

TRANSFORMING  
**SURGE  
CAPACITY**



# Guidelines for the Role of HR in Supporting Staff Care

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on behalf of the CHS Alliance



## INTRODUCTION

Staff working in surge responses are known to face high workload, environmental, cultural, physical and psychological pressures. Many organisations have developed good staff welfare and wellbeing policies and practices. The Transforming Surge Project has also produced some excellent documents that show the type of policies in place and resources available – soon on [Surge Capacity Online Platform](#).

Similarly the [‘Essentials of Staff Care’](#) by the Konterra Group provides a comprehensive guide on key issues to be considered in promoting and supporting staff wellbeing.

This guideline uses the ‘Essentials of Staff Care’ principles as outlined in the appendix but focuses specifically on the role of HR in staff care, with input from a wide range of HR professionals in many organisations.

## PRINCIPLE 1 – Organisational commitment to staff care

### > HR’s role should be:

Whilst the organisational commitment to staff care starts with the leadership of the organisation, HR will often need to influence the leadership team in making this commitment as well as being the ‘champions’ for ensuring staff care is integral to how a staff member is recruited, employed and supported during a response. Whilst a line manager has the responsibility for providing good supportive line management on a day to day basis, the messaging HR provides around staff wellbeing or care, the tools, processes and training can be a critical factor in how seriously staff care is taken within an organisation.

HR also has a role in partnering with other functions within an organisation (e.g. security, health and safety, travel, office management) to ensure staff wellbeing is also considered within all of these areas of work.

Another role for HR may involve coaching and supporting line managers on staff care ensuring they have the skills required and a culture of staff care is reinforced.

## PRINCIPLE 2 – Staff selection

### > HR's role should be:

- Providing interview templates that include questions on resilience and stress management – examples are given in Appendix 1.
- Providing reference check templates that include questions on how an individual manages their stress levels – Appendix 2.
- Some organisations require staff to have a psychological assessment as part of the selection (depending on the assignment), with follow up during and after the assignment.

## PRINCIPLE 3 – Orientation and preparation

### > HR's role should be:

- Setting up systems that ensure that every staff member being deployed has an adequate briefing on staff care and wellbeing and knows how to access support. Ideally this would be done by HR, but where this is not possible, HR should provide a guideline for managers to use and also regularly monitor if it is being implemented.
- To set up training programmes for staff and line management on staff care or making sure that deployed staff are aware of online resources that might be available.
- Training for staff generally focusses on personal resilience, managing stress, critical incident support and supporting others with stress. This is different from any security training that might be needed.

## PRINCIPLE 4 – Support during employment

### > HR's role should be:

- Setting up staff care systems including identifying and contracting psychological support services, critical incident reporting mechanisms, critical incident management protocols, regular reporting on absences related to stress etc. - soon on **Surge Capacity Online Platform**.

- HR often provide either formal or informal support to staff who are facing difficult situations. Therefore as many HR staff as possible should have some coaching/mentoring and basic counselling training. They should not be expected to be involved in psychological support but at least have the basic skills needed should something become apparent in a discussion.
- HR should have a role in dealing with a critical incident (e.g. evacuation of an individual) and it is important that there be a pre-identified person in the team who has also had full briefing on their role.
- In addition, a family liaison person should be identified in the event of a kidnapping or death of a staff member.
- A review of how a critical incident has been managed is vital and the learning can be used to improve staff care practices.
- Regular staff surveys can provide useful information on issues around staff wellbeing and issues raised can be considered for any changes/improvements. See Appendix 3 for example questions.

## PRINCIPLE 5 – After assignment

### > HR's role should be:

- Provide template exit interview documents that include a section on staff care and provide information on how staff can access further support after employment if needed. An example can be found in Appendix 4.
- Exit interview forms should be collated and analysed on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly) to look at the trends regarding staff wellbeing so as to identify where there may be issues or further action might be needed.

## PRINCIPLE 6 – Considerations for specific populations

### > HR's role should be:

As with all employment practices when working in different countries, staff care/wellbeing policies/practices should also be adapted to the relevant culture, society, legal and political system.

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## **APPENDIX 1 – Example interview questions regarding stress, resilience and staff care**

- Can you tell us about the most challenging work experience you have had to deal with? How did you manage this both professionally and personally?
- What things cause you stress? How do you manage it?
- How would your manager or colleagues know that you were feeling under pressure or stressed?
- Set out the scenario of where the person will be working and job undertaking – ask them what personal challenges they envisage facing in this situation?

## **APPENDIX 2 – Reference checking questions**

- How did the individual manage stress and pressure in their role/assignment?
- Did the individual face any particular challenges in their role that impacted on their ability to perform?
- What could we do as an employer to ensure that the individual gets the right care and support whilst working with us?

## **APPENDIX 3 – Example questions for staff survey**

- Are you aware of any staff care policy and the availability of staff care support within the organisation? If so, please outline your knowledge
- Do you have any comments on the level of staff care in the organisation and any suggestions on how it could be improved?
- Have you had to receive staff care support during your employment? If so, do you have any comments on how useful this was.

## **APPENDIX 4 – Example exit questions**

- What work and personal challenges did you face during your employment?
- Did you feel able to raise these challenges with your line manager or other relevant support mechanisms?
- If not, why not?
- If yes, did you receive the support you needed?
- Do you have any suggestions on how staff care/support could be improved?