**Psychosocial considerations**

Inter- and Intra- Health Authority Relocation

Evacuation events are unpredictable and separation from home and community can cause great emotional distress. In addition to meeting physical needs, itis important to provide psychosocial support to individuals who have been impacted by evacuation. The following is a summary of key psychosocial considerations following an evacuation event.

* The majority of people will manage reasonably well and will neither require nor seek mental health support following a disaster and evacuation.
* Those most likely to experience coping and mental health difficulties are persons who have pre-existing mental health difficulties or are experiencing high levels of stress at the time of the evacuation.
* Elderly persons suffering from cognitive impairments may experience increased confusion and intensification of symptoms.
* Individuals with previous evacuation experiences may have a heightened response to be being evacuated again. In particular, Indigenous persons who have experienced trauma resulting from forced evacuations must receive culturally-safe and trauma-informed care.
* While health care staff may experience significant stress because of increased workloads and extended hours, the resultant stress-related responses can be expected to be transitory and mild to moderate, provided there is a return to regular work hours within a reasonable time.
* Family members of patient/client/residents may also experience mild and transitory stress symptoms and it is important for them to be provided with up-to-date information about the evacuation and well-being of loved ones.
* Staff well-being can be enhanced by ensuring they are informed and prepared for the evacuation, feel they have the knowledge and equipment to care for patient/client/residents, are acknowledged and supported, and are able have time off to avoid accumulative stress and fatigue.
* Because the families of healthcare workers may also be required to evacuate, ensuring that staff have time off to connect with their own families is important for practical reasons such as preparing to evacuate and/or arranging alternative accommodations as well as to address any concerns and worries that they might have for loved ones that might arise because of the situation.
* For patient/client/residents, it is suggested that their emotional and psychosocial well-being is monitored regularly. Receiving reassurance and maintaining a sense of safety will be important to maintain their overall well-being. This can largely be provided by healthcare staff, with social workers or similar professions being called upon should an individual experience anxiety or other stress-related reactions.
* Persons with serious mental health difficulties (some of whom may have been hospitalized for mental health reasons) should continue to receive support from qualified MHSUS providers.  Follow-up support should also be arranged with practitioners who provide case management or other mental health support for persons living in the community and who might be at risk of rapid deterioration.
* In addition to managing the workload of healthcare staff, efforts should be taken to ensure managers provide regular check-ins, remind staff of the importance of self-care for themselves and their families, and provide information on EAP and other supports. Some staff may also find the opportunity to ‘debrief’ following the deployment helpful.

**Resources**

## Provincial/Territorial

* <List resources relevant to your jurisdiction>

## Federal

* [Anxiety Canada](https://www.anxietycanada.com/): This website contains information about dealing with anxiety and links to free online courses and apps with coping resources for anxiety such as the [MindShift App](https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/new-mindshift-cbt-app-gives-canadians-free-anxiety-relief/).

* [Care for Caregivers](https://www.careforcaregivers.ca/): Care to Speak is a peer support service that provides free, unbiased and confidential peer mental health support to anyone working in the Healthcare or Social Services sector via phone or chat. Call 1-866-802-1832.
* [Wellness Together Canada](https://ca.portal.gs/): Tools and resources to support Canadians with low mood, worry, substance use, social isolation, and relationship issues.
* [Kids Help Phone Free](https://kidshelpphone.ca/) 24/7 text and phone support for children and youth (bilingual). 1-800-668-6868 or <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

* [Residential School Crisis Line Support](https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/residential-schools): A specialized crisis line providing holistic support for former Residential School students and their families. 1-877-477-0775