Five Key Ways to Support Health Care Workers in the Midst of Crisis

1 Foster open and transparent communication to build trust, reduce fears, build morale, and sustain an effective workforce.
   - Share with employees the challenges facing the organization.
   - Ask employees for ideas on how to manage problems.
   - Recognize employees’ heroic efforts.
   - Acknowledge that there’s fear, anxiety, and frustration.
   - Listen, and show your own vulnerability and emotion.

2 Remove barriers to health care workers seeking mental health services and develop systems that support institutional, as well as individual resilience.
   - Eliminate policies that reinforce fear of the professional consequences of seeking mental health treatment.
   - Refer “second victims” of the crisis to an employee assistance program or off-site provider.
   - Implement flexible scheduling options, and transparent sick and return-to-work policies.
   - Monitor how much time each employee is working in high-risk or stressful situations.
   - Limit nonessential emails, calls and staff requirements for those working in crisis situations.
   - Offer self-care activities, such as meditation, prayer, quiet time, and human-to-human contact.

3 Protect workers’ safety using the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety Hierarchy of Controls framework.
   - Reduce the risk of exposure to workplace hazards, including COVID-19, using the five levels of control – elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment.
   - Check staff for COVID-19 symptoms prior to their shift.
   - Require staff to wear masks in all areas of the organization, including break rooms and lunchrooms.

4 Develop a flexible workforce; evaluate the work being performed and determine if it can be performed remotely.
   - Implement telehealth, which enables staff to work while in quarantine.
   - Continually develop team members who can contribute within intensive care settings.

5 Provide clinicians and others with opportunities to collaborate, lead and innovate.
   - Have clinicians work with individuals in traditional leadership roles (such as CMOs, CNOs, hospital epidemiologists) to make agile and informed decisions.
   - Build flexibility and resiliency into clinical staffing plans to establish multidisciplinary teams to organize surge preparation and response. Review and revise as needed.

QUICK SAFETY 54: Promoting psychosocial well-being of health care staff during crisis

For more information, see Sentinel Event Alert Issue 62, “Voices from the Pandemic: Health Care Workers in the Midst of Crisis.”

© 2021 The Joint Commission | May be copied and distributed | Published by the Department of Corporate Communications