

Addressing Health Worker Burnout: *The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Building a Thriving Health Workforce*

Opportunities for Supporting Rural Health Workers

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**Office of the
U.S. Surgeon General**

CW


- <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html>
- *If you or someone you know may be considering suicide, call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html) 24/7 at **1-800-273-8255** (En Español: 1-888-628-9454; Deaf and Hard of Hearing: dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255) or the [Crisis Text Line](https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html) by texting **HOME to 741741**.*

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- **Department of Labor (DOL)**
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
- **US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

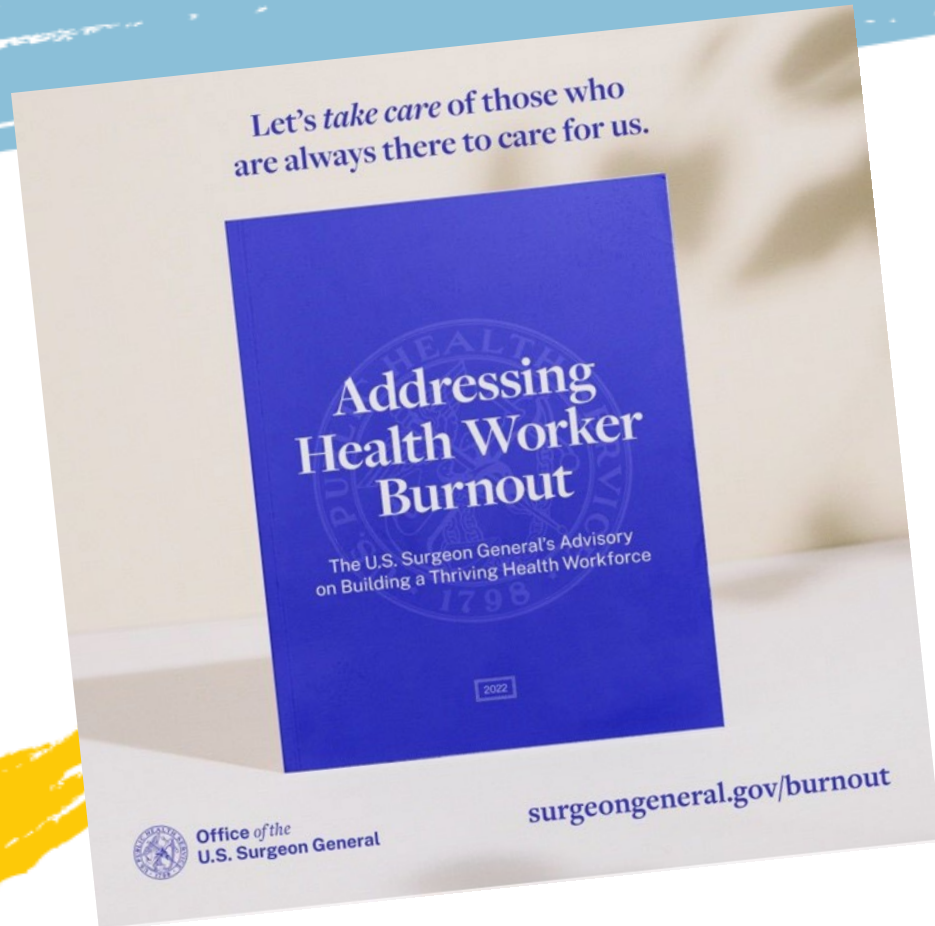
*During the COVID-19 pandemic,
thousands of health workers lost their lives.
They put their own health and safety at risk so
they could heal and comfort others.*

This call to action is dedicated to their memory



Surgeon General's Advisories are reserved for urgent public health issues that call for the American people's attention





- **Goal** of this Advisory is to sound the alarm on the pandemic's **unprecedented impacts on the well-being of our nation's health workers**, including long-standing burnout, systemic challenges, and workforce shortages that existed prior to COVID-19.
- This Advisory lays out key **recommendations for stakeholders** from health care delivery organizations, government at all levels, payors, health tech and IT companies, training and academic institutions, accreditation bodies, communities and more.
- <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html>

"Health Workers"

For this Advisory, we are defining health workers broadly as **all people engaged in work to protect and improve the health of individuals, communities, and populations, including those who assist in operating health care facilities.**^{1, 2, 3}

"I just believe that we need to take good care of our health care workers, so that they can take good care of other people."

