



**BLOOMBERG** | City  
HARVARD Leadership  
Initiative

# Addressing Stress and Mental Health

Kimberlyn Leary

**What should mayors understand about the mental health of their communities during this crisis?**

**What can mayors do to support the mental health of their communities?**

**How can mayors manage their own stress and that of their teams?**

# When Should You Worry About Stress and Anxiety?

- Under ordinary conditions, they serve as signals.
- Stress can become traumatic when people face events that are negative, uncontrollable, ambiguous, unpredictable and require continuous adaptation.





**What are you worried about  
regarding mental health in your city?**

# The Early Data Signals of COVID-19

from Digital Mental Health

**TalkSpace:** Volume is up ~25% since the middle of February.

**BetterHelp:** Number of new users on its service has spiked; users about stress and anxiety has doubled compared to last year.

**Crisis Text Line:** Message volume has risen by 116 percent, with callers using words like “scared,” ‘terrified,’ ‘overwhelmed,’ ‘panicking,’ and ‘paranoid.’”

# COVID-19 and Parental Stress

- Half of parents (50%) surveyed are worried they can't afford to pay bills or that money will run out.
- A majority of parents (61%) shouted, yelled or screamed at their children at least once in the past 2 weeks.
- About 1 in 5 (20%) spanked or slapped their child at least once in the past 2 weeks.
- Parents reported they have yelled or screamed at their children more often (19%) or increased discipline (15%) since the Coronavirus pandemic.



STRESS AND PARENTING  
DURING THE CORONAVIRUS  
PANDEMIC  
Shawna J. Lee & Kaitlin P. Ward

# Domestic Violence Is On The Rise



## Some cities see jumps in domestic violence during the pandemic

By Casey Tolan, CNN

🕒 Updated 10:37 AM ET, Sat April 4, 2020

“Of the 20 large metropolitan police departments that provided data to CNN, nine saw double-digit percentage jumps in domestic violence cases or 911 calls in March, either compared to the previous year or to earlier months in 2020.”

