A close-up photograph of a hand placing a white die on top of a row of four other white dice. The dice are arranged to spell out the word 'WELLNESSES'. The top die shows 'WELLN' and the bottom die shows 'STR'. The other three dice show 'E', 'S', and 'S' respectively. The background is a soft-focus green and yellow gradient.

Pandemic **Workforce Well-Being**

A Comprehensive Toolkit For
Supporting Our Own During COVID-19



For more information, contact www.owbr@mssm.edu



The secret of your future is hidden in your daily routine.



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Background on Mount Sinai Health System



Background on Mount Sinai Health System

The Mount Sinai Health System in New York City is an integrated health care system providing high-quality medical care to our local and global communities. We were at the forefront of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, which upended so many lives. The effort to care for the massive influx of infected patients created immense pressure and stress on everyone—especially our health care workers on the front lines. Our Mount Sinai COVID-19 Faculty and Staff Crisis Support Task Force has been working to develop ways to support our employees and trainees and ease their burden. The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai's Office of Well-being and Resilience, which is dedicated to the health and well-being

7,200
Physicians

13
Joint-venture
centers

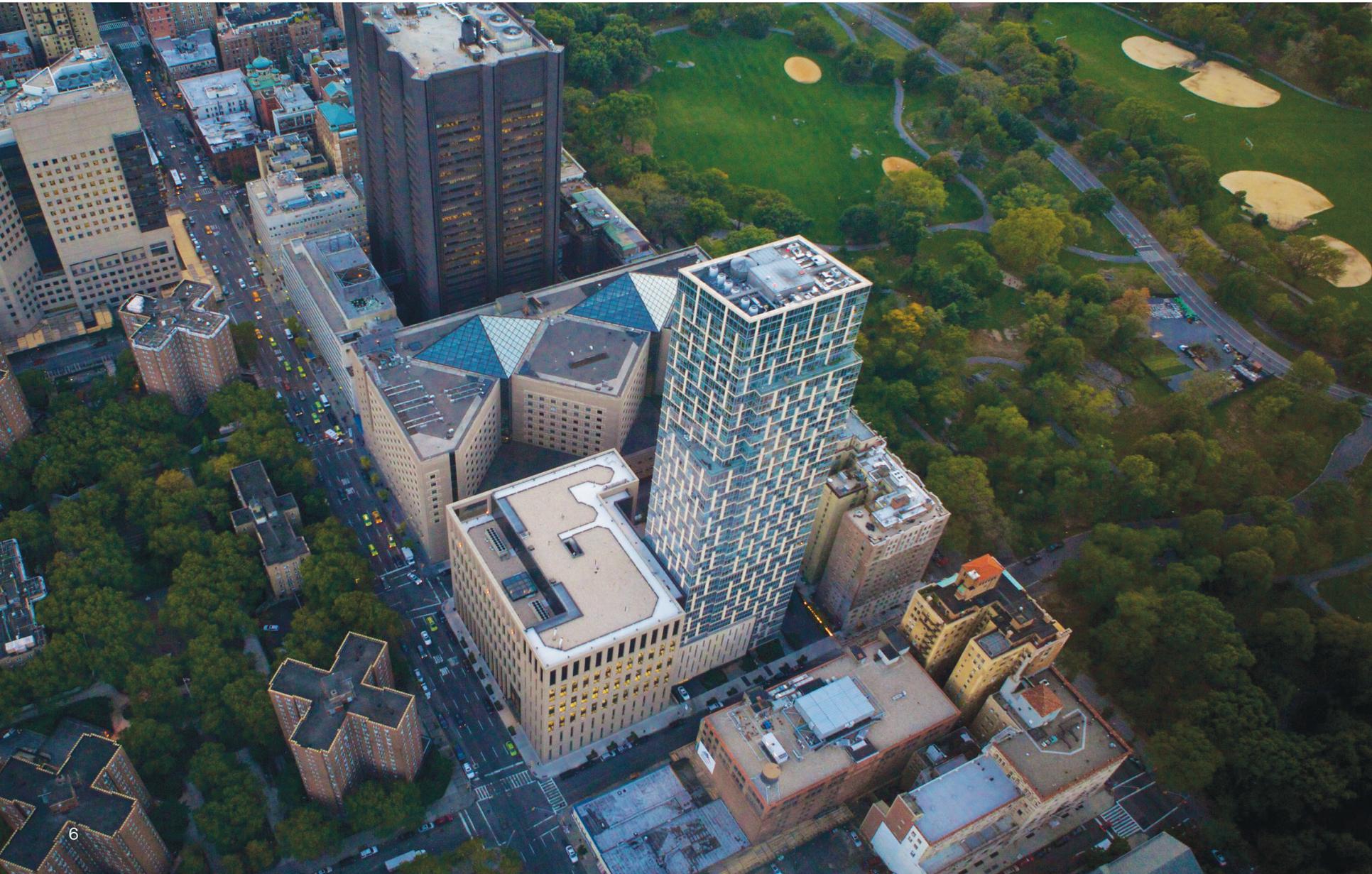
400
Ambulatory
practice
locations

of Mount Sinai students, trainees, researchers, and faculty, has been centrally involved in these efforts supporting all members of the Mount Sinai community in partnership with numerous other groups in our Health System.

In addition, Mount Sinai has launched the Center for Stress, Resilience and Personal Growth, a first-of-its-kind initiative in North America. Our goal as a system is to understand the psychological effects of COVID-19 and mitigate their negative impact on the mental health and well-being of our entire staff. It is our hope that our efforts can serve as a model for institutions and communities around the globe as they tackle similar challenges during this and future pandemics.

<https://www.mountsinai.org/about>

Purpose



Purpose

The COVID-19 pandemic put tremendous pressure and stress on our society—especially our health care workers on the front lines. Our clinicians, researchers, trainees, students, and staff at our hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices have all been affected by this crisis.

Due to the intense level of work the crisis required, we believe front-line workers

and other members of the Mount Sinai community will feel the effects of their efforts for months to come.

