

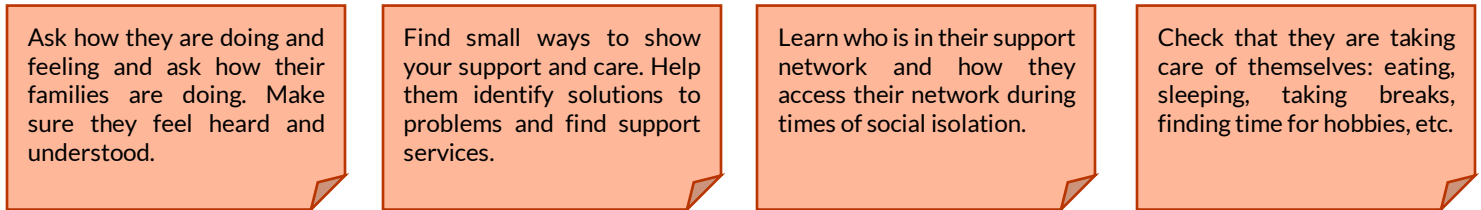
Impact of COVID-19 on Staff Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting quarantines and shutdowns require school staff to help children and families cope with crisis, and staff often find themselves providing supports that extend beyond an educator’s standard training and expertise. School personnel, particularly those who fail to engage in self-care or monitor their own response to the crisis, are therefore at increased risk of burnout or secondary traumatic stress.¹ **Managers can mitigate these outcomes, however, by:**



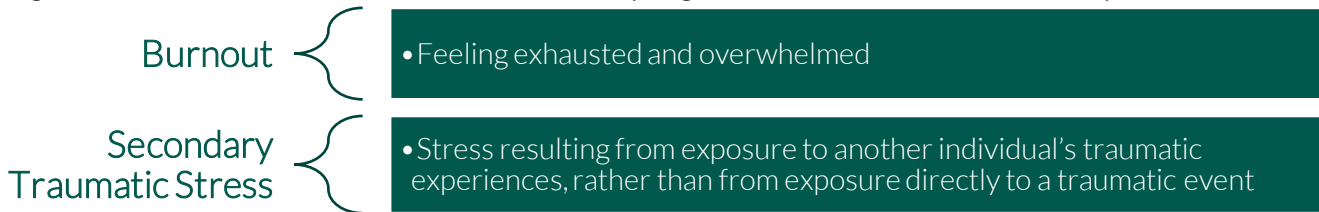
Monitoring Staff Well-Being

Managers should check-in with all employees at least once a week during and after a crisis. In a remote environment, these check-ins can take the form of individual video check-ins, online office-hours, and/or regular team conference calls.² Managers with limited time or capacity should consider monitoring employee well-being through the establishment of a “buddy system.”³ Recommendations for the content of these conversations is below.⁴

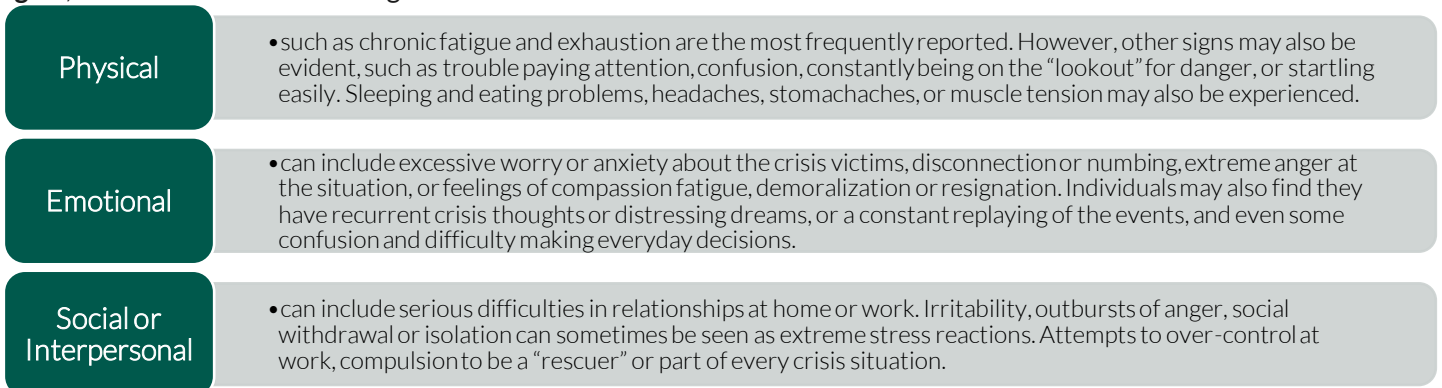


Source: American Health Care Association (AHCA) and the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL)

Managers should also use check-ins to identify signs of burnout and secondary traumatic stress:



The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) identifies **three categories of warning signs**, summarized in the figure below.



