

# Fact Sheet: The Impact of Pandemic Disease on Mental Health

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## Covid-19 Resources

- The long-term psychiatric impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is unknown, but clinicians, lay advocates, and some policymakers have been working to meet the needs of first responders, and to brace for an anticipated wave of behavioral health needs.

## Global

No guidelines exist on a global level. On May 13, 2020, however, the World Health Organization issued a policy brief, “Covid-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health,” outlining suggestions and rationale.<sup>1</sup>

- That same day, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on governments around the world to focus on mental health services.
  - “After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress,” he noted. Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19. They must be expanded and fully funded.”<sup>2</sup>

## Federal

The federal government has not issued guidelines addressing Covid-19 and mental health, but the CDC website (cdc.gov) is updated with comprehensive information about the virus and appropriate containment measures. This includes advice on stress and coping.<sup>3</sup>

- Professional groups such as the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have been exerting pressure for a federal response.
  - On April 27, 2020, leaders in mental health and substance abuse treatment sent a joint letter to the Trump administration pleading for funding to save community mental health centers facing financial collapse.<sup>4</sup>

## Local

Numerous states and municipalities have rolled out helplines, fact sheets, and mental health portals to help individuals navigate the crisis.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization Policy Brief (May 13, 2020) [“Covid-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health.”](#)

<sup>2</sup> António Guterres. (May 13, 2020) [Policy Brief on Covid-19 and Mental Health.](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

<sup>4</sup> [The letter was signed by the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the National Alliance on Mental Illness and 12 other organizations.](#)

- In New York, the Office of Mental Health (OMH) has produced a [site](#) containing links and phone numbers for emotional support, grief counseling, and provider resources.
  - o New York City's Department of Health has augmented its mental health hotline (1-888-NYC-WELL) with a [digital portal](#).
    - Since the beginning of the pandemic, the line has experienced a 50% increase in call volume.<sup>5</sup>

## **Professional**

- Professional groups have also been active in launching resource portals and supportive virtual counseling.
  - o On an institutional level, hospitals and other health care providers have rolled out urgent counseling services, psychiatric symptom trackers, and other resources for their personnel.
  - o In March, a Philadelphia-area psychiatrist established the [Physician Support Line](#), a mental health hotline exclusively for doctors.<sup>6</sup>
  - o Comprehensive information and resources are also available through
    - [The American Psychological Association](#)
    - [The American Psychoanalytic Association](#)
    - [The American Psychiatric Association](#)

<sup>5</sup> Megan Brooks (April 28, 2020) "[Covid-19: Calls to NYC Crisis Hotline Soar](#)," Medscape.

<sup>6</sup> Emily Sohn (April 24, 2020), "[Covid-19: National Psychiatrist-Run Hotline Offers Docs Emotional PPE](#)," Medscape.