



Miami-Dade County Employee Assistance Program



First Responder Emotional Wellness and COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. As a first responder caring for others during this outbreak of COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you.

Emotional Wellness Tip:

Remember to breathe.

Intentional breathing slowly in through the nose and out through the mouth can help slow down the anxiety response in the brain and body and help you focus on the present moment.



**Miami-Dade County
Human Resources Department
Employee Assistance Program**

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Emotional Wellness Stream:

<https://web.microsoftstream.com/channel/28dc7326-8d6f-4855-b3a2-70d7f6e8ca01>.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The emotional impact of an emergency on a person can depend on the person's characteristics and experiences, the social and economic circumstances of the person and their community, and the availability of local resources. People can become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports about the outbreak in the media in addition to seeing the effects of this pandemic on your community first hand.

Reactions during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

As a service provider you carry both your own concerns as well as the concerns of the patients and community in which you support. Taking care of yourself and each other and knowing when and how to seek help in paramount during this difficult time. Connect with your family, team, friends, and others in your community for support.

Although this is a stressful time for first responders and the community you serve, there are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the outbreak.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.

- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.
- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do other activities that you enjoy to assist you in returning to your normal life.
- Connect with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.

Miami-Dade's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential service which focuses on assisting those who are struggling with personal problems that may be affecting their ability to function at home, work or in the community. Our EAP counselors focus on supporting employees with internal and external resources that assist in setting the foundation for restoration or enhancement of emotional and mental wellness.

Due to current CDC recommendations, the EAP is also providing telephonic assessments for all employees that are in need of assistance. To set up telephonic assessment with an EAP counselor at no cost please **call 305-375-3293** or **email Jessica.Hughes-Fillette@miamidade.gov**. The hours of operation are Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Source: www.cdc.gov