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** NOTICE: This health alert provides written guidance for health care professionals and others who may need to take action to prevent or control a notifiable condition. It is not intended to provide guidance for the general public.*

Reactions to the Anniversary of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Actions Requested:

Support clients and patients¹ who are experiencing despair or hopelessness, apathy or anger, and grief and loss.

For clients and patients who are experiencing despair or hopelessness:

- Normalize their reaction - validate that a year is a long time to be struggling through something this significant.
- Facilitate a space for them to process their experiences. Use active listening when possible.
- Reflect about a light at the end of the tunnel. Ask them to identify small improvements they have made in the last several months.
- Help them shift, mentally and emotionally, from seeing the pandemic as a threat to seeing it as a challenge. Challenges have pieces that can be overcome and can generate growth and resilience.

For clients and patients who are experiencing apathy or anger:

- Help them direct their attention and motivation towards something bigger than themselves. For example, sometimes it's easier to make healthy and safe choices when people are committed to helping others.
- Help them identify positive ways that they can contribute to the experience of others. For example, lending a hand or offering to support those around them who may have fewer resources.

For clients and patients who are experiencing grief and loss:

- Recognize that there are significant cultural, familial, and past experiences that affect how each of us experience loss and how we show grief.
- Focus on validating and listening to the griever.
- Validate conflicting emotions. It's okay to feel terrible loss and also relief at the same time.
- Facilitate problem solving and decision making to prevent impulsive or risky decisions (e.g., decisions related to precautionary health measures, burial of loved ones).
- Modify coping plans if traditional strategies aren't possible (e.g., gathering with family to grieve using a virtual meeting platform).

1 Nemeth, D. G., Kurianski, J., Reeder, K. P., Lewis, A., Marceaux, K., & Whittington, T. (2012). Addressing Anniversary Reactions of Trauma Through Group Process: The Hurricane Katrina Anniversary Wellness Workshops. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 62(1). p. 129-142 <https://doi.org/10.1521/ijgp.2012.62.1.129>

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- Help identify places of belonging, safe and positive relationships, and activities that are uplifting. This helps the person feel some control.
- Provide psychoeducation about the grief and loss process, especially around the warning symptoms of complicated grief and trauma, such as symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder or major depressive disorder. See Resources.

Share information and resources with clients, patients, and their families on building resilience, support strategies, mental and emotional well-being, and crisis support.

Background:

Consistent with previous literature on disaster response and recovery cycles, the one-year anniversary after the initial impact of a disaster is typically a significant event for many in the affected population.² As the one-year anniversary of the initial social and economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic approaches for Washington residents in mid-March 2021, behavioral health related responses to this significant period will be widespread and varied. Areas of concern include:

- Despair or hopelessness that the pandemic has continued this long and that we are still in it.
- Apathy or anger about ongoing restrictions and following public health guidelines a year (or more) after the initial outbreak/impact.
- Significant bereavement, grief, and loss reactions about what has been lost or changed (e.g., economically, socially, and personally).

Expressions of distress during this time will vary dramatically and may range from being very intense to almost nonexistent. Consistent with other types of disasters or critical incidents, the one-year anniversary of the impact of an event can go unnoticed by some and is a main focus of attention or distress for others.¹²³

2 Knight, A. & Liu, J. (2015, August 14). Disaster Anniversaries. [Presentation slides]. SAMHSA. https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/webcast_disaster_anniversaries.pdf

3 Daly, E. S., Gulliver, S. B., Zimering, R. T., Kamholtz, B. W., & Morrissette, S. B. (2008). Disaster mental health workers responding to ground zero: One year later. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 21(2), p. 227-239. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.20311>

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RESOURCES:

Providers:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Anniversary Presentation-Slides: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/webcast_disaster_anniversaries.pdf and webcast recording https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktRY_0HO_WI&feature=emb_logo
- Washington State Department of Health-Behavioral Health Group Impact Reference Guide: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/BHG-COVID19BehavioralHealthGroupImpactReferenceGuide.pdf>
- WA ST DOH - Statewide High-Level Analysis of Forecasted Behavioral Health Impacts from COVID-19 – January Update: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/BHG-COVID19StatewideSummaryForecastofBHImpacts-Jan2021Update.pdf>

Clients, Patients, and Families:

Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19)

- Mental and emotional well-being resources: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/information-for-you-and-your-family/mental-and-emotional-well-being>
- Ingredients of resilience: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/COVID-19%20Ingredients%20of%20Resilience.pdf>
- Dealing with grief or loss: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID-19%20Grief%20or%20loss.pdf>
- Suicide warning signs: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/COVID-19-SuicideWarningSigns.pdf>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- Anniversaries and Trigger Events: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/anniversaries-trigger-events>
- Coping Tips for Traumatic Events and Disasters: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/coping-tips>

Helplines

- Mental health crisis lines: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/health-care-services-supports/behavioral-health-recovery/mental-health-crisis-lines>
- Washington Listens: <https://waportal.org/partners/home/WaListens> - Call 833-681-0211.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> - Call 800-273-8255 (English) or 1-888-628-9454 (Spanish).
- Crisis Text Line: <https://www.crisistextline.org/> - Text HEAL to 741741.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UPDATE

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION SECTION
THURSTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
412 LILLY RD NE
OLYMPIA, WA, 98506-5132
DISEASE REPORTING: (360)786-5470



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- Crisis Connections: <https://www.crisisconnections.org/24-hour-crisis-line/> - Call 866-427-4747.
- Washington Warm Line: <https://www.crisisconnections.org/wa-warm-line/> - Call 877-500-9276.
- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline> - Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
- DOH - Crisis lines for specific groups: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/InjuryandViolencePrevention/SuicidePrevention/HotlinesTextandChatResources>
- TeenLink: <https://www.crisisconnections.org/teen-link/> - Call or text 866-833-6546.

THANK YOU FOR REPORTING

TO REPORT A NOTIFIABLE CONDITION IN THURSTON COUNTY	
Voice mail for reporting non-immediately reportable conditions (24 hours a day)	Phone: 360-786-5470 Fax: 360-867-2601
Day time immediately reportable conditions – Call detailed information to the 24-hour Notifiable Condition Reporting Line at 360-786-5470. Messages are picked up hourly. If a call back can't wait call 360-867-2500 and ask staff to locate a Communicable Disease staff.	Phone: 360-786-5470
After hours immediately and 24-hour reportable conditions or a public health emergency	Call 1-800-986-9050
No one is available with Thurston County Public Health and condition is immediately notifiable	1-877-539-4344

Communicable Disease Updates are posted online at: <http://bit.ly/CDUpdatePHSS>