Unfortunately, many will suffer symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. At Mount Sinai, we are honored by their brave service and are committed to supporting our workforce with a wide array of well-being and mental health support services. Indeed, we



must do so to ensure the future of our health care system.

To this end, we have developed a variety of innovative approaches addressing the needs of “our own.” The Mount Sinai Office of Well-Being and Resilience created this toolkit to share our approach to addressing the basic, psychosocial, and mental health needs of our workforce.

Our aim is not only to provide

support and decrease stress and anxiety, but also to potentially prevent our staff from experiencing significant mental health consequences. We intervened early and aimed to offer support and treatment for every health care worker in need—and continue to do so. We hope that our efforts will serve as a model to hospitals, doctors' offices, and health care systems around the globe.

Addressing Staff Needs



This physical and emotional stress may cause symptoms of anxiety, guilt, grief in the immediate term, but perhaps the greater emotional challenge is in the long term.

Addressing Staff Needs

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unparalleled health care crisis that puts immense pressure and stress on our society—especially our workers on the front lines. Health care providers have been working longer, at a faster pace, and with more challenging shifts. At the same time, they have been worrying about meeting basic needs for themselves and their loved ones and facing chronic stress and pervasive uncertainty. This physical and emotional stress may cause symptoms of anxiety, guilt, and grief in the immediate term, but perhaps the greater emotional challenge is in the long term. If previous health care crises are any indication, we can anticipate increasing numbers of health care workers to experience significant psychological distress, depression, and anxiety.



At Mount Sinai, we realized, as we were heading into the crisis, that we would need to find new ways to support our front-line workers during it. We developed a new model based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. We started by focusing on helping our staff meet their basic daily needs. We helped them obtain food (by providing free meals), find a place to stay that didn't endanger family members (by offering nearby free lodging), and address transportation needs (by offering free parking). Then we moved on to address personal and family safety and the uncertainty around deployment to new settings. Finally, we looked to address both the short- and long-term mental health challenges of prolonged stress, anxiety, and sadness. We hope the lessons we have learned will help others follow a similar path.

