

# RESPONSE & RECOVERY **IN ACTION**

Your monthly resource for COVID-19 strategies and tools from NACHC, our health center community, and partners

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## MORAL DISTRESS, BUILDING RESILIENCY, AND SUPPORTING HEALTH CENTER STAFF DURING COVID-19'S WINTER SURGE

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### Supporting Team Wellness

Great efforts by leadership teams, staff managers, and directors at health centers and their affiliated health care systems and hospitals are underway to support team wellness and build resiliency at both individual and group levels. Several examples shared by Jessica Wallace, PA, at Denver Health's Montbello Family Health Center include:

- Senior leadership providing clear, transparent, and regular communication and sincerely acknowledging how hard people are working
- Medical leadership keeping everyone informed with daily COVID-19 updates
- Staff utilizing RISE, or Resilience in Stressful Events, for access to resources that can help them face stress in their work environment. (The program was developed by Johns Hopkins University and went live at Denver Health earlier this year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.)
- Expanding RISE peer/volunteer-run support groups

Primary Care Associations (PCAs) are also doing their part to help reduce some of the workloads and pressures at health centers in their states. Lori Dumke, MSN, RN, Director of Clinical & Quality Services, Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas says that CHAD is trying to take as much off the health centers' plates as possible and on several fronts such as:

- Providing free behavioral health counseling and resources via phone, text, Facebook messenger, and email
- Distributing updates from each state's 3 weekly COVID-19 meetings because health center staff do not have the time to participate
- Sharing of policies and procedures discussed during monthly Quality Improvement Group meetings so that health centers can learn from each other and do not have to reinvent the wheel
- Hosting COVID-19 response scenario planning sessions during the summer before COVID-19 rates sharply increased in both North and South Dakota.

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### **Building Resiliency**

Building resilience can help many healthcare providers and staff manage the many challenges and stresses they are facing professionally and personally. In the recent University of New Mexico's Project ECHO COVID-19 Global Learning Collaborative presentation, Managing Stress and Burnout during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Jeff Katzman, MD, Professor, University of New Mexico, Department of Psychiatry highlighted several ways health care teams can build resiliency individually and as a team. These recommendations include:

- Make a plan (e.g., What if I get the virus, what if a family member gets the virus, etc.)
- Turn to that plan instead of fear
- Have calm and transparent conversations
- Limit the news
- Honor genuine emotions and find people to validate them
- Identify passivity and fatigue and do something

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic is testing health centers unlike any other time in history. However, health centers and their staff can and are responding—from the top leadership on down to peer support groups and there are a wide range of resources to help health centers strengthen their current strategies and approaches. If you or your health center needs guidance in addressing moral distress, building resiliency, team wellness, and other behavioral health challenges, contact [CMO@NACHC.org](mailto:CMO@NACHC.org).

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