-I.R., NYC, Psychiatry Resident

References: 1- World Health Organization. (2006). Working together for health: The World Health Report. 2- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Infection Control in Healthcare Personnel: Infrastructure and Routine Practices for Occupational Infection Prevention and Control Services, Appendix. 3- Center for Health Workforce Studies. (2016). What is the Health Workforce?

"Exhaustion, job depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy"^{4,5}

What is health worker *burnout*?

Burnout is the result of **chronic workplace stress** due to an imbalance between job demands and resources. Learn more at surgeongeneral.gov/burnout



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References: 4- 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) (2019). 5- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Committee on Systems Approaches to Improve Patient Care by Supporting Clinician Well-Being. (2019). Taking Action Against Clinician Burnout: A Systems Approach to Professional Well-Being. National Academies Press.

Health Worker Well-Being, Before & During COVID-19

- In 2019, the National Academy of Medicine found **burnout** had reached “crisis” levels
 - Up to 54% in nurses and physicians ⁵
 - Up to 60% in medical students and residents
- The National Association of County & City Health Officials reported a **16% loss in the public health workforce** from 2008 to 2019 ⁶
- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) projects that physician demand will grow faster than supply ⁷
 - Shortage up to **139,000 physicians** by 2033
 - Most alarming gaps in **primary care and for rural communities**

Negative consequences of health worker burnout



“I can’t provide the best care to my patients...”

“I can’t get the care I need...”



Health Workers

- Insomnia, heart disease, and diabetes
- Isolation, substance use, anxiety, and depression
- Relationship and interpersonal challenges
- Exhaustion from overwhelming care and empathy

Patients

- Less time with health workers
- Delays in care and diagnosis
 - Lower quality of care
 - Medical errors

Health Care System

- Health workforce shortages and retention challenges
 - Limited services available
- Risk of malpractice and decreased patient satisfaction
 - Increased costs

Community and Society

- Erosion of trust
- Worsening population health outcomes
 - Increased health disparities

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on health worker well-being

- **Mental health conditions:** >50% public health workers reported symptoms of at least one mental health condition (anxiety, depression, PTSD, or suicidal ideation) in the 1st year of pandemic. ⁴
- **Violence against health workers:** In mid-2021, eight out of 10 health workers experienced workplace violence, with two-thirds having been verbally threatened. ⁵
- **Widespread falsehoods and misinformation** about COVID-19 have contributed to HWs exhaustion, frustration, burnout and moral distress. ⁶

References: 4- Bryant-Genevier, J., Rao, C., Lopes-Cardozo, B., et al. (2021). Symptoms of Depression, Anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Suicidal Ideation Among State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Public Health Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, March–April 2021. *MMWR Rep* 70:1680–1685. 5- National Nurses United. (2020). Workplace violence and COVID-19 in healthcare. 6 - NACCHO. (2021). Letter to Attorney General Garland.

Health workers in rural and underserved urban areas are disproportionately impacted

- Across 20 states, nine to 11 months into the pandemic, nearly **76% reported feeling burnout** from their work. ⁷
- **Facility closures** and lack of hospitals
- Increasing shortage of health workers, especially in multiple specialties; notably **primary and maternity care** ⁸
- Worsening **health disparities**

References: 7-Pittman, D., Sonis, J., & Harrison, J., (2021). Experiences of Safety-Net Practice Clinicians Participating in the National Health Service Corps During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Public Health Reports 137(1): 149-162. 8- U.S. Health and Human Services, Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). (2020). Special needs in rural America: Implications for the Healthcare Workforce Education, Training and Practice.

