

San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group COVID19 Community Response

The wellbeing and emotional resilience of essential workers are key components of maintaining essential health care services during the COVID-19 virus (coronavirus) outbreak. Therefore, it will be crucial to anticipate the stresses associated with this work and put in place supports for essential workers. Monitoring and assessment of mental health and wellbeing of essential personnel will be important.

A strong service-orientation, a lack of time, difficulties in acknowledging or recognizing their own needs, stigma, and fear of being removed from their duties during a crisis may prevent staff from requesting support if they are experiencing stress reactions. Given this, employers should be proactive in encouraging supportive care in an atmosphere free of stigma, coercion, and fear of negative consequences. The San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group (SLVBHG) is conducting onsite appointments for behavioral health are being offered virtually amid the COVID-19 outbreak, effective March 19. Essential workers can access behavioral health services through tele-therapy or by phone. During this time of crisis it is important to fight stigma and encourage staff to engage in behavioral health services if needed.

“The SLVBHG Team is committed to maintaining the continuity of our critical mission providing continued services to the people of the San Luis Valley. We will ensure that services are delivered in a manner that protects the health and safety of our staff and the people we serve,” said Fernando Martinez, Chief Executive Officer. SLVBHG encourages community leaders you reach out to if you would like our staff to engage your staff in stress management and mental health wellbeing skills. Self-care for essential workers during the COVID19 outbreak can be complex and challenging, given that people in these roles may prioritize the needs of others over their own needs. Therefore, a self-care strategy should be multi-faceted and phased properly to support the sense of control and contribution of essential employees. For instance, during work shifts, providers should engage in these behaviors:

- self-monitoring and pacing
- regular check-ins with colleagues, family, and friends
- working in partnerships or in teams
- brief relaxation/stress management breaks
- regular peer consultation and supervision
- time-outs for basic bodily care and refreshment
- regularly seeking out accurate information and mentoring to assist in making decisions

- keeping anxieties conscribed to actual threats
- doing their best to maintain helpful self-talk and avoid overgeneralizing fears
- focusing their efforts on what is within their power
- acceptance of situations they cannot change
- fostering a spirit of fortitude, patience, tolerance, and hope

At the same time, they should avoid:

- working too long by themselves without checking in with colleagues
- working "round the clock" with few breaks
- feeling that they are not doing enough
- excessive intake of sweets and caffeine
- engaging in self-talk and attitudinal obstacles to self-care, such as:
 - "It would be selfish to take time to rest."
 - "Others are working around the clock, so should I."
 - "The needs of survivors are more important than the needs of helpers."
 - "I can contribute the most by working all the time."
 - "Only I can do."

SLVBHG will continue to serve existing clients and accept new clients for more information about services offered or to complete an intake, contact SLVBHG at 719-589.3671. Talking through our emotions is a powerful tool to lower anxiety and heighten emotions.

If you are experiencing a crisis, please call 719-589.3671 or call the crisis hotline 1 (844) 493-TALK (8255). For after business hours assistance, please call 911 or the crisis hotline 1 (844) 493-TALK (8255) or text TALK to 38255 to receive mental health crisis support.