

With the impact of the COVID-19 virus in Montana and the transition to working remotely, our workforce is adjusting to alternate methods of conducting business, and managers are requesting resources to help support their staff during these quickly changing times.

We understand that this situation is unsettling and is creating anxiety for people. Employees are looking to their managers and supervisors for guidance, information, and resources. Our Office of Workforce Wellness is available to help support you and your employees as we navigate through this challenging time.

### ***What you can do?***

#### **Focus on preparation, not fear.**

Assure your employees that the State of Montana is closely monitoring information. Be ready to share new and updated information regarding any preparations or instructions as it relates to your employees. Remind employees to review the state's COVID-19 website (<https://covid19.mt.gov>) and the State HR webpage (<https://hr.mt.gov/COVID-19>) for updated information. Be wary of sharing unsubstantiated information or opinions as this information can be unsettling. People are looking to you as a leader to provide accurate, reliable information.

#### **Communicate your organizational preparedness plan.**

Part of your agency plan should include information regarding telework, remote meeting platforms you will be using, and any policy or work priority changes as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. You may have more employees who become sick or who need to care for a sick family member. Be clear about the policies and procedures in these situations and be sure that employees know who to contact with questions or concerns to reduce uncertainty.

#### **Keep common areas clean.**

Respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be followed carefully, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly contacted surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks and tables, etc.) can be cleaned by employees before and after use.

#### **Encourage employees to take care of themselves.**

Encourage people to be mindful of their emotional wellbeing. For many, this situation is a time of uncertainty and high stress. Connect with your employees weekly and share resources and support that might be uniquely helpful for them. Each person will experience different reactions and challenges; being fully aware of the resources available will help you provide the right resources at the right time.

#### **Help reduce stigma.**

Stigma is when someone sees a person in a negative way and defines them by their illness rather than who they are as an individual. As leaders, please be mindful of your words and actions during this challenging time. The Coronavirus outbreak is stressful for people and

communities, and those individuals with existing mental and other health conditions are at greater risk of experiencing deteriorating overall health.

**Connect people with resources.**

Uncertainty can be overwhelming. Remind your employees regularly that they have access to resources and counseling through our Employee Assistance Program. Access resources specifically intended to support the needs of managers and employees during the COVID-19 situation at the IBH/RBH website: <https://ibhsolutions.com/resources/>

Our Office of Workforce Wellness page is updated on a regular basis and provides a central location to review the resources available. <https://hr.mt.gov/Programs/Workforce-Wellness>

If you provide a clear path forward, employees can be amazingly resilient. They are looking for trust, compassion, stability, and hope. As a leader, you can take a few simple measures to help our workforce stay strong and stabilize during this crisis. We are available to help you and are committed to providing you with the resources and support you need now and in the months ahead.