

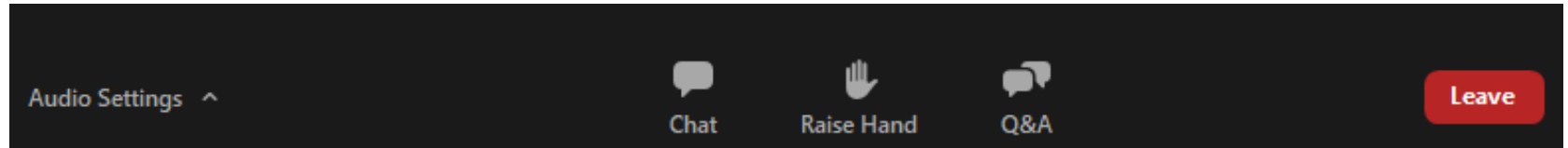


HEALTH QUALITY INNOVATORS

# Strategies for Outbreak (or Pandemic) Management & Staff Retention

*November 9, 2023*

# Logistics – Zoom Webinar



To ask a question, click on the **Q&A** icon.

**Raise your hand** if you want to verbally ask a question.

Resources from today's session will be posted in **Chat**.

You may adjust your audio by clicking **Audio Settings**.

You have been automatically muted with video turned off.

# Objectives

- Define an outbreak and discuss potential sources of an outbreak
- Review approaches to staff retention during a pandemic or outbreak
- Review organizational resilience
- Identify common HCW concerns during an outbreak/event
- Explain methods of promoting staff resilience and retention



# Definition of an Outbreak



## **An outbreak of infection is defined as:**

- A sudden rise in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in a specific location or population over a specific period of time
- A greater-than-expected number of infections compared to the usual rate for the specific location
- A single case of an unusual or rare disease

# How Infections Spread: Chain of Infection

**Mode of Transmission:  
the way germs transfer to  
a susceptible person**

Common ways that germs travel in healthcare settings include:

- Contact (i.e., touching)
- Sprays and splashes
- Inhalation (i.e., breathing in)
- Sharps injuries



Break the Chain of Infection | APIC

# Sources of Outbreaks

Healthcare settings are complex and can provide the opportunity for germs to spread

- Participants/residents are vulnerable
- Facility design, shared equipment and contamination of the healthcare environment
- Proximity of participants/residents
- Frequent contact with healthcare personnel and equipment



All of these can provide an ideal environment for an outbreak

# How Infections Spread: Environmental Surfaces



# Outbreaks Cause Strain on Healthcare Workers

Outbreaks and  
pandemics are  
traumatic for  
everyone





# Outbreaks Cause Strain on Healthcare Workers

Identified stressors include:

- Worrying about infecting family members
- Feelings of uncertainty
- Inadequate staff and supplies
- Personal danger



# Outbreaks Cause Strain on Healthcare Workers

Worker *burnout* refers to the response to stress at work, defined by exhaustion, reduced empathy and loss of motivation and enthusiasm

A literature review on healthcare worker burnout showed that a key factor contributing to burnout was exclusion from the decision-making process

## To reduce burnout and increase staff retention, leadership should:

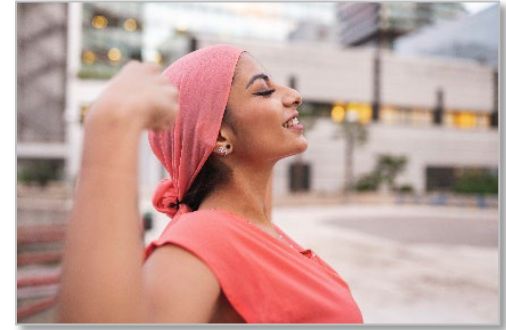
- Create a work environment of mutual trust and psychological safety
- Empower healthcare workers to communicate safety concerns and participate in the decision-making process

*The best way to understand what healthcare workers are most concerned about is to ask!*

# Outbreaks Cause Strain on Healthcare Workers

## Resilience

- **The ability to adapt** to a stressful situation, maintain psychological health and continue to give effective and quality care to [participants]/residents
- **Not avoiding stress** but rather having the **ability to effectively meet the stressor** and bring the body back into equilibrium



