

COVID Updates DMH

Monday March 23, 2020

Dear DMH family,

Welcome to the first day of 4th term! Today reflects an enormous amount of rapid activity over the last 10 days to prepare for an unprecedented virtual term for the school. I want to specifically thank our instructors and TAs who spent time during spring break preparing for new modes of teaching. I also want to recognize the incredible resilience of our students who are facing these new modes of learning. The activity has demonstrated your passion for teaching, for learning, and for mental health. If you have any challenges with zoom or internet, please let Judy Bass know and she can help find a solution.

Also, our department Wednesday noon seminars begin again this Wednesday. This is an important way for us to all stay in touch, so please join via zoom: <https://jh.zoom.us/j/336626111> ! It is wonderful to see your faces and for the presenters to have interactive opportunities with you. **Pi-Ju (Marian) Liu, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Purdue University, will be presenting ***Telling the Story of Adult Protective Services | [Add to Outlook](#)***.

In Friday's update, I mentioned the importance of promoting our own mental health and the health of others during this challenging time. Uncertainty is a natural stressor, and symptoms of anxiety and depression can be amplified during a time of crisis. Everyone is susceptible to these psychological responses, and those with chronic mental health conditions are at even greater risk. As I mentioned in previous updates, we have established a *Covid-19 Mental Health Task Force* with faculty, staff, student and post-doc representation to identify and share strategies to proactively address mental and behavioral health challenges. We have put together a set of guidance and resource suggestions to help departments and programs promote mental wellness during this time. The overarching goals are to:

1. Provide easily accessible information about services available
2. Provide tools for self-care
3. Provide communications that directly address mental health and stigma
4. Find ways of listening to those affected, so that we stay on top of issues

With this in mind, we have started several initiatives:

- A. **Guidance for programs:** We will provide some specific suggestions for departments and programs on an ongoing basis.
- B. **Spreadsheet of resources.** We have created a [repository of resources as a Google sheet](#) that anyone can access. (Please note, this is a long list, so smaller, topical sets of resources have also been prepared, see C below).
- C. **Specific messaging.** We have prepared small "vignettes" that highlight a few resources at a time, generally around a specific theme. We plan to disseminate these via social media in small doses repeated over time, and to also provide links on SPH websites. We encourage departments to amplify these through their own messages.
- D. **Listening.** We will monitor concerns/feedback to help guide resources and school responses in ways that best serve our faculty, staff, and students/post-doctoral fellows.

- E. **Interactive.** We are planning to develop webinars and other interactive sessions on specific mental health topics related to COVID response.
- F. **Training.** We are considering optional training opportunities for psychological first aid for faculty, staff, and students. There are already freely available online trainings, but these may need to be tailored to specific audiences in our school.

The first “vignette” (item C) is [here](#). Please seek care for yourself or others in this challenging time. I have found several of these resources to be extremely valuable to me personally. Stay tuned for more to come from the task force via our department communications and via twitter.

Thank you all for your continued commitment to public mental health. Please continue to reach out with any questions or concerns. We are eager to help.

Warmly,

Dani