



# Leadership Tips to Support Employees During a Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges to nurse leaders. You may be wondering how to make it through this. Staff are more overwhelmed than ever, resources are scarce, and typical routines have been disrupted. The tips and resources below will assist the nurse leader to formulate a response that supports staff during a time of crisis.



## Tip 1: Communicate and Connect with Staff

**Listen intently to staff concerns and questions; communicate often and with purpose.** Share essential information and updates routinely, for example – staffing, number of COVID-19 positive cases, status of PPE supplies, protocol reminders). Seek feedback on the status of operations and use this feedback to inform further outbreak planning.

**Use the personal knowledge and relationship you have with staff** to connect with them and support them individually and as a team.

**Don't overwhelm them.** A ninety second huddle could be as simple as “How is everyone today? We are still good on PPE and we have another shipment coming in this week. There are no new COVID-19 cases in the building. And there were no call-ins today.”

**Remember: You are the leader and your actions will impact how others respond.** If you are panicked, your staff will be panicked. If you are calm and purposeful, your staff will reflect that back. Pay attention to what you communicate with your tone, word choices, and body language.

**If you are feeling frazzled, practice self-care by taking five minutes** for yourself before presenting to staff. This could mean taking deep breaths or calling a family member to check-in.

[Access the VitalTalk playbook.](#) This resource provides advice on how to have difficult conversations related to COVID-19.



## Tip 2: Use Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

**Ask Human Resources (HR) if you have an EAP.** An EAP can help you with tips on responding to the COVID-19 crisis and provide advice tailored to your facility based on its size and other relevant factors.

**EAPs provide staff access to counselors specifically trained in crisis response 24/7.** Sometimes, services are even extended to include family members of staff. Moreover, EAPs are typically free for employees and only a minimal cost for employers.

**If you don't have an EAP, discuss options with HR to determine the right program for your employees.** Once selected and a contract has been signed, HR should provide employees with information on what services are available and how to access this new benefit.

**Post EAP resources.** HR should have an updated flyer addressing COVID-19 concerns and post it in high-traffic staff areas (in breakrooms and beside time clocks), as well as shared on the company intranet site and via an all staff email.

**Encourage staff to use the EAP's services.** EAPs are often underutilized and are almost always confidential for employees. Outreach materials can encourage staff to call before they think about quitting or not coming in. When an employee calls an EAP, a licensed professional counselor typically answers to discuss a staff member's concerns often leading to a positive solution or outcome.



### Tip 3: Meet with Facility Management

**Remember, no department works in a silo.** Check in with housekeeping, dietary staff, and other managers to take a temperature check of how other departments are doing.

**Get cross-departmental buy-in of utilization of the EAP.** Encourage all managers to communicate EAP program benefits to staff.



### Tip 4: Use Your Tools to Educate and Reassure Staff

**Consistently remind staff of heightened protocols**, including decontamination upon arriving home. Use widely available resources, such as [Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself](#) provided by the CDC.

**Share printed facility protocols.** Facility protocols demonstrate that leadership has thought through how to best protect residents and staff in crisis situations and provide much-needed structure to staff.

**Encourage staff to share educational resources** with their families, especially those family members who feel unsure about the safety of their loved ones at work. Online and printed resources can help spread information and soothe nerves. Use the CDC's resource pages for [Handwashing](#) and [Prevent Getting Sick](#).

**Educate staff on how to access and use their telehealth benefits.** Promote health and wellness and getting doctor advice from a distance.



### Tip 5: Empower Employees

**Verbally recognize staff.** Remind all staff that the nation has deemed their work in their long-term care facility critical, and that they are doing essential work at an unequivocally challenging time.

**Use social media to recognize staff** and communicate how their service is saving lives.

**Email or message the families** of the staff to acknowledge what their loved one is doing and the difference they are making.



### Tip 6: Creatively Recognize Staff With the Resources Available to the Facility

**Utilizing the procurement power of the facility**, recognize staff by offering them access to a pantry or in-house grocery store.

**Support local restaurants and boost morale** with delivery of meals for staff to enjoy with each other.

**Work with local daycare** providers to offer extended hours for childcare services.



### Tip 7: Practice Self-care

**AAPACN has a [dedicated webpage](#) with wellness resources and information** including a Wellness Wednesday Challenge for LTPAC professionals.

**Access the [AMA website](#) for a variety of wellness information and resources** to support physicians and healthcare personnel.