

# Ethical Action amid COVID-19

## **Program Description**

The concept of moral distress originated in the field of nursing to describe the results when external forces prohibit professionals from carrying out proper actions. It can lead to job withdrawal, learned helplessness, moral disengagement, and an array of physical and emotional conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020 has given rise to unprecedented conditions affecting the demand for health and social services and the professionals' capacities to respond. This session will examine the phenomenon of work-related moral suffering, examine examples emerging from international research on social work in the time of COVID, and describe moral courage and ethical action as strategies to mitigate the occurrence and effects of moral distress.

## **Program Objectives**

At the conclusion of this session participants will:

1. Outline definitions and causes of moral distress;
2. Explain the ethical dilemmas and causes of distress related to COVID-19;
3. Discuss insights into international comparisons of pandemic-related distress;
4. Examine moral courage, role models for moral courage, and the barriers to acting ethically;
5. Name eight tools that can assist change agents in standing up for ethical principles;
6. List resources for responding to moral distress, generally and in relation to the pandemic.

## **Target Audience**

Physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, counselors, substance abuse professionals, case managers, adult clinicians, therapists, and others working with adults who have experienced trauma.

## **Contact Hours**

4.0 hours

## **Program Agenda**

10 minutes – Introductions and overview

15 minutes – Sharing COVID-19 practice experiences

60 minutes – Review the definitions of moral distress, moral courage, and related concepts

30 minute – Presentation and discussion of positive and negative exemplars of moral courage and the barriers to acting on principle

30 minutes – Review and discuss findings from COVID ethics study

20 minutes – Identify opportunities for action

15 minutes – Case Vignette discussion

45 minutes – Present tactics for ethical action and apply to case vignettes throughout

15 minutes – Wrap-up Q & A

**Kim J. Strom-Gottfried, MSW, LISW, PhD**, is originally from the state of Maine. She is trained as a social worker, with experience in adult mental health and crisis services. She

received her Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Strom has been a social work educator for over 30 years, teaching in the areas of direct practice and educational leadership. Her research is on moral courage and ethics. She is Principal Investigator of the UNC School of Social Work behavioral healthcare contract and Director of UNC – Chapel Hill Office of Ethics and Policy. She is internationally recognized for training, consultation, and scholarship on ethical practice and ethical action.