# Retaining Staff During An Outbreak or Pandemic

- Recognize the reality of the situation
- Provide resources for self-care
- Provide opportunities for asking questions/providing feedback

## Caring for Yourself During an Infectious Disease Outbreak or Pandemic

An infectious disease outbreak or pandemic creates a stressful working environment for the entire healthcare team. The following are some actions you can take to reduce stress:

- Make plans for meals, childcare and other activities of daily living ahead of time.
- Stay informed about the situation using reliable resources like local health department websites, the CDC and through your facility's internal communication.
- Take care of yourself by making sure you know how to use coping methods, eat healthy, get enough sleep and recognize when to get help for stress that interferes with work, sleep and a healthy lifestyle in general. Learn more about maintaining health during an emergency by accessing the QR code.

When you feel pressure, hit the "pause" button to reset your thoughts. Taking a break to clear your head may reduce the effects of stress. Try stress reduction techniques. Learn more about tips for reducing stress by accessing the QR code.

Eat healthy meals and snacks to maintain energy and overall health. Eat meals at regular times each day as often as possible. For more information on healthy eating, access the QR code.

Get as much sleep as possible. When shifts are long, "bank" extra sleep hours on days off. To learn more about the importance of getting enough sleep, access the QR code.

Understand your internal stress meter so you can respond to actual or anticipated stressors in a healthier way before the situation gets worse. To learn more about how to get help, access the QR code.

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# Retaining Staff During an Outbreak or Pandemic

## Resilience & Staff Retention

- Create an environment of trust, psychological safety and empowerment to enable individual workers to communicate safety concerns to managers
- Develop communication structures to enable the organization to learn from the problem-solving strategies and communications of individual healthcare workers



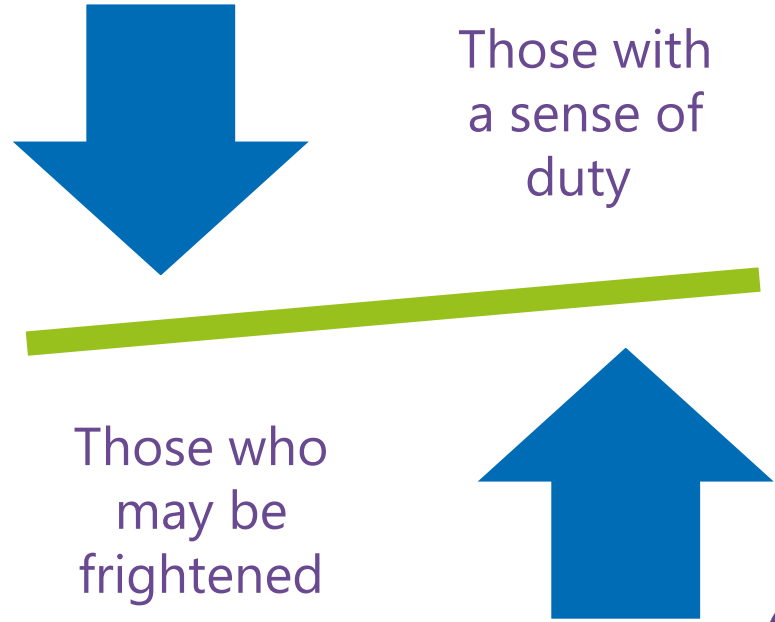
# Retaining Staff During an Outbreak or Pandemic

Consideration	Impacts	Strategies
Moral Purpose/Duty, Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working together</li> <li>Understanding motivation, values, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routine check-ins with staff to identify feelings, needs, opportunity for process improvement in the work setting, etc.</li> </ul>
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to connect with loved ones throughout the day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure appropriate breaks for refueling and connecting with family, etc.</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear, attentive communication</li> <li>Leading with courage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve staff in policies and processes to ensure the flow is practical</li> <li>Encourage peer relationships that create comradery</li> <li>Address staff and participants/residents about outbreaks/pandemics with information from regional health departments, DSS and nationally-recognized agencies like CDC</li> </ul>
Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports emotional needs, finds ways to boost morale</li> <li>Fosters learning from experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town halls, newsletters, simple contests, 1:1 conversations, designated space for "reflection and meditation"</li> </ul>
Potential for Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heartfelt reflections</li> <li>Encourages change when needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificates of recognition, verbal recognition, etc.</li> </ul>