Factors associated with burnout among health workers



“This is beyond my control...”

We Must Take Action

Together, we can:

- **Protect** the health, safety and well-being of all HWs, including students & trainees
- **Transform** organizational cultures to prioritize HW well-being
- **Eliminate** punitive policies for seeking mental health and substance use care
- **Reduce** administrative burdens to help HWs have quality time with patients, communities and colleagues
- **Prioritize** social connection and community as a core value of our health care system
- **Invest** in public health and our public health workforce

Stakeholder Recommendations

- Health Care Delivery Organizations
- Federal, State, Local Governments and Tribal Authorities
- Health Insurers & Accreditation Bodies
- Health Care Technology Companies
- Academic Institutions
- Family, Friends, and Communities
- Health Workers
- Researchers

Resilience strategies for recruitment and retention in rural areas - I

Health Care Organization Leaders at all levels^{9,10,11}

- Ensure effective, sustainable staffing models; team-based care
- Reflect the community
- Include opportunities for cross-training, peer support; mentoring and career advancement
- Provide incentives and more than EAP - scholarships, loan repayment; family and caregiver support

References:

9. HHS Office of the US Surgeon General. (2022). SG Advisory on Addressing Health Worker Burnout <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html> ; 10. COGME. (2021). Rural health issue brief #2. Retrieved from <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/graduate-medical-edu/publications/cogme-rural-health-issue-brief.pdf>; 11. COGME. (2021). Rural health issue brief #3. Retrieved from <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/graduate-medical-edu/publications/cogme-rural-health.pdf>



Reference: Shanafelt, T. et al. (2021). Wellness-Centered Leadership: Equipping healthcare leaders to cultivate physician well-being and professional fulfillment. Vol 96(5): 641-651

Retrieved from: https://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/Fulltext/2021/05000/Wellness_Centered_Leadership_Equipping_Health.29.aspx

Resilience strategies for recruitment and retention in rural areas - II

Federal and state level ^{9,10,11}

- Provide long-term funds to expand and sustain successful programs (NHSC, THCGME, RRPD, HCOP, etc)
- Drive investment and innovation in rural areas
- Align GME investment with rural needs
- Support safe, equitable, human-centered (pt and HW) telehealth
- Reduce regulatory burdens

References:

9. HHS Office of the US Surgeon General. (2022). SG Advisory on Addressing Health Worker Burnout <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html>; 10. COGME. (2021). Rural health issue brief #2. Retrieved from <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/graduate-medical-edu/publications/cogme-rural-health-issue-brief.pdf>; 11. COGME. (2021). Rural health issue brief #3. Retrieved from <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/graduate-medical-edu/publications/cogme-rural-health.pdf>

Thriving together: Solutions to health worker burnout



We must shift burnout from a “me” problem to a “we” problem.



National Academy of Medicine (NAM) National Plan on HW Well-Being

- The **NAM Action Collaborative on Health Worker Well-Being and Resilience** released a National Plan on June 24th
- All stakeholders can utilize this (draft) plan alongside the SG's Advisory
- Follow-on regional convenings will be underway in Sept and Nov 2022
- [Resource Compendium: https://nam.edu/compendium-of-key-resources-for-improving-clinician-well-being/](https://nam.edu/compendium-of-key-resources-for-improving-clinician-well-being/)



*Our nation's health depends on the well-being
of our health workforce.*

"Will we step up and meet our
moral obligation to care for those
who have cared for us?"

-Dr. Vivek Murthy



The background features a gradient from light blue on the left to light orange on the right. On the left side, there are several overlapping, wavy, light blue shapes that resemble stylized waves or clouds. On the right side, there are similar wavy shapes in a light orange or cream color, also overlapping and curving upwards.

Q&A