Addressing Staff Needs

To address these needs, we asked our front-line health care workers some key questions:

How can we support clinicians and staff who are caring for patients?

What concerns have they expressed?

What are front-line workers' most pressing needs?

What should leadership do to promote well-being and assure safety during this time?

Here are a few key areas that leadership addressed:

- Anxiety/stress/fear regarding new deployments
- Need for adequate personal protective equipment
- Healthy meals/hydration
- Extreme workloads and scheduling
- Safety for themselves and their families
- Lodging and transportation
- Proactive and 24/7 mental health support services



Source: JAMA article titled: *Understanding and Addressing the Sources of Anxiety among Healthcare Professionals during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Dr. Jonathan Ripp, Chief Wellness Officer at Mount Sinai, was a co-author of this article.

Pandemic Curve and Associated Stressors

The COVID-19 pandemic created tremendous pressure and stress on our health care system and front-line workers. These stressors and our employees' needs have evolved over the past few months. With this evolution, we have continually updated our responses to support our front-line workers.

Initially, front-line workers were hit with fears about meeting their basic needs. They worried about food, transportation, housing, child and elder care, and keeping their families

safe. As it became clear that this was no short-term crisis, concerns over the uncertainty for the future took center stage. These include unclear answers about when we might find an immunization and a treatment, what will happen as we start to reopen our elective and nonurgent care facilities and programs, and how this will affect the physical and emotional health of ourselves and the ones we care about. Even after the worst days of this crisis, our employees will continue to process all they have experienced and the toll this has taken on our society.

Pandemic Curve and Associated Stressors

Greatest Concerns

Fear for Basic Needs

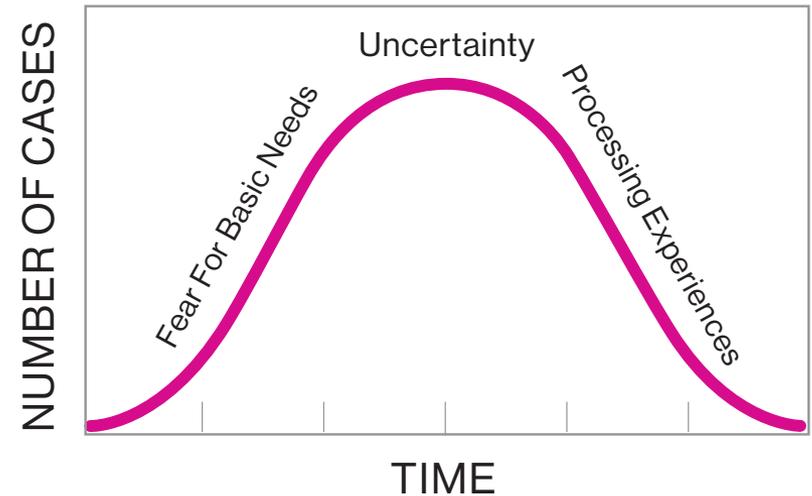
- When/what will I eat?
- How will I be kept safe?
- Who will care for my children?
- How will I get to and from work?

Uncertainty

- How long will this workload continue?
- Will I be able to be redeployed?
- Am I doing enough?

Processing Experiences

- Grief and loss
- Post-traumatic stress disorder or post-traumatic growth
- Catching my breath and time to reflect



Pandemic Curve and Associated Stressors

As a health care system striving to take care of our front-line workers, we felt it was important that we address their changing concerns in a similarly evolving fashion. During the start of the pandemic, we focused on addressing basic needs. This meant offering food, helping with parking and housing, and providing options for child care. As the city begins to reopen, we believe that the best thing we can do is provide clear,

transparent information through regular communication; the more we can lessen the uncertainty, the better our health care workers will be able to cope effectively. Once we hit the downward slope of the pandemic curve, many of us, particularly our front-line workers, will face the emotional aftermath of the rollercoaster. Thus, our staff will need psychological and social support during this time.

