



MAKING SELF-CARE A PRIORITY

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) links information about all types of violent deaths (including homicides and suicides) - gathering data on the who, when, where, why and how surrounding these deaths. It is the only state-based surveillance system for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico that pools data elements from death certificates, coroner/medical examiner records and law enforcement records into one database.

Data Abstractors play a critical role in the success of NVDRS, as they are responsible for gathering and culling the information surrounding violent deaths from multiple data sources and linking them together in the surveillance system.

Given the gravity of the subject matter of NVDRS, abstractors may be prone to professional burnout and may need strong support and self-care practices to maintain mental wellbeing. In a survey conducted with NVDRS abstractors across the U.S., participants responded that they experienced symptoms of stress, had difficulty in consistently getting enough sleep, and spent less time in social activities. It is important that processes and procedures are in place to assess staff wellbeing, provide ample opportunity for self-care, and connect staff to appropriate resources (e.g., employee assistance programs, counseling services, etc.). Signs of stress and burnout are listed below along with prevention tips and resources to assist with stress management and self-care.

SIGNS OF STRESS AND BURNOUT

- Exhaustion
- Being cynical
- Feeling useless
- Being depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Dizziness
- Indigestion
- Low energy
- Easily agitated
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Constantly worrying
- Increase in or loss of appetite
- Headaches
- High blood pressure

TO HELP PREVENT STRESS AND BURNOUT

- Eat healthy
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough sleep
- Practice mindfulness
- Get regular medical care
- Engage in physical activity you enjoy
- Dress for success
- Take vacations
- Take a break from cell phone and electronics
- Spend time outdoors
- Take care of yourself when sick/fatigued
- Spend time with family and friends
- Maintain relationships
- Treat yourself with kindness
- Read/listen to books and podcasts
- Allow yourself to feel different emotions
- Play – especially with children and pets
- Take time for lunch
- Take breaks
- Set limits
- Balance your workload
- Create a comfortable and inviting workspace
- Delegate and ask for help
- Build resiliency

RESOURCES:

- [Professional Quality of Life \(ProQOL\) Scale](#): the most commonly used measure of the negative and positive effects of helping others who experience suffering and trauma that has subscales for compassion satisfaction, burnout and compassion fatigue.
- [CDC – The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) – website including resources on workplace safety, health topics and research focused on stress at work.
- [Employee Assistance Program](#) – an in-depth guide on free and confidential workplace counseling services offered by companies to support their employee’s well-being in the office and at home.
- [National Recreation and Parks Association](#) – website providing information and access to park and recreation opportunities in sustainable communities across the U.S.
- [Self-Care Plan information and template](#) – resource to assist in developing a self-care plan that is unique to individual needs.
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) – helpline for individuals facing mental and/or substance abuse disorders that provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups and community-based organizations.
- [US Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion—Health.gov](#) - website providing information and access to nutrition and physical activity resources.

[Trauma-Informed Compassion Fatigue Resiliency Webinar](#) – by Charlene Richard, B.S.W., M.S.W., RSW - Founder of Caring Safely® that covers stages of compassion fatigue and sustainable care ([SLIDES](#)).

(This list identifies helpful resources for professionals; it is not an exhaustive list of all resources available. Please share any additional resources with christa.thelen@safestates.org for inclusion.)