

DEALING WITH COVID-19 IMPACT IN THE WORKPLACE

ICAS understands the devastation, anxiety and disruption that may be caused when an employee tests positive for COVID-19, especially if other employees have been exposed to the positive person and in worst case scenarios the impact that death of family members, or even employees, may have on teams.

This pandemic is forcing us to reach for our highest levels of resilience and coping to enable us to deal with the daily trauma and disruption that we will all be exposed. In these early days it is appropriate for employees to have conflicting emotions and feel unsure about how they are feeling and their responses to their environment. However, as time goes by, it is important to build an armoury for ourselves as a response to the constant negative news to which we will be exposed as the disease gets closer and closer to impacting those whom we know and interact with on a daily basis.

ICAS has a number of support interventions that can be activated at a time like this. We would like to encourage the following approaches to such interventions so that it affords specific focus of valuable time and resources on the most vulnerable and at risk for support. Part of our response is to position the client organisation to show care and concern to those that are impacted in some way, with more targeted support to those who need direct support and assistance.

01 SMS campaigns

These are useful in reaching large numbers that may all be at different coping levels and have differing responses to a number of issues. This could be in response to finding out about a colleague testing positive, to whom the team has been exposed, or teams that are feeling particularly demotivated and anxious about all the negativity and difficulty going on around them. The aim is to offer the employee psycho social support.

How this works:

- A carefully designed message is created to speak to the issue at hand and sent out to all affected employees.
- An option is provided on the SMS for the employee to respond 'yes' they would like a check-in or callback or 'no' they would not.
- The ICAS Clinical team will arrange callbacks to all employees who would like to access additional support and choose 'yes', as well as assess in more depth what their current needs are and engage with them directly on how we can provide further support.

02 Email campaigns

An email campaign directed at a specific target group of managers or employees is another option for reaching out to those who are possibly in need of additional support to cope in this uncertain time.

- A carefully designed message will be created and sent out to the relevant team or group by your dedicated Client Relationship Manager.
- Recipients are able to select the option to be contacted by the relevant EWP professional that they wish to engage with, for example, a financial coach, counsellor or a medical advisory professional and a callback will be arranged.

03 ICAS On-the-Go self-check in assessments

ICAS On-the-Go self-check assessments are a creative way to reach out to employees or small groups of employees.

- It highlights for the individual the specific area with which the individual may not be coping with and brings their awareness to this through answers to a few short questions.
- Post completion of the questions, the individual is prompted to either call ICAS directly from the app (no toll-free number required, it is an automatic dialler from the app) or to request a callback for further support.
- ICAS is also able to meaningfully gather the data on where employees find themselves and their ability to cope should they wish to reach out for support or not. ICAS is then able to provide further insights on this data for a more targeted response.
- The self-check in assessment can be done frequently as we know our coping levels may differ from day to day and week to week and thus answering these questions regularly will highlight the need for further action and support as and when necessary.
- In addition, a pre-designed flyer will be made available to target the relevant teams encouraging them to assess themselves on the app.
- Once they have done so and reviewed their responses they are open to decide whether they would like additional support or not and will then be prompted to either dial us directly or log a request for a callback. If they feel they need additional support, no matter which method they choose to do so, once ICAS has established contact we can then ascertain the type of support they require, e.g. counselling support, medical advice, financial advice, etc.

04 Individual debriefing

For those who are identified to not be coping at all, the traditional EWP support is available to them. Individual support can either be accessed on a self-referral basis or as a managerial referral via the various access points into the service offering (toll-free number, app, USSD, email, etc.). Once ICAS is in contact with the individual we are better able to assess all support avenues the individual may need to be adequately debriefed and contained. ICAS is encouraging limited physical face-to-face contact in these times and thus have a host of virtual platforms to continue to support individuals as appropriate.

05 Medical Advisory

Medical Advisory forms an important aspect of the containment that may be required as part of the COVID-19 response. Employees have direct support to this medical advice by dialling their toll-free number and selecting the menu option for medical advice (option 3). The employee will be assisted by a registered nurse on various medical issues and directed to appropriate resources should further assistance be needed.

This Health@Hand team can also be accessed from the app or through the USSD option by dialling *134*905# and selecting the option for Medical Assistance (option 3).

06 Group trauma debriefing

Although group trauma intervention (GTI) services are a key part of the EWP offering, they may not be the best solution to address the worries and anxieties related to the current pandemic, including COVID-19 exposure, displayed by teams. All South Africans are slowly having to deal with facing a new normal in daily life and exposure to COVID-19, and perhaps even testing positive, is fast becoming part of that new normal. While group trauma interventions are an invaluable way to ensure proper processing of a particular traumatic event, given that COVID-19 exposure and infections are becoming an everyday part of our lives, the GTI intervention is not the best way to deal with that. Rather, equipping people with effective coping skills and resilience is what is required and this is more effectively managed through an emotional impact session or another PL intervention.

07 Emotional Impact (EI) Sessions

An EI Session is a structured group process in which a group facilitation expert aids the group in normalising and integrating the changes and challenges which they are experiencing, psychoeducation to better understand their emotional experience, as well as offering employees a contained forum in which to vent and express their feelings about the situation. The session is then directed towards agreeing on actionable outcomes that will aid the team in mutual support and wellbeing care to assist them in moving forwards.

COVID-19 EI sessions utilise the same process for supporting teams who are struggling to process their experiences of heightened anxiety, loss, insecurity, increased stress, large-scale organisational and personal change, and in helping them to build personal and team resilience for improved coping in the future.

08 Performance Learning & Organisational Development (PL & OD) Interventions

ICAS has developed numerous COVID-19-specific Training interventions aimed at upskilling and empowering Employees and Leadership to improved psychosocial and behavioural responses to the pandemic and its social consequences:

Series 1 – Understanding the Coronavirus

Senior Management: Strategic conversations

Leadership: Managing the panic

Employees: Responding reasonably

Series 2 – Living in Locking

Leadership: Leading in lockdown

Employees: Living in lockdown and working remotely

Series 3 – Thoughtful Reintegration

Leadership: Reasonable expectations and managing remote workforces

Employees: Psychological (Mental Health) impact and what-to-expect from reintegration

ICAS also continues to tailor existing Learning and Development Interventions to speak to the specific effects of change and social anxiety on organisations and employees. These include:

Prosilience

Proactively developing resilience-building habits for the demanding road ahead.

Fit for Change

Understanding workforce and social changes post lockdown, and developing skills for agility and healthy adjustment in this new world of work.

EQ and Mindfulness:

Being in the right frame of mind for coping and supporting teams.

Restructure and Retrenchment Support:

- Onsite counselling following restructure announcements
- Surviving a restructure: how to move forwards
- Re-entering the job market: post retrenchment

Leadership Coaching:

Individual and Team Coaching programmes for development of leadership for improved adjustment to ensure business continuity, employee support, and team performance.