Pandemic Curve and Associated Stressors

Strategies to Address

Provide Basic Daily Resources

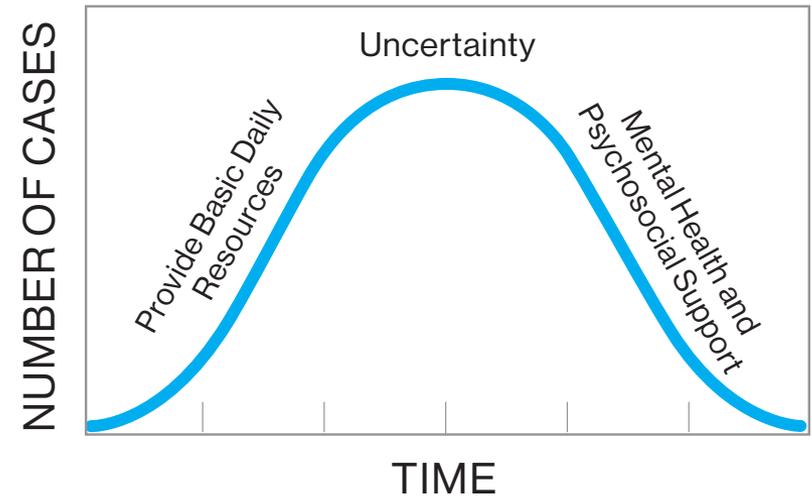
- Food (free and subsidized)
- Personal protective equipment clarity
- Child care resources
- Transportation and parking

Outreach Communications to Ease Uncertainty

- Weekly wellness messages
- Town halls
- Transparency

Psychosocial and Mental Health Support

- Support groups phone lines
- Telepsychiatry
- Mental health assistance
- Front-line relief



Strategy: Social Responsibility



Strategy: Social Responsibility

The Mount Sinai Office of Well Being and Resilience partnered with colleagues across the Mount Sinai Health System to expand existing programming and alleviate the burdens that our clinicians, researchers, trainees, students, and staff face as a result of the COVID-19 global health crisis. We offer tools that address three basic areas: basic needs, psychosocial support and mental health evaluation and treatment, and on-ground support.



Strategy: Social Responsibility

Basic Needs

We appreciate that in this time, health care workers may struggle with meeting some basic needs. To help, we maintain an up-to-date list of resources for all health professionals and employees. We provide resources and information regarding:

- Food provision
- Transportation and parking
- Housing
- Family resources
- Self-care and stress management
- Child and eldercare
- Fitness and nutrition
- Personal/family safety and medical care

Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Evaluation and Treatment

We want our front-line workers to feel empowered to take good care of their minds, bodies, and spirits. To this end, we offered a range of services. Some were brand-new; others predated the pandemic, but were bolstered during this time. These services included:

- Crisis support
- One-on-one support
- Facilitated group discussions
- Spiritual care
- Peer support
- Well-being tips and coping strategies

On-Ground Support

For our workers on the inpatient services, we offered resources that were accessible and provided spaces for rest and emotional relief during shifts and deployments.

- Mental health rounding teams
- Snack and well-being stations
- Frontline relief and well-being centers.



Tools and Resources



Tools and Resources

To keep our employees up to date on the ever-changing COVID-19 situation, Mount Sinai provided a variety of communications daily. We offered updates on our Health System's response to the virus in numerous ways including emails and town halls.



List of links here:

- [Well-Being Tips and Coping Strategies](#)
- [Mount Sinai's Channel for Physicians:](#)
- [Daily updates on Mount Sinai responses](#)
- [Mount Sinai Safety Hub](#)
- [Mount Sinai Today/Blog](#)
- [Resources for ongoing education](#)
- [Social media \(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube\)](#)
- [Town Hall Meetings](#)
- [Virtual Calm Live Zoom Classes that address yoga, meditation, and mindfulness practices](#)
- Email distribution: Outreach letter with hyperlinks

COVID-19 Well-Being Response Offerings | [Academic Medicine, April 2020](#)

Attending to the Emotional Well-being of the Health Care Workforce in a New York City Health Care System During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In this invited commentary, the authors describe how a Mount Sinai Health System Employee, Faculty, and Trainee Crisis Support Task Force used a rapid needs assessment model to capture the concerns of the workforce related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Created in May 2020, the task force consisted of behavioral health, human resources, and well-being leaders from across the Health System. It identified three priority areas central to promoting and maintaining the well-being of the entire Mount Sinai workforce during the pandemic: meeting basic daily needs; enhancing communications for delivery of current, reliable, and reassuring messages; and developing robust psychosocial and mental health support options.

