



COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations: Staffing Contingencies for Behavioral Health Providers in Pandemic Emergency Response and Recovery Planning

Each Provider is responsible for developing plans to safely maintain operations during periods of emergency or crisis. The need to maintain appropriate staffing levels during disasters or under emergency circumstances can be especially challenging. The following information is provided to assist providers to identify and develop staffing resources during emergency operations. The recommendations in this document should be followed to the extent possible in order to slow and stop the spread of COVID-19, but are not mandatory.

Consider developing an immediate emergency plan that covers a 72-hour staffing period. Consider such options as

- Alternative scheduling of existing staff
- Re-assigning administrative or support staff
- Re-aligning shifts to facilitate staff rotation

Consider developing resources for additional staff

- Contact local temporary work agencies (advance coordination is most effective)
- Contact past employees who may be able to return to work
- Contact community partners who may be able to share staff (advance coordination is most effective; this could include developing agreements with other agencies)
- Develop a list of individuals with program awareness who may be willing to work (volunteers, associates of current staff)

Consider reviewing budgetary allowances for hiring additional staff including

- Hiring of new staff
- Paying overtime to existing staff
- Incentive pay for extra or difficult shifts

Consider options for maximizing staff efficiencies

- Eliminate program activities that require extra staff
- Alter staff responsibilities to minimize the need for additional staff
- Consider temporary placements (such as visits) to minimize staff levels (if possible)
- Consider alternate facility/locations to improve staffing availability/management (if possible)
- Develop specific training for new staff onboarding in times of emergency operations

Reporting staffing support needs to the Oregon Health Authority, Health Systems Division (HSD). Whenever activating emergency staffing protocols, you should contact your HSD compliance specialist to provide an update on the status of your program. You should report;

- What circumstances have created the need for emergency staffing
- What staffing support measures you have put in place and how long your current staffing plan can be maintained
- Whether any variances may be needed to maintain operations
- Your plan for maintaining operations with your current resources
- What your plan will be for keeping the HSD notified of your status

Requesting staffing support during times of emergency. Normally staffing support comes from local resources which can be accessed directly by the provider. Local community mental health programs may be able to assist with identifying members of the mental health advisory council or other community partners for staffing assistance. Advance planning with mutual aid agreements is the most effective way to plan for staffing needs during disaster events or emergency situations. This includes planning for how emergency staffing resources will be coordinated, deployed and funded. The HSD may be able to help you connect with regional and state resources during emergency events but cannot guarantee the availability of such resources. When requesting emergency staffing support from HSD, please identify the following;

- What type of staff do you need? (qualifications of staff)
- How many staff do you need?
- For what period of time? (starting and ending dates)
- What shifts will staff be working?
- How will they be oriented/trained/supervised?
- How will temporary staff be maintained when not working (if needed)
- How will temporary staff and associated costs (billeting, transportation) be paid for

If a Federal Emergency Declaration is made, requests for state and federal assistance should be routed through your County Emergency Management office by the local public health authority. The CMHP and HSD can assist you in working through this process, however the same information will be needed to process any request for assistance.

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the Health Information Center at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsosha.state.or.us