the Workplace

- Set the tone by treating coworkers with respect and valuing their contributions.
- Hold regular staff meetings to plan, problem solve, recognize accomplishments, and promote staff cohesiveness.
- Clearly communicate the rationale behind procedural or supervisory changes and performance expectations.
- Create a formal employee suggestion system and encourage staff to contribute.
- Resolve conflicts early and quickly.
- Prepare workers for concrete tasks that they may perform through technical training.
- Acknowledge that work is often stressful and connect staff to professional help if necessary.
- Promote an atmosphere where attention to one's emotional state is acceptable and encouraged rather than stigmatized or disregarded.



During the Crisis—At the Scene

At the disaster scene, you, as a manager, can provide certain supports for workers to mitigate stress and help them effectively perform the tasks at hand.

Minimizing Stress During the Crisis—At the Scene

- Clearly define individual roles and reevaluate them if the situation changes.
- Institute briefings at each shift change that cover the current status of the work environment, safety procedures, and required safety equipment.
- Partner inexperienced workers with experienced veterans. The buddy system is an effective method to provide support, monitor stress, and reinforce safety procedures. Require outreach personnel to enter the community in pairs.
- Rotate workers from high-stress to lower-stress functions .
- Initiate, encourage, and monitor work breaks, especially when casualties are involved. During lengthy events, implement longer breaks and days off, and curtail weekend work whenever possible.

- Establish respite areas that visually separate workers from the scene and the public. At longer operations, establish an area where responders can shower, eat, change clothes, and sleep.
- Implement flexible schedules for workers who are directly affected by an event. This can help workers balance home and job responsibilities.
- Reduce noise as much as possible by providing earplugs, noise mufflers, or telephone headsets.
- Mitigate the effects of extreme temperatures through the use of protective clothing, proper hydration, and frequent breaks.
- Ensure that lighting is sufficient, adjustable, and in good working order.
- Lessen the effect of odors and tastes, and protect workers' breathing by supplying facemasks and respirators.
- Provide security for staff at facilities or sites in dangerous areas, including escorts for workers going to and from their vehicles.
- Provide mobile phones for workers in dangerous environments. Ensure that staff know who to call when problems arise.

After the Crisis

The ending of the disaster assignment, whether it involved immediate response or long-term recovery work, can be a period of mixed emotions for workers. Though there may be some relief that the disaster operation is ending, there is often a sense of loss and “letdown,” with some difficulty making the transition back into family life and the regular job. The following are action steps that can help ease the disengagement and transition process for workers.

Minimizing Stress for Workers—After the Crisis

- Allow time off for workers who have experienced personal trauma or loss. Transition these individuals back into the organization by initially assigning them to less-demanding jobs.
- Develop protocols to provide workers with stigma-free counseling so that workers can address the emotional aspects of their experience.
- Institute exit interviews and/or seminars to help workers put their experiences in perspective and to validate what they have seen, done, thought, and felt.
- Provide educational inservices or workshops around stress management and self-care.
- Offer group self-care activities and acknowledgments.

This information has been excerpted from SAMHSA's "A Guide to Managing Stress in Crisis Response Professions." DHHS Publication No. SMA 4113 Printed 2005