Using a work group strategy, the task force operationalized the roll-out of support initiatives for each priority area. Attending to the emotional well-being of health care workers has emerged as a central element in Mount Sinai's COVID-19 response. The Health System continues to be committed to the physical and emotional needs of a workforce that courageously faces this crisis.

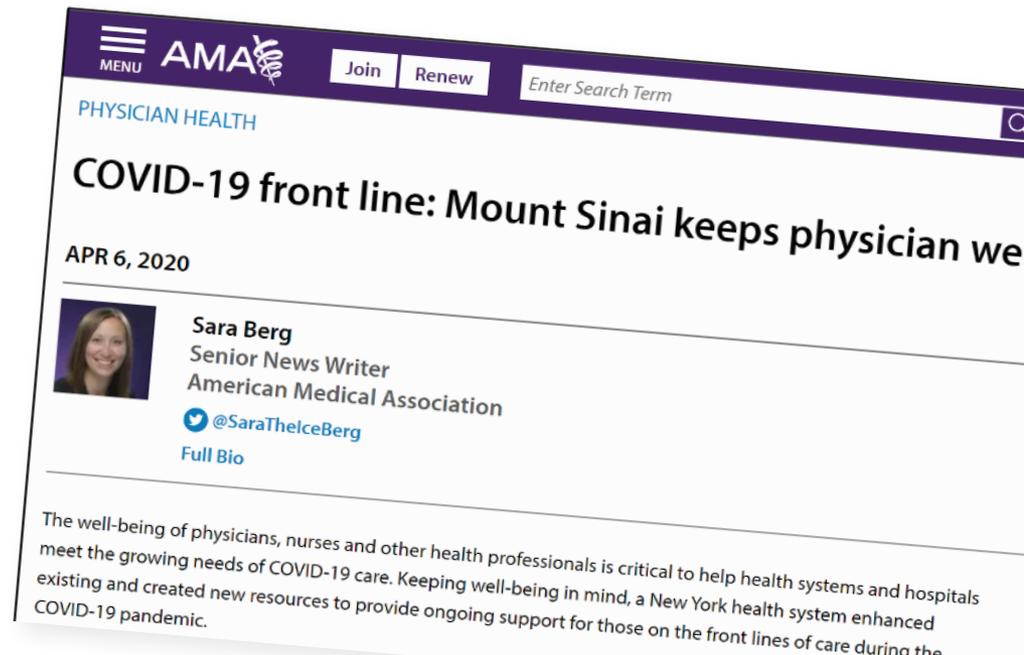


COVID-19 Well-Being Response Offerings | [American Medical Association, April 2020](#)

COVID-19 Front Line: Mount Sinai Keeps Physician Wellbeing in Focus

The well-being of physicians, nurses and other health professionals is critical to helping health systems and hospitals meet the growing needs of COVID-19 care. Keeping well-being in mind, Mount Sinai enhanced existing resources and created new ones to provide ongoing support for those on the front lines of care during the pandemic.

The program addresses everything from basic needs such as child care and food to mental health and supportive counseling. It maintains an up-to-date list of resources for all health professionals and employees, keeping their well-being at the center of focus. With these concerns in mind, Mount Sinai developed resources focused on several areas to improve well-being and reduce added stress on physicians: basic needs, psychosocial needs, and mental health evaluation.



