



Mental Health Systems' Response to Public Health Emergencies

The following infographic discusses how agencies and facilities can be prepared during a national health crisis. For more information, watch the accompanying webinar [here](#).

1 Why Should We Prepare?

A public health emergency may lead to:

- Staffing & supply shortages
- The need to practice social distancing or quarantine
- Suspension of prevention services
- A surge in demand for services
- The need for telehealth
- Added stress for staff and administrators

2 Continuity of Operations Plan

Service delivery disruptions may occur during a public health emergency. Having a plan in place for who will fill which role during an emergency is key:

1. Identify who is essential staff (crisis, medication, financial, IT, HR, maintenance staff, etc.).
2. Know in advance which roles can be filled remotely, and have an instruction guide regarding your agency's remote working policy and procedure handy.
3. Delegate, in order of succession, who will fill a role in case a staff member becomes ill or must care for an ill family member.
4. Remember that relocation may impact information security. Work with staff and IT to secure electronic records offsite.
5. Maintain clear & concise communication with staff and with clients. Let your community know about any service modifications.

3 Surge & Community Response

- Expect an increase in calls for crisis services.
- Know that people who otherwise do not utilize mental health services may seek help.
- Include in your preparations a plan for staffing phone lines and outreach emails.
- Widely advertise how community members can seek help.
- Distribute information regarding psychological self-care in your community.
- Ensure that staff members also have emotional and psycho-social support during the emergency.

4 Recovery & Evaluation

- Reconstitution of normal services will not happen over night.
- Clients may need encouragement to reengage in services.
- Clear communication with staff and with clients will lessen confusion.
- Establish a documentation process throughout the emergency.
- Evaluate emergency processes and make changes to future emergency plans.