

## *Helping our Healthcare Heroes (H<sup>3</sup>) Psychological First Aid Program: Information Sheet*

Our UT Health San Antonio/University Health System community has risen to the challenge presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which places healthcare workers at risk for greater stress and burnout. We developed the *Helping our Healthcare Heroes (H<sup>3</sup>) Psychological First Aid Program* to help mitigate negative effects of stress associated with caring for COVID-19 patients.

### **What is Psychological First Aid (PFA)?**

- PFA is an evidence-informed approach “designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping.”
- PFA is most commonly used in the aftermath of acute disasters (e.g., Hurricane Harvey, 9/11, etc.).
- PFA was created as a brief and immediate method to reduce distress and improve adaptive functioning in the face of a traumatic event by helping people feel calmer, regulated, and supported.
- A PFA approach recognizes that stress reactions are not pathological.
  - PFA helps normalize and manage the many emotions that arise in a crisis, it promotes healthy coping strategies and provides a psychological environment of safety, connectedness, calm, and hope.
  - PFA helps people to access social, physical and emotional support, promoting self-efficacy as individuals and communities—these factors are protective against long term issues and helpful in long-term recovery.
- *A key component of PFA involves brief 1:1 consultative/educational meetings (i.e., 20-30 minutes) with trained professionals.*

### **How is the H<sup>3</sup> PFA Program implemented here?**

- H<sup>3</sup> PFA consultations are offered virtually (via Zoom or telephone) to faculty & staff healthcare workers in identified high-risk units
  - H<sup>3</sup> PFA consultations are not psychotherapy and are NOT treatment.
  - H<sup>3</sup> PFA consultations may involve listening, help with problem-solving or decision-making, providing education/information and linkage to services as necessary.
  - H<sup>3</sup> PFA providers offer empathy, support, and practical assistance.
  - Confidentiality is maintained although it may be breached in cases where a person is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others.
  - No formal health records are kept because consultations are not treatment.
  - H<sup>3</sup> PFA consultations will be provided by behavioral health professionals (psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, etc.) from across departments and institutions (e.g., Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Graduate Medical Education, Family & Community Medicine, Research to Advance Community Health [ReACH] Center; South Texas Veterans Health Care System; STRONG STAR).
  - The H<sup>3</sup> PFA consultations are NOT available for crisis situations. Please refer to these options if you or someone you know is having a mental health crisis:
    - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) OR
    - CHCS Crisis Hotline: 210-223-7233

**To schedule your own H<sup>3</sup> PFA Consultation, please call Ms. Joyce Furlough @ 210-562-6700 or email [furlough@uthscsa.edu](mailto:furlough@uthscsa.edu)**

*For more information about Psychological First Aid: <https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery/about-pfa>*