COVID-19 Well-Being Response Offerings | [JAMA, April 2020](#)

Understanding and Addressing Sources of Anxiety Among Health Care Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The rapid spread of COVID-19 and the severity of symptoms it can cause in a segment of infected individuals have acutely taxed the limits of health care systems. Having sufficient ventilators, intensive care unit beds, and other supplies is not helpful unless there is also an adequate workforce. Maintaining an adequate health care workforce in this crisis requires not only a sufficient number of physicians, nurses, advanced practice clinicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and other clinicians, but also maximizing the ability of each clinician to care for a high volume of patients. Everyone must be able to perform to their full potential over an extended time interval while coping with the same societal shifts and emotional stressors everyone else is confronting. Front-line workers also face a greater risk of exposure, extreme workloads, moral dilemmas, and a rapidly evolving practice environment that differs greatly from what they are familiar with.

This article summarizes key considerations for supporting the health care workforce so health care professionals can care for their patients and communities. Few of these considerations and suggestions have substantial evidence to support them; they are based on experience, direct requests from health care professionals, and common sense.



How We Did It

The project is a collaboration of a vast number of departments and programs within the Mount Sinai Health System. These include:

- The Office of Well-Being and Resilience
- The Department of Rehabilitation and Human Performance and the Abilities Research Center
- The Department of Psychiatry
- The Department of Social Work
- Mount Sinai Food Services
- Studio Elsewhere
- Mount Sinai Calm
- Mount Sinai Fit
- Spiritual Care
- Human Resources Employee Assistance Program
- ICARE

In addition, the Joseph F. Cullman, Jr. Institute for Patient Experience provided generous support to this initiative.

We know that our job is not over. We are in this for the long haul. We know that employee stress related to the pandemic will not disappear in an instant. The effects will be long-lasting. And we need to continue to support our front-line workers.

Future Planning

To address the long-term needs of our health care workers and staff, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai has launched the Center for Stress, Resilience, and Personal Growth. The Center will both provide clinical care and conduct research to better understand and treat those who are suffering from the long-term emotional consequences of the pandemic. The multidisciplinary clinical arm will offer screening, psychoeducation, support groups, individual assessments and resilience plans, and referrals for mental health care. The research branch will collect data, conduct longitudinal analyses, identify psychosocial and biological determinants of risk and resilience, and develop evidence-based interventions and novel treatments. The clinical program will be separate from



the research program, and participation in research will be voluntary and not required for receiving clinical care. Research will be led by experts within the Icahn School of Medicine, a world leader in post-traumatic stress disorder research and treatment.

Toolkit Categories

**TO THE HEALTH CARE WORKERS
FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES, THANK YOU.**



mountsinai.org/ways-to-help | #SinaiStrong



Toolkit Categories

Basic Needs and Self Care

Mount Sinai believes it is imperative that the basic needs of our heroic workers are being met. Basic needs encompass a broad range of services, including:

Food provision

Mount Sinai coordinated food donations, often delivered directly to clinical and nonclinical units, as well as grocery runs and some subsidized delivery.

Transportation and parking

Employees received free bike rentals and parking and could use a carpool program and Mount Sinai shuttle. In the midst of the pandemic surge, free parking and other subsidized means of transportation were provided to employees and health care workers.

Housing

Mount Sinai arranged for off-site accommodations, including apartments and hotel rooms, for front-line workers.

Family Resources

Employees were able to use child care options for young children, extracurricular programs and academic support for school-age children, and college application guidance for rising high school seniors. We also provided parenting counseling and support and teletherapy for children.

Self-Care and Stress Management

Mount Sinai offers a range of wellness events and activities, self-care evaluations, and group sessions on yoga, meditation, and mindfulness.

Fitness and Nutrition

Faculty, staff, and students can participate in free personal nutrition consultations and fitness classes.

Personal/Family Personal and Medical Care

Gowns and equipment as well as scrubs machines were made available.

