



**Request for Proposals**  
**Essential Employee Assistance Program**  
**During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*A hero is someone who has given his or her life  
to something bigger than oneself.*

Joseph Campbell

April 22, 2020

VII. Overview

The Steinman Foundation has contracted with [Mental Health America of Lancaster County](#) (MHA) to coordinate an Essential Employee Assistance Program (EEAP) using local mental health professionals to provide **virtual mental health services** to essential workers who do not have an employer-sponsored Employee Assistance Program (EAP). While this project cannot provide all essential workers with the comprehensive mental health support they may need as a result of their efforts, it will provide approximately 1,000 essential workers with short-term mental health support from licensed mental health providers who have the knowledge and skills to help them assess their needs and offer them options for ongoing support, if needed.

COVID-19 will impact the Lancaster County community in four waves, each of which brings significant challenges for everyone, but especially for essential workers who are unable to shelter-in-place during the pandemic. The following illustration, courtesy of WellSpan, illustrates the challenges associated with each wave.

### The Four Waves of the Corona Virus Impact

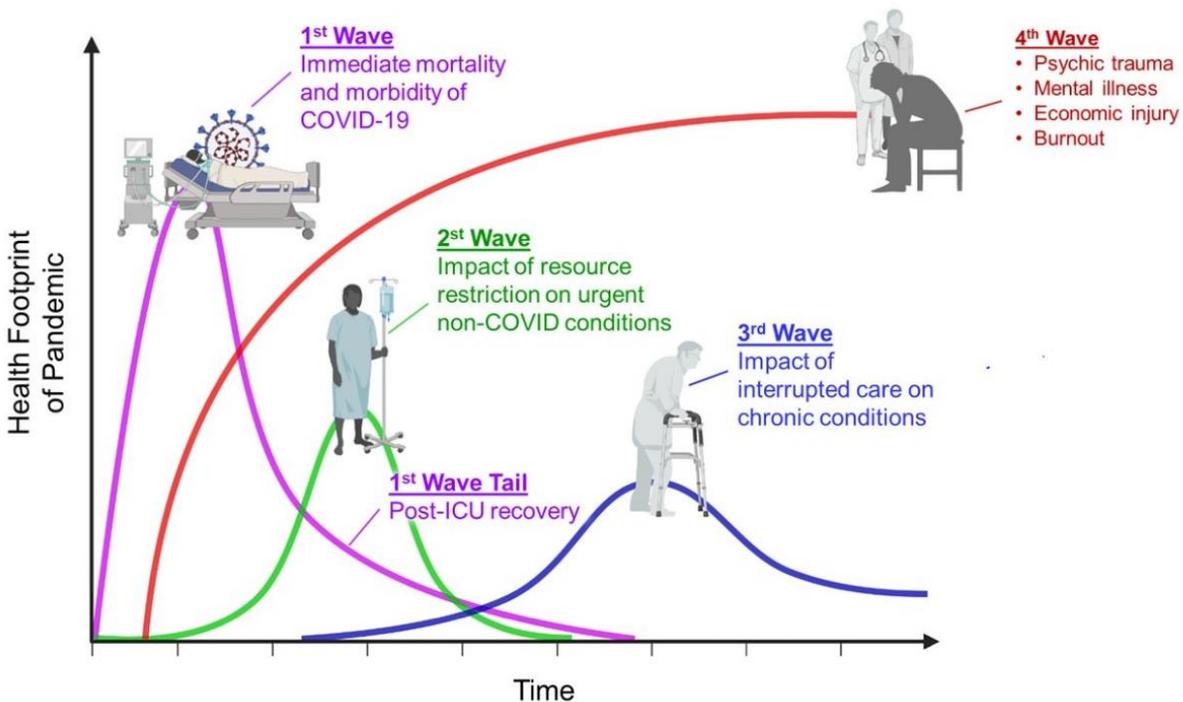


Figure 1: Courtesy of the WellSpan Employee Assistance Program

For many, the immediate, or 1<sup>st</sup> wave impact is managing the virus itself as it spreads throughout the community. Those who contract the virus need immediate medical care; the health care system is stretched to meet the needs of the critically

ill; families who shelter in place struggle with a host of issues including personal safety, caring for sick family members, and home-schooling children. For essential workers it is a time of frenetic activity as they juggle the unprecedented physical and emotional demands of the workplace, anxiety about contracting the virus and infecting family members, and stress related to meeting the day-to-day needs of family members, including young children, who are sheltering-in-place.

Wave 2 is characterized by the depletion of medical resources for non-COVID-19 conditions. Hospitals and health centers are not designed exclusively for pandemics and medical emergencies do not stop to make way for patients affected by COVID-19. Elective surgeries may be postponed, medical supplies may be depleted and staff shortages will inevitably contribute to exhaustion on the part of essential workers in all occupations. There is every indication that COVID-19 will be with us for many months as medical researchers work arduously to test vaccines.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of impact focuses on those with chronic medical conditions who may have delayed routine medical care to avoid exposure to COVID-19 or because the local healthcare system has lacked the capacity to respond to non-critical health issues. Essential workers, like everyone else, may have serious conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease that require routine monitoring. Left unattended, many of these conditions can result in significant health concerns.

