

Moral Distress Amid COVID-19

Program Description

The concept of moral distress is not new. Originating in the field of nursing, it describes the effects 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 social work services and the profession's capacity 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 discuss options to mitigate the occurrence and effects of moral distress.

Program Objectives

Upon completion of this program participants will be able to:

1. Site the definitions and causes of moral distress;
 2. Outline ethical dilemmas and causes of distress related to COVID-19;
 3. Explain insights into international comparisons of pandemic-related distress;
 4. List resources for responding to moral distress, generally and in relation to the pandemic.
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Target Audience

Clinicians, case managers, social workers, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, educators, advocates, health and human service practitioners

Program Agenda

5 minutes – Introductions and overview

15 minutes – Sharing COVID-19 practice experiences

40 minutes – Review the definition research findings on moral distress and related concepts

30 minutes – Review and discuss findings from COVID ethics study

15 minutes – Steps and resources for preventing and addressing moral distress in the pandemic era

15 minutes – Case application, Q & A, closing thoughts

Contact Hours

2.0 to 4.0 hours

Faculty

Dr. Kim Strom is the Smith P. Theimann, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Professional Practice at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Dr. Strom teaches in the areas of direct practice, education, and human resource management. Her scholarly interests involve ethics, moral courage, and social work education. She is the former chair of the National Association of Social Workers' National Committee on Inquiry and is active in training, consultation and research on ethics and social work practice. She has written over 60 articles, monographs and chapters on ethics and practice. She is the author of *Straight Talk about Professional Ethics* and *The Ethics of Practice with Minors: High Stakes and Hard Choices* and the forthcoming text *Cultivating Courage*. Dr. Strom-Gottfried is also the co-author of the texts *Best of Boards, Direct*

Social Work Practice and Teaching Social Work Values and Ethics: A Curriculum Resource. Dr. Strom also held an appointment as the UNC Institute for the Arts and Humanities Associate Director for the Academic Leadership Program, which helps prepare and support the next generation of academic leaders. Currently, she serves as Principal Investigator of the UNC School of Social Work behavioral healthcare contract, and has been recently appointed by the chancellor to serve as Director of the UNC - Chapel Hill Office of Ethics Education and Policy Management.