# Retaining Staff During an Outbreak or Pandemic

Presenteeism is a situation where workers go to work despite being sick

Presenteeism is common in professions that experience a lot of stress or heavy workloads, such as nursing



# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention

- Healthcare facilities must be able to adapt during an outbreak/event while still providing a safe environment
- Readiness relies on three key elements of resiliency:





# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention


**Individual level:** Individual healthcare workers who use workarounds to temporarily resolve recurring safety problems on the frontlines and then communicate their safety concerns to managers in an effort to prevent problem recurrence

**Team level:** Managers who encourage frontline healthcare workers to freely communicate their safety concerns, with a view to addressing underlying issues and preventing problem recurrence

**Organizational level:** Senior leadership commitment to safety and lasting improvement

# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention

## Communication Plan

- Pre-scripted messages/templates should be developed so they can quickly be posted and shared with staff
  - Prepare responses to frequent concerns 
- Provide quick access to information about the disease/event, contact info for local health department, emergency management coalition and facility leadership
- Consider inviting a member of your local health department to attend a staff meeting to answer questions

*What is the facility doing to address my safety?*

*Is it safe to go to work?*

*How can I prevent the spread to my family?*



# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention

## To help alleviate HCWs' increased stress levels:

- Keep staff informed and updated
- Ensure a safe working environment
- Provide adequate supplies, equipment and training
- Allow for multiple short breaks throughout shifts
- Model and reinforce self-care
- Offer emotional support through listening

Those in the healthcare profession agreed with the statement:

“Getting daily COVID-19 updates from leadership helped reduce my stress.”



**Supporting healthcare workers (HCWs) through an outbreak/event is a vital role of healthcare organizations**

# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention

## Seek input from the team:

- Designate an area (based on staff input) for breaks
- Dedicate a bulletin board where staff can post positive experiences during their day, jokes, humor, etc.
- Install a suggestion box
  - Staff can offer ideas and solutions
  - Provide recognition for ideas adopted by the facility



**A respite area is a break area for staff to relieve stress and restore energy**

# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention



Debriefing is a conversational session that involves sharing and examining information after a specific event has taken place



Debriefing helps protect and support those exposed to events by minimizing abnormal stress responses related to the event



Debriefing can build team morale

# Organizational Resilience & Staff Retention

Being proactive has been shown to prevent adverse mental health outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and stress associated with an outbreak



# Outbreak Readiness Strategies



Outbreak readiness strategies focus on the facility's readiness or response to an outbreak such as:  
PPE and other supplies • Cleaning and disinfection • Isolation/separation as appropriate • Visitor restrictions



Consider the impact of an outbreak/event on staff





# Resources

- [Epidemiology Fact Sheets | VDH](#)
- [Virginia Reportable Disease List | VDH](#)
- [Health Department Locator | VDH](#)
- [Local Health Districts | VDH](#)
- [Resource Center | HQIN](#)
- [Types of Debriefing Following Disasters | National Center for PTSD](#)
- [Tips for Retaining Staff after a Disaster | ASPR TRACIE](#)
- [ASPR TRACIE Mini Modules to Relieve Stress For Healthcare Worker | HHS](#)
- [Training and Resources for Health Workers and Mental Health | NIOSH | CDC](#)
- [Pandemic, Outbreak or Endemic? How Do We Protect Ourselves? | HQIN](#)
- [Caring for Yourself During an Infectious Disease Outbreak or Pandemic | HQIN](#)
- [How Infections Spread Pocket Card | HQIN](#)
- [Survival of Microorganisms on Inanimate Objects and Surfaces Pocket Card | HQIN](#)



# Contact Information



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