# Healers Are at Risk



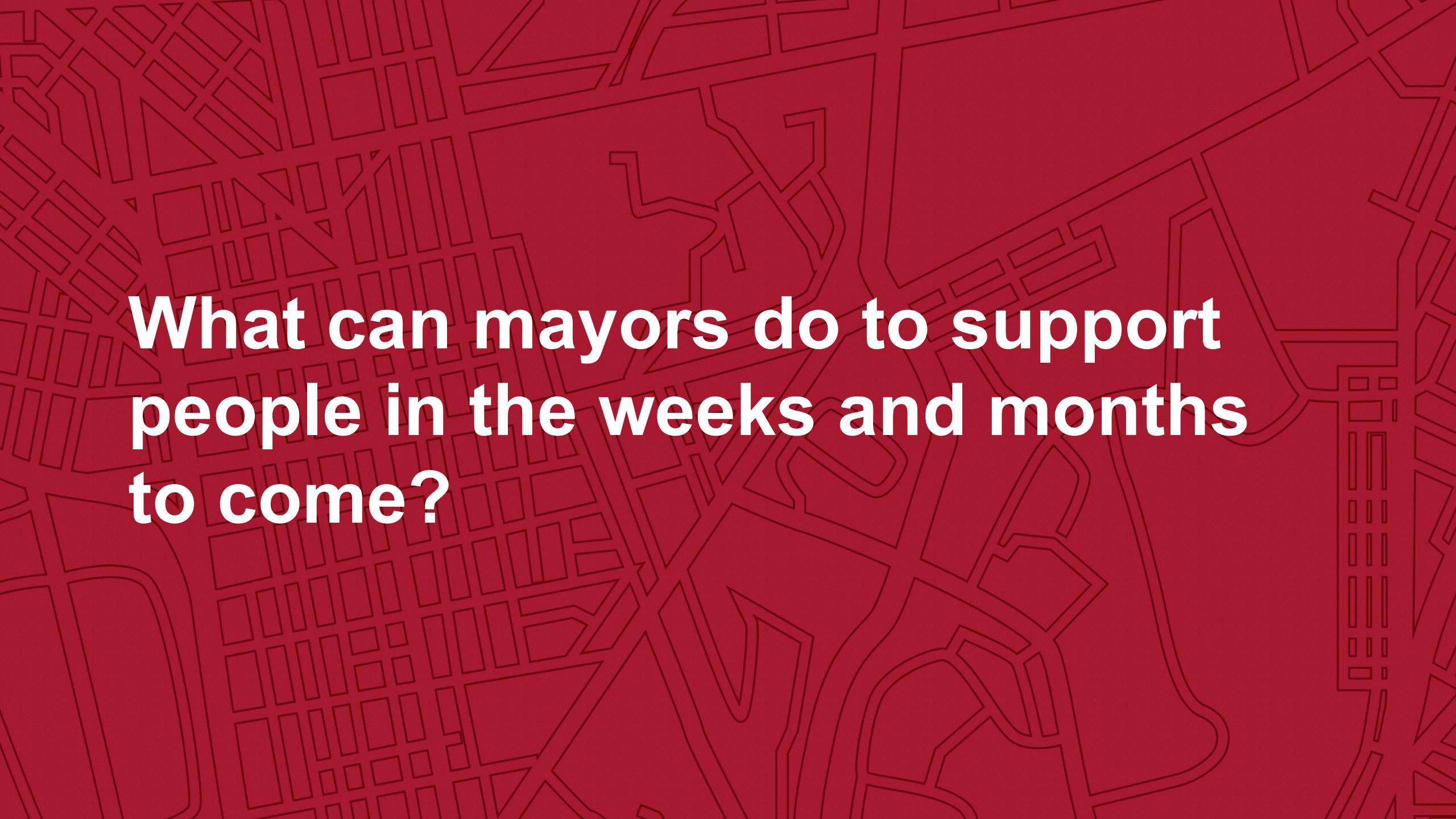
## Mental Health Needs of Health Care Workers Providing Frontline COVID-19 Care

John Z. Ayanian, MD, MPP<sup>1,2</sup>

JAMA Health Forum™

# **Mental health and stress conditions are treatable**

... and people can get treatment under stay-at-home conditions.



**What can mayors do to support  
people in the weeks and months  
to come?**

# Mental Health Supports Should be Leveraged

- **Universal Supports for Positive Coping** (WHO, CDC, SAMHSA, etc.)
- **Tele-mental Health Access**
  - Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act 2020:  
Allows Medicare beneficiaries to receive telehealth
  - Mandated telehealth coverage/parity by state governors or legislatures
  - Relaxed interjurisdictional tele-mental health regs by state boards
- **Crisis Hot-lines**
  - Disaster Distress Helpline, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Crisis Text Line, Veterans Crisis Line
- **“Warm-lines”**
  - Non-crisis emotional support telephone lines staffed by peer volunteers

# Key Responsibilities of Leaders

## Messaging

- Amplify social distancing *and* alternative social connectivity (#AloneTogether); acknowledge link between economics and mental health concerns; amplify positive stories

## Augment Access and Capacity

- Continuously update mental health resources & seek new opportunities (e.g. pastoral care helplines); outreach to vulnerable populations; partner with disaster mental health professionals

# Key Responsibilities of Leaders

## Mitigate Stigma

- Normalize mental health concerns & encourage help-seeking; employ mindful language (“People with Covid-19” not “Covid cases”)

## Honor the Unspeakable

- Lead communities in grieving; speak honestly about losses; support new culturally-sensitive rituals



**How can mayors better recognize  
and deal with their own levels of  
stress?**

# A Short Check List for Tracking Your Stress

- **Thinking:** Being easily distracted, unable to concentrate
- **Emotions:** Trouble relaxing, feeling irritable
- **Body:** Increase or decrease of energy, feeling restless, sweating, headaches, appetite and sleep changes
- **Behavior:** Blaming others or getting into arguments





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