

Saskatchewan College of Psychologists

Memorandum

March 30, 2020

To: All Members

From: Karen Messer-Engel, M.A., R. Psych., Executive Director / Registrar

RE: **Pro Bono - Psychological Support for Health Care Workers and the Public List**

As COVID19 spreads, the healthcare system will increasingly be taxed. Healthcare workers are called to put themselves and potentially their loved ones in harm's way and are currently pressed to work in less than ideal conditions. The longer the threat continues, the greater the negative impact on those at the front line of the effort to treat the disease, and on their loved ones. We also know that for the general public this is a very frightening and uncertain time. The profession is not involved in treating the disease directly however in the coming weeks and months will have an increasingly important role to play in addressing the mental health impacts of the pandemic. Psychological support and treatment will be essential for frontline workers, their families, and for members of the public who are struggling to cope with what is occurring. As the disease spreads, and individuals are being laid off from their jobs, the financial resources to access mental health services for many must take a back seat to food and housing security. In addition, with the scope of this crisis, publicly funded mental health services will be also taxed to meet the demand.

In anticipation of the College being asked to mobilize the profession to help address the mental health needs of frontline health providers, as well as the general public, **the College is hoping as a first step to establish a list of members of the profession with a Clinical and/or Counselling Psychology competency who would be willing and able to provide psychological services to those in need pro bono.** The nature, scope, and duration of the service would be the psychologist's determination and not the College's. That said it is encouraged that service provision in general be carried out where possible via tele-means congruent with the current state of emergency directive to avoid in-person contact where possible, and to practice physical distancing. It is also understood that if one agrees to be listed that this does not mean that one is committing to taking everyone who may contact them, or to waiving their fee indefinitely. This will not be a referral by the College, rather simply a listing of available members of the profession.

I do recognize that this is a "big ask" as many members of the profession are also currently experiencing job layoffs, financial hardship, family concerns and increased stress as a result of the pandemic. **If you are unable to offer pro bono services but are available to offer paid services please also let the College know, and a list will be established.** Our profession is one of service and giving, and that service is necessary in good times and essential in difficult times. I thank each of you for all you do for the public on a daily basis. It is so important and so valuable!

If you are able to assist with this request please respond to it via email. Your name and contact information will be put on a list that would be shared with members of the public should a request be made and will be shared with the Sask. Health Authority for their frontline workers who are in need. CPA also has put out a call to their membership to donate time and expertise to frontline workers in need of mental health support and services. CPA's list can be found at <https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/pro-bono/#Saskatchewan>.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I hope that you and your loved ones remain well and safe!

Karen Messer-Engel, M.A., R. Psych.
ED / Registrar