



MHPSS Bulletin

May-June

A bulletin to connect people, networks, and organizations across British Columbia, fostering the sharing of resources and building knowledge in the field of mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings. Past issues of the bulletin and recordings of Lunch and Learn webinars will be available on our website using the button below.

Provincial Psychosocial Services

Education & Learning Opportunities

New! Public Online Course (Free) by Provincial Psychosocial Services

- [Eco-Anxiety and Climate Distress](#): Learn about ecological/ environmental stress and distress, how it affects you and your community, and ways to mitigate it.
- [Getting Through Tough Days](#): Learn about how stress affects you and practical ways that can help you get through those particularly tough days.

All courses and trainings listed in this Bulletin are voluntary and intended to provide additional learning opportunities. They do not replace or fulfill any mandatory training requirements set by an organization.

Lunch and Learn Webinar

We will be taking a summer break from the webinars out of recognition that summer means much busier schedules for many of us.

Our May 6th Lunch and Learn speakers were Brandon Blackwood and Meghan O'Reilly, Indigenous Liaisons. Unfortunately, the session's recording glitched and we were not able to salvage the video. They have, however, included the slides from the session, [linked here \(pdf\)](#). Apologies for the inconvenience!

One of the important takeaways from the session was that there is a "no wrong door" approach to access. Anyone seeking assistance can approach any partner organization and be referred to the appropriate place.

Community navigators were also discussed, and their role. They can serve their communities during emergencies by helping link the communities to the Indigenous Liaisons. More about community navigators can be found [here \(pdf\)](#).

Email Nikki to get added directly to the distribution list for all future webinar invitations edu.pps@phsa.ca

Engaging and Useful Links to Explore

With the wildfire season approaching, this Government of Canada resource on *Evacuations and Your Mental Health* might be of interest.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/evacuations-mental-health.html>

Check out the latest resources from the Canadian Emergency Response Psychological Support Network (CanEMERG). <https://canemerg-urgencecan.com/about/>

The National Collaborative Centre for Environment Health offers resources and guidance on *Psychosocial Impacts of Disasters: Resources for Mitigation, Response and Recovery*. <https://ncceh.ca/resources/subject-guides/psychosocial-impacts-disasters-resources-mitigation-response-and-recovery>

The Knowledge Network (you need to sign up but its free) has a five-part documentary series names *Wildfire* which has unprecedented access to and footage from B.C.'s deadliest wildfire season in 2021. [Wildfire | Program | Knowledge Network](#)

Disney+ has a movie streaming named *Rebuilding Paradise*: The community of Paradise, California, a town in the Sierra Nevada foothills, attempts to rebuild after devastating wildfires in 2018.

Small Actions, Big Impact: Supporting Each Other in Challenging Times

Author: David Hutton

This article has been edited with the use of AI (ChatGPT)

In the March/April MHPSS Bulletin, we spoke about the importance of taking care of ourselves during the response season. It is also important to look out for one another. Supporting colleagues through stressful times is essential to maintaining a healthy and effective workplace—especially in high-pressure environments like emergency management and health services. One practical, evidence-informed approach you can use is Psychological First Aid (PFA). PFA is not therapy or formal counselling; it is a humane, supportive response that helps people feel safe, heard, and connected in the aftermath of distressing experiences.

At its core, PFA focuses on simple but meaningful actions you can take in the moment. This often begins with noticing when a colleague may be struggling. For example, you may notice changes in their mood, such as becoming easily frustrated or angry, being less talkative than usual, having difficulty concentrating, or appearing more tired. Rather than trying to “fix” the situation, you can approach them with respect and openness.

You can do this through a simple, private check-in. There are different ways to show that you care and are available. For example, you can say, “I’ve noticed you don’t seem like yourself. How are you doing?” You can also open up a conversation by acknowledging it’s been a stressful period for everyone including yourself. “It’s been really tough lately. How are you doing?” This non-intrusive approach not only helps normalize the moment but also respects their privacy while creating space for them to share, if they choose.

Listening is one of the most important elements of PFA. This means giving your full attention, avoiding interruptions, and not rushing to offer solutions. Often, what someone needs most is to feel heard and understood. It’s also important to validate their reactions—acknowledging that stress responses such as fatigue, frustration, or worry are common in demanding or uncertain situations.

PFA also involves helping to restore a sense of practical stability. You might support a colleague by helping them prioritize tasks, encouraging a short break, or offering to share workload where possible. Small, tangible supports can make a meaningful difference when someone is feeling overwhelmed. You can also support them in reaching out for additional help if needed, while reminding them that everyone needs support at times—whether this is through family or peers, an organizational resource, or another trusted support.

Supporting others also means recognizing your own limits. You are not expected to take on the role of a counsellor or carry someone else’s distress alone. If a colleague’s needs go beyond what you can provide, gently encourage them to consider additional supports or seek advice from a supervisor or wellness resource. Maintaining your own boundaries helps ensure support remains sustainable.

In practice, using PFA with colleagues helps foster a culture where people look out for one another, respond with empathy, and feel comfortable seeking support. These small, everyday actions can strengthen team resilience and help everyone navigate the demands of response work more effectively.

You can learn more about Psychological First Aid (PFA) by signing up for one of our PFA courses. These are regularly posted in the MHPSS Bulletin and on our website, however we are planning a summer break for the public offerings. Group sessions can be discussed on a case-by-case situation by contacting edu.pps@phsa.ca

Definitions

Psychosocial: The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological dimension of a person and the social dimension of a person. The *psychological* dimension includes the internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions, and the *social* dimension includes relationships, family and community network, social values and cultural practices. 'Psychosocial support' refers to the actions that address both psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities. (Psychosocial interventions. A Handbook, page 25.)

The title "MHPSS" in this bulletin refers to a broad approach to mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies. It does not signify the endorsement or inclusion of specific services or organizations.

Provincial Psychosocial Services

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