Toolkit Categories

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

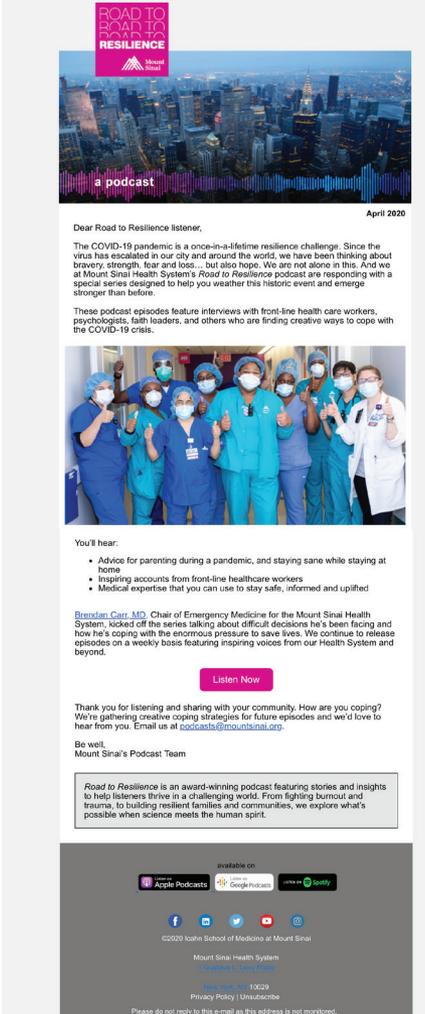
During a time of heightened emotions, we know it is normal for employees to need support. We encourage our employees to seek mental health evaluation and/or treatment or connect with others. To help, we offer a wide array of group discussions, individual support, and extensive spiritual care offerings for our staff members. These offerings included:

Crisis support

We offer in-house and off-site support referrals for health care workers in acute psychological or emotional distress and needing support.

One-on-One Support

Our faculty practice psychiatry and behavioral health programs offer one-on-one support. Psychiatrists, psychologists, nurse practitioners, and social workers provide confidential care through telepsychiatry platforms to all employees, regardless of their health insurance. Students and trainees can access mental health care through our Student and Trainee Mental Health program. We also provide short-term one-on-one counseling through our Employee Assistance Program and consultations with Mount Sinai Calm.



The screenshot shows an email newsletter for the 'Road to Resilience' podcast. At the top, there is a header with the podcast title and a cityscape image. Below the header, the date 'April 2020' is displayed. The main body of the email contains a greeting, an introduction to the podcast series, and a list of topics covered in the episodes. A 'Listen Now' button is prominently featured. At the bottom, there are social media icons for Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify, along with contact information and a privacy policy link.

ROAD TO RESILIENCE
a podcast

April 2020

Dear Road to Resilience listener,

The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime resilience challenge. Since the virus has escalated in our city and around the world, we have been thinking about bravery, strength, fear and loss... but also hope. We are not alone in this. And we at Mount Sinai Health System's Road to Resilience podcast are responding with a special series designed to help you weather this historic event and emerge stronger than before.

These podcast episodes feature interviews with front-line health care workers, psychologists, faith leaders, and others who are finding creative ways to cope with the COVID-19 crisis.



You'll hear:

- Advice for parenting during a pandemic, and staying sane while staying at home
- Inspiring accounts from front-line healthcare workers
- Medical expertise that you can use to stay safe, informed and uplifted

Brendan Carr, MD, Chair of Emergency Medicine for the Mount Sinai Health System, kicked off the series talking about difficult decisions he's been facing and how he's coping with the enormous pressure to save lives. We continue to release episodes on a weekly basis featuring inspiring voices from our Health System and beyond.

[Listen Now](#)

Thank you for listening and sharing with your community. How are you coping? We're gathering creative coping strategies for future episodes and we'd love to hear from you. Email us at podcasts@mountsinai.org.

Be well,
Mount Sinai's Podcast Team

Road to Resilience is an award-winning podcast featuring stories and insights to help listeners thrive in a challenging world. From fighting burnout and trauma, to building resilient families and communities, we explore what's possible when science meets the human spirit.

available on
[Apple Podcasts](#) [Google Podcasts](#) [Spotify](#)

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Mount Sinai Health System

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Please do not reply to this e-mail as this address is not monitored.

