

Support Information for Health Care Providers* after Adverse Events

(*Previously referred to as Second Victims)

For whom is this document intended?

Healthcare providers (including physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, learners, support personnel, and volunteers) involved in any unanticipated adverse event that involves injury or death to a patient, a medical error, or any clinical event that has caused emotional harm or struggle for the provider.

What are signs that I may have experienced emotional harm?

A provider may:

- Feel personally responsible
- Feel as though they failed the patient
- Second-guess their clinical skills/knowledge
- Worry about how the event may affect their work/career or relationships with colleagues
- Experience significant stress

What are signs of stress?

Stress can manifest in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to):

- Headaches
- Body pain/tension
- Stomach aches or other GI issues
- Fatigue or sleep disturbances
- Anger, irritability, or anxiety
- Guilt or shame
- Inability to concentrate

How can I provide emotional support to providers after adverse events?

- Listen: Listen actively to their experience and their feelings (maintaining a focus on them)
- Validate: Validate and normalize their feelings and any stress-related symptoms they may be experiencing
- Refer: Offer them online and in person resources (e.g., PAS)
- Care: Model self-care, and help identify how they can engage in self-care.

What can I do for self-care after experiencing an adverse event?

- Be compassionate towards yourself, and recognize that the above feelings and symptoms are normal
- Utilize your support network (e.g., colleagues/friends)
- Talk to your manager/supervisor
- Give yourself time and space to process the event
- Care for yourself (e.g., meditate, exercise, take a walk). [More ideas](#)
- Utilize resources (below and attached)

What Duke resources are available for providers after harm events?

(see [Duke Resources sheet](#) for more Duke resources)

- [Personal Assistance Service \(PAS\)](#): one-on-one counseling, up to 8 sessions, 919-416-1727
- [Employee Occupational Health and Wellness](#) (EOHW), 919-684-3136
- [Peer Support Program](#)
- [Coping Card](#) with strategies and resources
- Local chaplains or social workers