



## Support for staff during evacuation

Being well prepared for a sudden shutdown and evacuation or hibernation of your programme goes a long way in helping your staff feel safe and contained. Yet even the best plans will require staff to make radical adjustments to a wide range of change and loss.

Hurriedly leaving behind a job, responsibilities, colleagues and friends can cause extreme distress and anxiety. Some staff may disagree with the decision to evacuate and feel angry or guilty for leaving. Some are eager to return to their posting, while others are ready to go home. Living in uncertainty about next steps and in a completely new environment can exacerbate these stressors.

This info sheet gives a few tips and considerations in keeping your team healthy and well during and after an evacuation:

**Provide information regularly** and to the entire staff group at the same time. If the team is split, explore the possibilities of connecting as a group remotely. With large teams, ensure that managers are providing the same information and within a similar timeframe. With evacuated staff take time to explain in detail the process that has led to the decision for evacuation and acknowledge the moral dilemmas at play.

**Stay connected.** Social connectedness is proven to be one of the most effective ways of keeping well during crisis or transition. Share with friends, family, or colleagues your fears, concerns, distress. Reach out to others intentionally.

**Engage evacuated staff in any useful activities** relating to the projects they were involved in to help counter feelings of powerlessness and boredom. If possible, have staff join an existing team in the country of evacuation, or set-up a temporary office with enough infrastructure to support their ongoing work.

**Establish a new routine.** Even when you do not know how long you will be out of your duty station find ways of establishing a new routine. Continue to set feasible work-related and personal goals. You may need to adjust your expectations and be patient if you can't do as much as you would like to. Practice self-compassion.

**Ask for help.** If you need airtime to call a friend, ask for it. If you need advice on how to use public transportation, ask for it. If you don't know where to go to eat, ask someone. Whatever it is, don't stay silent.

**Recall what you have done in the past to help you through tough times.** It may be an old meditation habit, or going out for a jog, connecting with a faith community, or cooking your favorite dish with friends. During evacuation, it seem like a luxury, but

keeping yourself healthy and well will give your colleagues and programmes the best version of you when you return to your posting.

**Maintain watchfulness** for those who exhibit high levels of distress. This may include: uncontrollable crying, shouting/anger, increase in substance use, lack of personal hygiene, check-out/numb demeanor, social isolation, somatic complaints (a physical pain brought on by a psychological state), among others. Keep a close eye on those who you know have experienced a recent traumatic event. Make informational material available and clear instructions on how to access psychological support.

## **How can Thrive help?**

### **Remote services**

Psychological First Aid: A remote appointment offered in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events, aimed at providing reassurance, information and guidance to those immediately affected.

Specialist trauma counseling: If further help is needed, staff can access trauma specialists or associates for additional remote counseling support.

### **On-site services**

Thrive can send psychosocial support staff and offer services for both groups and individuals as well as training.

### **Contact us**

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