Guidance on security measures for frontliners

Psychosocial Security

Psychosocial security in our guide refers to ensuring the psychological and social well-being and safety of frontliners. The psychosocial security of frontliners is another priority that should be focused on, given the nature of their work and the different cases and stressors that they may be subjected to; all of which are further exacerbated in light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Their work, which focuses on human rights of PLHIV and key populations, service provision and follow-up care and support, often exposes frontliners to cases that are suffering from a number of violations, sometimes exposing them to compassion fatigue when they are affected by cases that they are following up on. The effort and dedication that frontliners work with often takes a toll on their emotional and mental health increasing their risks of stress, anxiety, depression, and even burnout, if not equipped with the proper coping skills and psycho-social support to mitigate these risks.

Measures to be taken to ensure psychosocial well-being of frontliners

Frontliners

• **Seek guidance:**
  Request and follow recommendations and procedures regarding physical, social, and well-being; including coping strategies related to stress management, working with KPs, stress related to COVID-19, and general psychosocial guidelines on self-care.

• **Connect for support:**
  Establish a group of peers or colleagues you are able to communicate with easily, to discuss challenges and difficulties that you may be facing on both the work and personal levels.

• **Take a break:**
  Try to establish a routine in which you identify activities that help you to relieve stress and anxiety- whether through exercise, music, spiritual activities, talking to friends, or any other facet. It is important to give yourself a pause/rest especially when you feel that you are becoming emotionally impacted by your work.

• **Watch out for warning signs:**
  Learn and recognize your warning signs - what happens and what do you feel when you are stressed, anxious, or on the verge of a depression.

• **Seek professional help:**
  Ask for help even before your warning signs become apparent. (psychologist, counselor …)

HIV Organizations

• **Provide guidance:**
  Share up-to-date information regarding physical, social, and well-being; including coping strategies related to stress management, working with KPs, stress related to COVID-19 and general psychosocial guidelines on self-care.

• **Provide connections for support:**
  Encourage and initiate psychosocial group sessions for frontliners on a periodical basis. These groups may include the facilitation of a counselor.

• **Ensure a sense of safety:**
  Set certain guidelines for frontliners to follow on self-care. Encourage them to reach out to the organization when facing any challenges or issues to provide them with a sense of security.

Safety & Security definitions

Security relates to intentional harm such as acts of violence, aggression and criminal acts.

Safety relates to unintentional harm or accidents, events, or hazards.

The terms are used interchangeably throughout this guidance document.

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