One of the most crucial roles health center leadership plays is taking care of the well-being of our staff. While mental health challenges among the healthcare workforce is not a new phenomenon, the COVID-19 pandemic and other societal and traumatic events only served to further exacerbate the problem. This factsheet provides health center leadership with a better understanding of the different mental health struggles their workforce may face and identifies strategies, related to compensation equity and inclusive benefits, to address these ongoing workplace challenges.

We can no longer suggest wellness strategies that place ownership on individuals...we need to look at ourselves as leaders, at the role our organizations play.

-Jennifer Moss, The Burnout Epidemic

Compensation Equity & Inclusive Benefits Strategies

Free or Low-Cost Mental Health Services
- Ensure employee health benefits by providing free or low-cost mental health services. This may mean expanding health insurance benefits to increase mental health coverage or providing free memberships to virtual/telehealth therapy services.

Flexible/Hybrid/Remote Work Options
- Establish an EAP that is accessible to all staff and their families. Ensure that staff leaders and supervisors are aware of mental health services that are free-of-charge as part of their employee benefits package.

Employer Assistance Program (EAP)
- Flexible/remote work options.
- Employers enhance emotional and mental health benefits for 2020

Providing additional pay to staff who perform hazardous duties or undergo physical hardship. This includes employees in a variety of roles and at all levels of the organization (e.g., housekeeping, maintenance, front-desk).

Mental health issues are not just a state of well-being. At minimum, provide all staff a living wage that covers their basic needs (e.g., food, housing). However, it is important to move towards a thriving wage, which allows individuals to build a life focused on their wellness needs (e.g., hobbies, travel, self-care activities, debt elimination).

Moral Distress
- A conflict and psychological disquietment between one's beliefs and values and institutional/workplace constrains.

Moral Injury
- A profound change and psychological disequilibrium between one's worldview and belief system as a result of exposure to traumatized individuals.

Burnout
- A syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

Compassion Fatigue
- Physical and mental exhaustion and a diminished ability to empathize and cope as a result of exposure to traumatized individuals.

Trauma-informed care in behavioral health services.

Defining Mental Health & Trauma in the Workplace

Mass Trauma
- Large scale natural or human-caused disasters that directly or indirectly affect large numbers of people.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- A prevalent disorder that happens directly to a person versus exposure to another person's trauma.

Acute Stress Disorder
- A reaction to a traumatic event that occurs between three days to one month after exposure to trauma; may lead to PTSD.

Mental health center staff may experience acute, develop, or complex trauma and mental health struggles.

Regardless of the strategies used to improve staff wellness, it must all start with de-stigmatizing and normalizing mental health and helping behaviors.