

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Thank You – And Available Resources if Needed

March 19, 2020

To the UT Southwestern Community:

As efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 increasingly affect essentially all aspects of our work and personal lives, I want to acknowledge the stress that this pandemic has created for all members of the UT Southwestern community – and to thank each and every one of you for your exceptional efforts to confront this unprecedented challenge. We are all greatly indebted to those members of the campus community whose positions have put them at the forefront of enabling UT Southwestern to weather this storm, while also serving the community around us.

I know that no facet of our institution has been untouched, and there has been exceptional work done by colleagues across Academic Affairs, Business Affairs, Communications, and many other areas. A special thanks to all those in Health System Affairs and our health system who have been involved in efforts to prepare to care for affected patients. Indeed, countless faculty and staff have been working tirelessly to provide the leadership, expertise, and operational abilities needed at this time. As a result of everyone's efforts, we have made tremendous progress in our readiness to navigate the turbulent weeks and months to come – to both meet the needs of our patients and sustain all aspects of our institutional mission.

In these times, it is important for each of us to recognize the need to take care of ourselves and our loved ones and to also be attentive to the well-being of the colleagues around us, even if many of those connections have become virtual, with so many members of our community now working from home.

Your well-being is important to us, and we recognize that this COVID-19 pandemic may affect each of us in different ways. With that in mind, **I am very pleased to announce that, thanks to our colleagues in the Department of Psychiatry, we have arranged to offer, effective today, mental health support to any member of the UT Southwestern community through a program designed by faculty experts with previous experience in worldwide epidemics.**

From experience, we know that many employees will experience some degree of time-limited stress in response to COVID-19 and all the disruption associated with it. Most individuals do not require full mental health treatment, but can be helped with support, knowledge, and psychosocial assistance. I encourage all of you who think this assistance might be helpful to avail yourselves of the program outlined below and to encourage those around you who appear to be struggling with our very real current stresses to do the same.

Starting Thursday, March 19, all UTSW faculty and staff may access mental health support by calling [\(214\) 645-5686](tel:2146455686) or emailing behavioralhealthresponseteam@UTSouthwestern.edu. Calls and emails will be answered daily between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

The response team will keep calls and emails confidential and will not share anything outside of the team. The service will not be documented in medical records or EPIC, and you will not be billed.

Any employee who wishes to undergo further mental health evaluation and treatment will be referred for a visit with a provider in the UTSW Psychiatry Clinic for medical management or psychotherapy as appropriate – or to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) office for further help. The Department of Psychiatry will prioritize scheduling employees for patient visits, as appropriate to individual circumstances. If an employee is referred for treatment, that information will be entered into EPIC and billed as usual patient care.

As a reminder, the EAP is also always available to all faculty and staff and can be reached by telephone at [214-648-5330](tel:2146485330); toll-free phone: [800-386-9156](tel:8003869156) or eap@utsouthwestern.edu.

We are living through a generation-defining moment; the situation is a highly dynamic one, and we all must recognize that the coming weeks are likely to bring new difficulties and challenges. However, going through this experience together can ultimately make us even stronger as a community and in our shared commitment to the mission areas of UT Southwestern Medical Center – education, discovery, and healing.

Thank you for your commitment and sacrifice - and for everything you are doing in both your personal life and through your role at UT Southwestern to contribute to containing the spread of COVID-19 and the resolution of this global crisis.

Sincerely,

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center