

MISSION

CHA OFFERS RESOURCES ON CARE PROVIDER WELL-BEING

It is hard to believe, isn't it? A year has now passed since the beginning of the COVID crisis for our country and for the whole world. It was last March that CHA staff were sent home to begin working remotely. We gathered our personal belongings, important books and documents, computer equipment, packed them in our cars and headed home to set up "virtual offices." Surely this would be for a few weeks, right? None of us ever imagined that this new virtual reality would last a full year and beyond.



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As we adjusted to working remotely and learned the tricks of the Zoom world, we reached out to you. While this lockdown was inconvenient in the ways we had to work differently, it was costing you a lot more. We were (and remain) acutely aware of the tremendous impact of the pandemic on the health care ministry across the country, especially the direct caregivers on the front lines of the crisis. Our first question was personal: How are you doing? We held many listening sessions with each of our committees to better understand how you were enduring but also to ask other questions: How can we help? What do you need from us?

In the early stages of the pandemic, we found there were many ethical questions and concerns, especially around triage of patients and allocation of scarce resources. As time passed, spirituality questions arose, such as the provision of pastoral care and the sacraments for completely isolated COVID patients. Soon, we began to hear more and more about the impact the crisis was having on the well-being of caregivers and associates. We heard grave concern for those staff who were experiencing increasing physical exhaustion, fear, moral distress, compassion fatigue, mental and emotional stress and burnout. One

year later, and still counting, this concern for personal well-being continues and intensifies.

Following a number of conversations with members, CHA set up a new focus area on our website concentrating on well-being resources. It can be found at <https://www.chausa.org/well-being/well-being>. It contains a wealth of materials including body, mind, spirit supports; a curated collection of best practices from CHA members throughout the Catholic health ministry; COVID-related resources and research; a listing of events — upcoming and recorded — and pertinent reputable articles; resources and tools from across the globe focused on well-being; and staff contact information. This focus area continues to serve our members, and we encourage you to visit it often for program ideas, support and encouragement.

In May, we produced a four-part webinar series entitled Our Well-Being — A Webinar Series Sharing Wellness Resources. It shared CHA member practices, trusted wellness resources, practices and programs to help all involved in Catholic health care identify and address immediate needs brought on by the pandemic, as well as the eventual post-COVID reality. This series is free to all members and can still be viewed on our Well-Being site. Highly knowledgeable and experienced professionals presented the work being done to support caregiver and associate well-being from Providence St. Joseph Health, SSM Health and SCL Health. Attendance for the live version of each webinar was tremendous, and the feedback we received demonstrated the great need for information sharing and learning across the ministry.

As our ministry and country navigated the many challenges of the pandemic, we continued looking for ways to support the sacred work of caring for associates, patients and communities. In order to share best practices and get clear guidance from you, a new task force came together, focused on the well-being of ministry associates. The Well-Being Task Force is comprised of behavioral health clinicians, human resources, organizational development, mission integration and spiritual care leaders from across the ministry. Their experience, expertise and passion continue to provide great insight and creativity as the task force works to reexamine what it means to promote the inherent dignity of our caregivers and how to create an environment that allows them to thrive and flourish.

Aware that the opportunity to share, discuss and meaningfully connect with others is critical to sustaining well-being for the long term, the task force put together a Conversation Guide: Sustaining Connection for Well-Being, www.chausa.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/well-being-guide-2020.pdf. The discussion guide is a grab-and-go tool for anyone in our ministries to lead a conversation around well-being. In an hour, facilitators can create community through connection. The guide includes a template email invitation and opening prayers along with resources and questions to prompt discussion. It is a whole-person-care offering for everyone in Catholic health care.

Mindful that so many leaders across the ministry are holding these dialogues and conversations for others without having a space for themselves, CHA held four listening sessions for leaders. These sessions followed the framework and utilized Zoom breakout rooms to foster meaningful dialogue in smaller groups. The vulnerability, commitment to ministry and sharing of personal well-being practices were humbling testaments to

the soul of Catholic health care.

We believe, more than ever, that the people working throughout the ministry are the most treasured resource in Catholic health care. As such, CHA is committed to facilitating well-be-

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ing, resiliency and post-traumatic growth with our members. While this current crisis has underscored the serious challenges in our health care system, it has also provided an opportunity to transform the way we work, connect and build relationships. CHA will continue to work across systems to re-examine how we promote the inherent dignity of our colleagues and create a community that allows all to thrive and flourish — body, mind and spirit.

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