

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER TEAMS

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Lead by example by being a good role model. Create a sense of belonging through regular team meetings. Talk openly about stress and the demands of the work. This supports volunteers to feel safe when expressing their feelings. Make yourself available to individual volunteers and respect confidentiality. Reach out to volunteers you feel may need additional support.

PEER SUPPORT

Volunteers or staff members who are trained in Psychological First Aid, may like to become a 'Peer supporter'. Peer supporters are trained to assess the needs of team members in distress, to supportively listen and to refer. Regularly discuss basic self-care tips and positive coping strategies.

CHECK-INS AMONGST VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers are given a 'Buddy'. Each buddy checks in with the other at the beginning and end of each day or shift. The buddy is the first person a volunteer contacts in case of problems. Ask how volunteers have managed difficult experiences in past shifts.

TEAM COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Create instant messaging groups (e.g., Telegram, Facebook or WhatsApp groups) to enable teams to easily communicate with each other. Insist that communication platforms should be for information sharing, communication purposes and for positive messages only. Discuss with volunteers how to handle interest from the media and communications teams.

TEAM MEETINGS AND VOLUNTEER TEAM MANAGEMENT

Start each shift with a short meeting. Rotate volunteers in frontline roles with volunteers in support roles. This can help manage feelings of overwhelm and expose volunteers to a variety of tasks. Pair more experienced volunteers with new volunteers. Inform volunteers that they can decline tasks if they do not feel capable. Prepare volunteers for challenging tasks of witnessing death, distress, and supporting for bereaved and separated families.

APPRECIATION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF MEMBERS

Show appreciation and thank the volunteers at team meetings and at the end of the day or shift. Send volunteers messages of appreciation for their work and time and arrange opportunities for teams to gather. Celebrate team and individual successes however small.