

Tips to Support Staff Involved in a Clinical Adverse Event

The mental health of all healthcare providers, including staff, physicians, midwives, students and volunteers, is one of AHS's priorities. When a healthcare provider is involved in a clinical adverse event (CAE), they can experience a range of emotions and physical reactions that can impact on their health. AHS is committed to support staff through trauma associated with a CAE by creating a healthy and safe environment for recovering and healing.

Immediate Post Event Response

- **Just culture** – provide an environment that is safe and free of judgment to talk about the event and how they are feeling.
- **Open communication** – bring the impacted functional team together to talk about the CAE.
- **Acknowledge an adverse event has occurred** – share general information about the CAE and the process underway to make care safer.
- **Send a clear message of support** to all health care providers involved or impacted by the CAE.
- **Encourage healthcare providers to seek support** – ensure healthcare providers are aware of available support services (see below) and encourage discussions with coworkers.
- **Provide information on next steps** – share actions that AHS will take to prevent the CAE from happening again. A review may be conducted to understand the factors influencing it. Healthcare providers involved in the CAE may be asked to participate and share their experiences. Remember to share lessons learned to help the healthcare providers with the healing process and increase awareness about the system's hazards.

Support Services

- Staff and their immediate family members can access confidential support through the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at 1-877-273-3134.
- Physicians and Residents have access to the AMA Physician and Family Support Program at 1-877-SOS-4MDS.
- Managers can schedule Crisis Management Services through EFAP by calling 1-877-273-3134.
- Midwives can access service through Alberta Association of Midwives (AAM) On Call by calling 1-866-418-3773 (ext. 2262 for non-urgent issues and ext. 2265 for urgent issues).
- Volunteers and Students can contact Workplace Health & Safety at wellness@ahs.ca.

Helping Healers Heal

Health care providers involved in unexpected adverse events can experience long lasting psychological, personal, professional, and social impacts.

Health care providers can feel psychological impacts such as frustration, anger, anxiety, distress, fears, shame, and inadequacy which may result in burnout.

Physical symptoms may include headaches, sleep disturbance, fatigue/exhaustion, hypertension, appetite disturbances, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and difficulty concentrating.

With the help of coping strategies, impacts can be mitigated. The environment must support learning through a just culture including open discussion, sharing about the event, and ways to prevent the harm from happening in the future. Supportive structures to help health care providers after an adverse event can help healers heal.

Chan, S.T., Khong, P.C.B., & Wang, W. (2016). Psychological responses, coping, and supporting needs of healthcare professionals as second victims. International Nursing Review, 64, 242–262.

For additional information regarding clinical adverse events, please contact Provincial Patient Safety ProvincialPatientSafety@ahs.ca.

For additional information regarding Crisis Management Services, please contact Workplace Health & Safety at wellness@ahs.ca.