

SUPPORTING A NATION IN CRISIS

Solutions for Local Leaders to Improve Mental Health and Well-Being During and Post-COVID-19

[Supporting a Nation in Crisis: Solutions for Local Leaders to Improve Mental Health and Well-Being During and Post-COVID-19](#), an action guide for local leaders, emphasizes the urgency of addressing the growing mental health and addiction issues in their communities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Produced by the de Beaumont Foundation and Well Being Trust, the action guide provides practical steps that policymakers and civic institutions can take to improve their communities' mental health and well-being. The action guide also features recommendations to address the mental health challenges of populations who are uniquely impacted by COVID-19.

ACCESS THE ACTION GUIDE WITH ALL RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES [HERE](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

1. Explicitly talk about and destigmatize mental health. Leaders from all sectors need to talk about and help normalize the communal trauma that many Americans, both infected and not infected with COVID-19, may experience as the country begins to recover. Mental health issues affect all of us, either directly or indirectly through family members, friends, colleagues, or others.
2. Increase the capacity and role of the local workforce to recognize mental health issues and refer community members to appropriate services.
3. Publicize and support the existing networks of organizations providing mental health and substance misuse services.
4. Reduce stress, fear, and anxiety exacerbated by the economic fallout and financial insecurity of COVID-19 that affects Americans across socioeconomic groups and highlights systemic inequities.
5. Augment the social safety net to ensure that social needs are met.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM RECOVERY

1. Incentivize builders and real estate developers to create affordable, humane, and safe housing options through new construction or repair of existing properties.
2. Create work environments that meet the health and safety needs of employees and address financial insecurity concerns. Long-term planning should include worker protection policies associated with health and wealth, including those for essential workers.
3. Ensure that all people have access to green space. Higher levels of green space in a neighborhood are associated with significantly lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

The following list is not exhaustive. These groups were selected as examples of populations whose well-being has been uniquely changed as a result of COVID-19. There is considerable overlap between these communities and essential workers, so many of the recommendations are broadly applicable.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

- Build resilience among health professionals and first responders by breaking down social and cultural barriers and ensuring that specific resources are created and set aside to meet their unique needs.

YOUTH AND FAMILIES

- Enhance the ability of schools to address the mental health needs of youth and build their emotional intelligence.
- Advocate for the needs of parents and caregivers who have been thrust into a world where they must balance work while simultaneously being forced to be educators, social workers, and parents.

FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS REENTERING SOCIETY

- Swiftly strengthen, expand, and adapt reentry programming and procedures to provide individuals reentering society with services that support their physical and emotional needs and aid in stabilizing their lives.

INDIVIDUALS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

- Increase access to naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal drug.
- Increase access to evidence-based treatments for opioid use disorder, specifically methadone and buprenorphine, which have been shown to save lives. Regulatory changes that have been adopted to increase access during the COVID-19

pandemic should be made permanent.

- Increase opportunities to safely dispose of unused medications to reduce unintended adverse effects such as misuse or experimentation by children, teens, and young adults or detrimental medication interactions often caused by taking a stored medication without physician or pharmacist knowledge.
- Regulate alcohol sales to reduce long-term dependence and combat new drinking patterns.

OLDER ADULTS

- Increase access to easy-to-use technology and/or provide technology training to older adults to help them remain connected to family, friends, their community, and health providers.
- Facilitate virtual civic engagement and learning programs and telehealth service delivery to decrease depression/anxiety and increase feelings of personal agency and purpose.

VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, CHILD ABUSE, AND ELDER ABUSE

- Increase awareness and availability of resources to report and exit abusive situations.
- Adapt victim safety nets and support systems and other interventions to prevent and address abusive situations.

PEOPLE OF COLOR

- Engage communities of color in authentic and meaningful ways that acknowledge their cultural norms.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

- Protect undocumented immigrants from enforcement authorities and provide needed financial, health care, and social services support.