



Leading in Times of Crisis

The unprecedented crisis presented by the COVID-19 pandemic has made the already challenging job of leading a rural health care organization even more difficult. In the face of extraordinary uncertainty, leaders must make critical decisions, keep lines of communication open, and support others - all while managing their own emotions related to events inside and outside the workplace.

Lead by Example

Employees are paying especially close attention to leaders' actions right now, so leaders need to be diligent about modeling all behaviors being asked of employees. This includes self-care!

Direct the Focus

Under stress, our brains often narrow our focus, shifting away from a team perspective and instead attending to our own needs. This can help us with self-care, but when taken to the extreme it can break down team cohesiveness. Because successfully weathering a crisis requires a team to think strategically and make decisions together, leaders may need to continually help their team members "zoom out" and expand their focus in order to make decisions based on what's best for the team, organization, and community overall.



Make Room for Emotions

The mental endurance required in a long-lasting crisis causes each of us to experience a variety of emotions and energy levels over the course of a day. Leaders set the tone by allowing space for others to express emotions while at the same time being willing to share their own feelings. In particularly "down" moments, leaders can inspire others by encouraging a focus on the things we can control and the common purpose of caring for the community, each other, and ourselves.

Balance Realism with Optimism in Communications

To minimize uncertainty and speculation, communicate on a regular basis with everyone in the organization. Use multiple channels for communication such as video messages, email updates, and one-on-one conversations. Be realistic by openly sharing facts and being upfront about any unknowns. At the same time, express confidence that by working together the team and the organization will prevail in the end.

The DRCHSD team is here to support you through this time. For more information or to set up a personalized coaching or education session for you or your team, contact Shannon Studden, Senior Program Specialist sstudden@ruralcenter.org