Mental health, or wave 4, starts almost immediately, permeates all waves and extends far beyond COVID-19 as essential workers struggle with conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety, depression and grief. While these conditions are not unique to essential workers, they are amplified by the extraordinary stress associated with working on the front lines of a pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Lancaster County's essential workers are community heroes who have willingly put themselves in harm's way for the well-being of others.

Given the likelihood that a COVID-19 vaccine will not be publicly available until 2021, this project will be limited to **virtual mental health support**. While the shelter-in-place order may be lifted for Lancaster County prior to December 31, 2020, this project will only cover mental health services that present 0% risk of transmission of COVID-19. If eligible individuals choose to continue mental health support beyond the 3 virtual sessions covered as part of this EEAP program, they can determine the meeting format that best meets their unique situation.

## VIII. Definitions

**Essential Employee Assistance Program (EEAP) Services** – EEAP will allow mental health professionals to invoice The Steinman Foundation for up to 3 counseling sessions per individual for an essential employee who does not have access to an employer-sponsored EAP. The reimbursement rate for each 1-hour session may not exceed \$50.

**Essential Workers** - the standard definition of an essential employee is someone that performs work involving the safety of human life and the protection of property. On March 20, 2020, Governor Wolf issued *Industry Operation Guidance* outlining those industries that may continue physical operations in Pennsylvania because their workers are essential to maintaining the health and well-being of our commonwealth. This guidance is located at <https://www.scribd.com/document/452553026/UPDATED-12-30pm-April-20-2020-Industry-Operation-Guidance>. Essential workers are not limited to healthcare workers and may include grocery store workers, maintenance workers, and agricultural workers, among others.

A quarter of Pennsylvania's essential workers make less than \$30,000 annually, and two-thirds make less than the state's household median income of \$60,000. Grocery stores employ one of the largest groups of workers making the lowest wages. There are more than 120,000 grocery store workers in Pennsylvania, the data shows, and average annual wages for workers in the sector are about \$23,000. Gas stations, assisted-living centers, and building maintenance firms are among the other essential businesses employing large numbers of low-wage workers across the state.

**Mental Health Professional** – refers to individuals who are licensed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to provide mental health services.

**Virtual Mental Health Services** – For the purposes of this project, virtual mental health services are defined as services offered online via platforms such as FaceTime, Zoom, Microsoft TEAMS, WebEx or any other publicly available online service. In cases where *the client* is not able to access online services, telephone support will be considered a virtual mental health service.

#### IX. Eligibility

Agencies that employ Mental Health Professionals and Self-employed Mental Health Professionals are eligible to respond to this request for proposals. All proposed providers must be licensed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to provide mental health services.

#### X. Timeframe

Services must be rendered between date of executed contract with [Mental Health America of Lancaster County](#) (MHA) and December 31, 2020. The following is an estimated timeline for project implementation:

May 6, 2020: RFP is released by The Steinman Foundation

May 20, 2020: Deadline for submitting an application in response to this RFP

May 21, 2020 – May 31, 2020: Applications are scored and contracts are negotiated

June 1, 2020: Mental health services are available to essential workers who do not have an employer-sponsored EAP

#### XI. Range of Awards

A total of \$100,000 is available to provide a minimum of 2,000 hours of counseling support for essential workers. We hope to work with a variety of mental health providers to offer this much-needed support as quickly and efficiently as possible. The minimum grant award will be \$5,000 for a minimum of 100 hours of counseling support. The maximum grant award will be \$25,000 for a minimum of 500 hours of counseling support. Based on quantity and quality of the applications received, MHA may enter into negotiations with specific providers in an effort to serve as many individuals as possible with the limited resources available.

#### VI. Provider Responsibilities

Grant recipients will be responsible for the following:

1. Assisting with the dissemination of information related to this program.
2. Offering clients access to virtual counseling services via a publicly available virtual platform.
3. Determining client eligibility for services using Pennsylvania guidelines on essential workers and confirming that clients do not have access to an employer-sponsored EAP.
4. Scheduling services with clients and arranging for up to 3 online or phone counseling sessions per individual.
5. Maintaining client confidentiality.
6. Ensuring that all individuals who provide direct counseling services to clients are licensed mental health professionals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
7. Billing MHA monthly for sessions offered as part of this program. Sessions billed to MHA as part of the EEAP program **may not** also be submitted for insurance reimbursement and clients **may not** be charged a co-pay or encouraged to make a financial contribution toward the services provided as part of this project.
8. Sharing data with MHA on the number of clients served, the occupations represented, the number of sessions offered, and the number of individuals who elected to continue services after completing 3 free sessions. ***No personally identifying client information will be requested from providers at any time.***
9. Providing assurance that all licensed mental health professionals associated with this program will not discriminate against clients or potential clients on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or military status.

VII. How to Apply

Applications will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on May 20, 2020 at [https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID\\_2103?SA=SNA&FID=35036](https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_2103?SA=SNA&FID=35036)

VIII. Application Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a team of individuals including mental health professionals, funders, and community members.

Applications will be evaluated on:

1. The capacity of the applicant to provide virtual mental health services to essential workers as soon as possible.
2. The applicant's reputation and past history as a mental health provider in Lancaster County.
3. The applicant's understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the mental health needs of essential workers.
4. The applicant's ability to meet the needs of a diverse clientele during the initial 3 sessions and beyond.
5. The proposed number of clients to be served and cost per session.

For questions related to this RFP, please contact:

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