

The DMH Responder



Office of
Mental Health



Department
of Health

Office of
Health Emergency
Preparedness

Welcome to this issue of the New York DMH Responder, our (usually) quarterly newsletter for the Disaster Mental Health community. Like everything this year, our publication schedule was disrupted by the pandemic as all partners at NYS Office of Mental Health, Department of Health, and Institute for Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz became immersed in various aspects of the response, just like our readers. We decided to use this hiatus as an opportunity to reinvent our format into a more streamlined style focused on connecting you with the many training and preparation resources available in the field – both those we’ve produced and those generated by other reputable experts in the field of Disaster Mental Health. We hope you find the new format useful, and we hope you are all taking care of yourselves during this highly stressful time.

As always, your feedback and suggestions for topics to cover in future issues are welcome; please email any comments to [Tom Henery](mailto:Tom.Henery@DOH) at DOH or [Steve Moskowitz](mailto:Steve.Moskowitz@OMH) at OMH.



“Science is telling us that we can do phenomenal things if we put our minds and our resources to it.” - Anthony Fauci

The DMH Training Challenge: Maintaining Readiness for Traditional Disasters Amid the Pandemic

One of the most difficult issues training directors and DMH responders have faced this year is how to uphold preparations for more traditional acute disasters while personnel were struggling to meet the demands of Covid-19 patients in their communities. This was compounded by the necessary restrictions on traveling and gathering in groups for live trainings, forcing us all to adapt to remote learning via technology like webcasts and teleconferencing.

New York State was fortunate to get through this year’s hurricane season without being hit, but the same was not true for multiple states in the Southeast and Gulf Coast, and numerous Western states had to manage record-breaking wildfires during significant waves of infection. These are painful reminders that weather-based disasters don’t take a break just because there’s a global infectious disease outbreak going on. And while one silver lining of current conditions has been a decrease in mass shootings and other acts of large-scale violence relative to recent years, we can’t count on that decline continuing. So, it’s essential that OMH and DOH personnel continue to maintain and build their skills through focused training, which is likely to be tech-based for the foreseeable future. Fortunately, many trainers have upgraded their skills and become adept at presenting through Zoom and comparable platforms, incorporating interactivity and practice opportunities in creative ways.

That’s the goal for all of the upcoming DOH-OMH-IDMH trainings, as we catch up from the annual webcast and Psychological First Aid Train the Trainers we’ve typically delivered each spring and summer. Since those weren’t possible, we’ll be doubling up this year so watch for announcements about multiple training opportunities in Spring and Summer 2021.

In the meantime, we’re excited to announce a very timely webcast on December 17, 2020, from 1:00 to 2:30 by Rachel Kaul and Kayla Siviyy from the Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response:

Disaster Mental Health: How Long Has Your “Check Engine” Been Light On? Enhancing Your Understanding of Yourself and Stress During COVID-19

Understanding our own early warning signs of emotional trouble (like the check engine light in your car), our personal responses to adversity and the current state of our overall wellbeing are essential components of being able to help others cope and heal. However, compounded stressors related to the pandemic such as social distancing, facility surges, and limited resources have created challenges for recognizing these early signs of stress and have led to an increase in complex behavioral health risks, including compassion fatigue, caution fatigue, moral injury and complex grief.

This virtual yet interactive workshop will examine current impacts of stressors and stress as influenced by the COVID-19 environment. The workshop will provide participants the opportunity for self-assessment and activities to encourage consideration of individual mitigation techniques that promote well-being and enhance professional performance. Participants will also be given a tool to help them anticipate and plan for how to address stress threats going forward to better prepare them to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

To enroll in the training, please go to www.NYlearnsPH.com and either register or login to the LMS. Search Course Catalog for: OHEP-DMH-2020 OR [click this shortcut to the course enrollment page on the LMS.](#)

Questions Regarding NYSDOH Learning Management System (LMS):

Direct questions to edlearn@health.ny.gov or 518-473-4223 Ext 4.

Questions Regarding Training:

Direct questions to prepedap@health.ny.gov or 518-474-2893.

Research Brief: Understanding and Addressing Sources of Anxiety Among Health Care Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic

While empirical research on the impact of the outbreak on various populations is just beginning to be published, it was evident from the beginning that healthcare workers would directly confront multiple stressors as they strove to balance professional demands with personal concerns. To understand this group’s needs, three physicians from the Stanford University School of Medicine in California and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York City conducted listening sessions with 69 physicians, nurses, advanced practice clinicians, residents, and fellows early in the outbreak. Their goal was to explore the healthcare professionals’ main concerns, what they needed from their leaders, and what forms of support they would find most helpful. The authors summarized their findings in a table of requests to leadership, excerpted here:

Hear me:

Listen to and act on health care professionals’ expert perspective and frontline experience and understand and address their concerns to the extent that organizations and leaders are able

Protect me:

Reduce the risk of health care professionals acquiring the infection and/or being a portal of transmission to family members

Prepare me:

Provide the training and support that allows provision of high-quality care to patients

Support me:

Provide support that acknowledges human limitations in a time of extreme work hours, uncertainty, and intense exposure to critically ill patients

Care for me:

Provide holistic support for the individual and their family should they need to be quarantined

These needs are likely to continue as the pandemic goes on, so we hope leaders will address them as effectively as possible.

Source: Shanafelt, T., Ripp, J., & Trockel, M. (2020). Understanding and addressing sources of anxiety among health care professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association, 323(21), 2133-2134.

More Resources

In addition to the DOH-OMH-IDMH-run trainings, there are many other excellent resources for healthcare and mental health providers on various aspects of disaster and pandemic response. We recommend these as credible sources for your information and training needs:

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): New York Department of Health

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

New York State Department of Health Learning Management System:

LMS Course Catalog, which includes links to almost 2,000 sessions

<https://www.nylearnsph.com/Public/Catalog/>

NY Project Hope:

This program of the NYS Office of Mental Health is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Administration and administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Services including an emotional support helpline,

educational materials, and referrals to trained crisis counselors in order to help people manage and cope with changes brought on by COVID-19.

<https://nyprojecthope.org/>

Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314

Centers for Disease Control:

CDC COVID-19 central site

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>

CDC COVID-19 Trainings for Healthcare Professionals

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/training.html>

CDC Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication for COVID-19 webinar

https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/training/webinar_20200406.asp

CDC Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Manual

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/manual/index.asp>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

SAMHSA COVID-19 central site

<https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>

FEMA:

FEMA COVID-19 central site

<https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus>

FEMA Disaster Planning During a Pandemic

<https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/governments#planning>

Contact Us

Institute for Disaster Mental Health

Science Hall 148

1 Hawk Drive, New Paltz, NY 12561-2440

Phone: (845) 257-3477

Email: idmh@newpaltz.edu