Source: National Association of School Psychologists⁵

Providing Supports and Resources

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recommends that managers use the [Stress First Aid \(SFA\) model](#) to support employees experiencing challenges to well-being as a result of COVID-19.⁶ The SFA model provides guiding questions that managers can use to assess employees' stress reactions along a continuum.⁷ The SFA model includes five components, and the Department of Veterans Affairs recommends that managers use the questions listed below to assess each component.

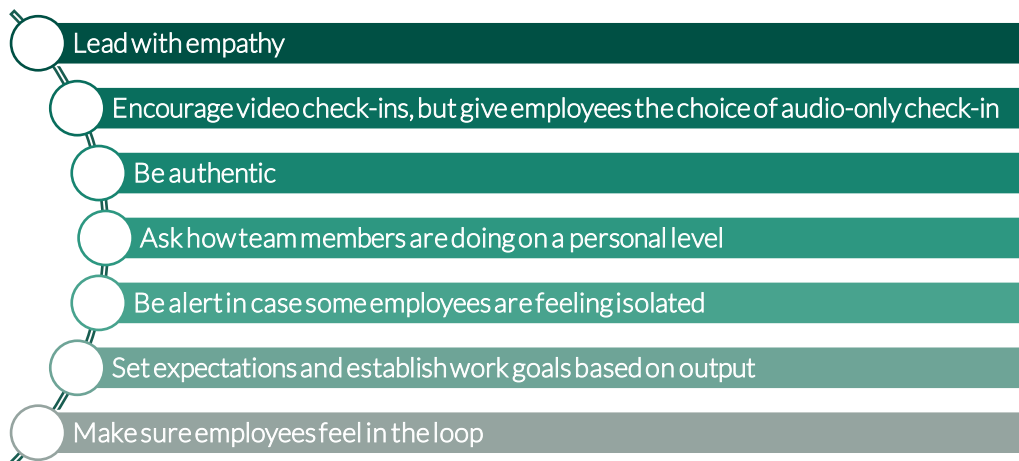
Component	Questions
Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has the pandemic affected your sense of safety? If it has, what can we do to help?
Calm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are you doing? What changes have you experienced regarding sleep, feelings of being on edge, or ability to stay calm? If you're having trouble staying calm, is there anything we can do to help?
Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has there been an impact on how you talk with each other, work morale, or connecting with family and friends? Is there someone you feel comfortable talking with about this? Has anyone you know done or said something that really helped? Do you feel the need for practical support right now?
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any concerns about being able to handle what's going on in your life, deal with your stress reactions, or do your work? What are some things that you have done to cope that have been helpful in the past, or have been helpful recently? What else could we do that would help?
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you noticed any change in your confidence in your ability to do your job the same way as before the outbreak or your confidence in leadership? Are you feeling guilty or wish you could do something differently? Does the outbreak hold special meaning or connect with other experiences in any way? What else could help?

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD⁸

Managers should encourage employees to engage in self-care, debrief with other school staff members about their experience, and take advantage of available resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs.

Building a Supportive Staff Culture

In general, school administrators should adopt the following best practices for leading and managing in times of crisis in order to create a supportive culture in which staff feel comfortable asking for and getting help.



Source: Willis, Towers, and Watson⁹

Endnotes

- ¹ “Care for the Caregiver: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams.” National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/care-for-caregivers-tips-for-families-and-educators/care-for-the-caregiver-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams>
- ² Nawaz, S. “How Managers Can Support Remote Employees.” *Harvard Business Review*, April 1, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-managers-can-support-remote-employees>
- ³ “NIOSH Fact Sheet: The Buddy System.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 28, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/index.htm>
- ⁴ “Tips on Supporting Staff During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” American Health Care Association (AHCA) and the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL). https://www.ahcancal.org/facility_operations/disaster_planning/Documents/Emotional-Support-HCW.pdf
- ⁵ “Care for the Caregiver,” Op. cit.
- ⁶ “For Leaders: Supporting Your Staff During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic - PTSD: National Center for PTSD.” General Information. https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_leaders_support_staff.asp#two
- ⁷ “Stress First Aid Self Care / Organizational Support Model.” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD. p. 2. <https://www.theschwartzcenter.org/media/Stress-First-Aid-Self-Care-Organizational-NCPTSD10.pdf>
- ⁸ Chart contents taken verbatim from: “For Leaders,” Op. cit.
- ⁹ Chart contents taken verbatim with minor alterations from: Hecht, R., W. Poirier, and J. Koumans. “How Managers and Employees Can Maintain Wellbeing amid COVID-19.” Willis Towers Watson. <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/2020/04/how-managers-and-employees-can-maintain-wellbeing-amid-covid-19>