Toolkit Categories

Mental Health Liaisons

The Department of Psychiatry has established dedicated Mental Health Liaisons for the staff of emergency departments, intensive care units, and COVID-19 units across the Mount Sinai Health System. The liaisons are psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and mental health counselors who serve as the confidential points of mental health support for all faculty, staff, and trainees in these areas.

Facilitated Group Discussions

- **COVID-19 Theme-Based Virtual Support Groups**

The Department of Psychiatry offers virtual support groups for faculty, staff, and trainees on a variety

of topics. These include Leading in Times of Crisis, Stress Management, Caregiving During COVID, Parents and Families, and Grief and Loss.

- **Team-Based Virtual Group Discussions:**

Group discussions personalized for your team or unit allow participants to connect with colleagues sharing similarly difficult experiences, receive mutual support, and discuss and practice coping strategies.

Experienced clinicians facilitate these sessions via Zoom.

Spiritual Care and Peer Support

The Center for Spirituality and Health Chaplains provide spiritual, religious, and emotional support to people of all

belief systems. They can support you in identifying and living your values; creating rituals to honor milestones; sharing prayers or blessings; exploring your feelings and emotions; thinking about spiritual questions, and other religious needs. Spiritual care offers a variety of programs including one-on-one and group sessions.

Peer Support

For one-on-one peer support to health care workers who have experienced a particularly stressful work-related clinical incident, ICARE can help.

Workers can call and talk through the event confidentially with a peer-support colleague.

Toolkit Categories

Well-Being Tips and Coping Strategies

On-the-Ground Support for Front-Line Workers

We recognize and appreciate the incredible work of our front-line providers. We make a point to thank our workers for all that they do and remind them they are not alone in their efforts. To this end, we offered a variety of types of ground support. This included spaces to recharge, stations to nourish body and mind, and in-person teams to support mental health.

Mental Health Rounding Teams

These teams check in on front-line COVID-19 units and provide immediate support if needed. They are also knowledgeable about other resources and can discuss additional options for emotional and psychological help. The teams conduct in-person rounding several times a week.



These teams routinely conduct rounds at Mount Sinai Brooklyn, Mount Sinai Beth Israel, The Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Morningside, Mount Sinai Queens, and Mount Sinai West. The teams are led by the site chairs/vice chairs of psychiatry for Mount Sinai Beth Israel, Mount Sinai West, and The Mount Sinai Hospital. For Mount Sinai Queens and Mount Sinai Brooklyn, two clinicians and a chaplain provide similar rounding.

Toolkit Categories



Toolkit Categories



Snacks and Well-Being Stations

These stations offer:

- **Snacks and drinks** for pick-up near clinical spaces
- **Seating at proper distancing** for staff to relax for a few minutes when possible
- **Comfort packs** (including amenity kits) for staff working overnight or staying away from family members
- **Information about psychosocial support** and well-being resources for use during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Mount Sinai Paws and Play Facility Dogs**, which provide a moment for employees to relax and play.

We asked all clinicians and staff to maintain social distancing and hand hygiene when visiting Snack Stations.

Toolkit Categories



Front-Line Relief and Well-Being Centers

These centers offer:

- **Interactive recharge rooms**—immersive private spaces that include music, scent, meditative visual elements, seating, lighting, and sound
- **Nourishment** and rest areas
- **Visits** from the Mount Sinai Paws and Play therapy dogs
- **Showers** and bathrooms

We asked all clinicians and staff to maintain social distancing and hand hygiene when visiting Snack Stations.

COVID-19 Podcast Series

These podcasts bring stories and insights to help our front-line workers, and others, thrive in a challenging world. From fighting burnout and trauma to building resilient families and communities, the podcasts explore what is possible when science meets the human spirit. Powered by the best experts in the world. Podcast links include:

- [The Recharge Room](#)
- [Our Finest Hour](#)
- [Signs of Hope](#)
- [How to Stay Sane While Staying at Home](#)
- [Calm through Chaos \(Video promo\)](#)
- [Calm through Chaos \(Podcast\)](#)
- [Pandemic-Proof Parenting Tips](#)
- [The Only Way Out is Through](#)



Wellness

Resilience

Support



For more information, contact owbr@mssm.edu