# **Mental Health Care Available for Health Care Professionals and First** Responders

Mental Health Professionals, across the nation, recognize the great stress that many of our first responders and active medical and other healthcare professionals are experiencing. As mental health specialists, our education, training, experiences, and competency puts us in the best position to support you and your fellow colleagues with maintaining your mental health status — with compassion, empathy, and skill.

Mental health providers want to take the burden off—as much as possible—of those first responder and medical, and other healthcare professionals within your association or organization who continue help others fight against and treat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that is severely impacting everyone’s lives and livelihood. We want to assist you in the best way that we can during the COVID-19 crisis and that is by ensuring that your members are continuing, developing, and maintaining healthy habits for their emotional, mental, and cognitive wellness and well-being.

The mental health specialists/professionals with the training, expertise, and aptitude to aid you and the members of your organization include clinical mental health counselors (e.g., LPCs, LCMHCs), psychologists, social workers (LCSWs), and marriage and family therapists (MFTs). They are trained, experienced, and specifically licensed to address individuals experiencing mental, emotional, physical, and cognitive distress.

Because the novel coronavirus has so many unknowns, it can be quite anxiety-provoking. As troubling as it is for the general population, it is chronically disturbing for first responders and medical specialists as well. Professionals who experience repetitive distressing experiences commonly develop the snowballing effects of trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma resulting in signs and symptoms of anxiety, depression, or other physical effects.

Members of the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) stand with our colleagues in the other mental health helping professions in offering support resources.

What can you and your association do right now?

* Create a list of two or three Primary Mental Health Care Providers you can call, including crisis phone and text lines.
* Create a self-care plan that is practiced on a daily basis that includes activities such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, etc.
* Be kind to yourself—avoid self-criticism and focus on the values of your vocation.
* Continue to be who you are—compassionate and caring.
* Stay (virtually) connected with colleagues, friends, and family by phone, text, email, or video-chat.

In the face of an unrelenting crisis, many health care professionals have a tendency to emotionally disconnect from others. Unfortunately, this “flight, fight, or freeze response” is an entirely ineffective protective coping mechanism. Emotionally, mentally, and physically disconnecting yourself ultimately alienates others when they are in a place, where caring support is genuinely and justly needed. Isolating and repressing our emotions is often a precursor to other serious mental concerns, such as compassion fatigue, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, etc.

As a nation, we all continue to deal with effects of COVID-19. Remember, you are not alone. Many mental health professionals, some are even providing free services, are available to talk to your members within the organization you represent.

Oftentimes, just a phone call, text, email, video chat, or even snail mail can be encouraging and immensely beneficial.

For more information, please visit [www.amhca.org](http://www.amhca.org) and state chapter website goes here.

The Mental Health Counseling (MHC) Association of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is here to support you. Let us know how we can help.

Leader Name

AMHCA State Chapter Name