



Info sheet COVID 19

Remote Psychological First Aid

Area of intervention
MHPSS

Key objectives
To present Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) and how it can be adapted to COVID 19 context.

Audience
Frontline workers

Key considerations

Psychological first aid (PFA) is a method of helping people in distress so they feel calm and supported to cope better with their challenges. This approach can be used by all frontlines in a proactive or reactive modality.



PFA is ...

- Providing **non-intrusive, practical** care and support
- assessing **needs** and concerns
- helping people to address **basic needs**
- **listening to people**, but not pressuring them to talk
- comforting people and helping them to **feel calm**
- helping people **connect** to information, services and social supports
- protecting people from further harm.

PFA is NOT ...

- Something that only professionals can do
- **Counselling or therapy**
- A **detailed discussion** of the event
- Asking someone to **analyze** what happened to them or to put time and events in order
- **Pressuring people** to tell you their feelings and reactions to an event
- **Having all the answers** to questions or being able to provide all the things someone needs.

Who can benefit from PFA in the context of COVID 19 ?

Many will be anxious and afraid and those directly affected in different ways by the virus may be in greater panic, fear and worry. **Everyone may benefit** from PFA at some point, however, remote PFA services can **be provided more specifically to**:

- **Self-quarantined persons** in homes, hotels or appointed facilities,
- **Health workers and social welfare responders** providing care and treatment to patients,
- People who have **recovered from COVID-19**,
- **Families and friends of deceased**,
- **Caregivers** with children at homes due to closure of schools,
- **Older adults** and other groups who may find themselves isolated,
- Other groups **with previous vulnerabilities** such as mental health or substance abuse problems.



How to adapt PFA in the context of COVID19 ?

PFA consists of four types of actions, which historically have included Prepare, Look, Listen and Link. Because of the nature of a pandemic, **“Look” has been changed to “Engage”** to cover the ways in which you may connect with people.

PFA can be offered either **through communication tools that allow for visual or only auditive contact**. *When offering PFA without visual contact, it is even more important to:*
speak slowly, clearly and calmly
*to communicate with empathy and warmth through **modulating the voice**.*





PFA Core Actions Guidance

PREPARE



Plan for how you will engage with people during the pandemic, including appropriate safety measures and privacy.

- Determine all possible options of communication
- Choose a communication method
- Make sure clients consent to the method of communication and understand any privacy limitations.

Organize what information, resources, and supports you might offer.

- Educate yourself about COVID 19
- Try to gather contacts, referral pathways, sources of information in your own context

ENGAGE



Contact: Think about how you will initiate contact, or respond to contact, in a way that helps build trust and rapport.

- An open-ended question such as, "How are you doing?" is often a simple and sufficient prompt.

Information Gathering: Determine what questions you might ask that are non-intrusive, compassionate, and helpful to identify needs and concerns, gather additional information, and tailor PFA interventions.

- You can use the [Client Safety Planning](#) developed by IRC.

LISTEN



Calm and Stabilize: Utilize active listening skills to calm and orient people who may be overwhelmed or fearful.

- Common listening techniques that helpers can use include : Silence, Paraphrase, Validate, Anticipatory guidance, Recognize...

Safety: Pay attention to immediate and ongoing safety issues, including if the person is not able to function at this time.

- A key is often to look at the Intensity, Frequency, and Duration of a common reaction.
- You can ask things like : What does this look like for you? How often is this happening ? How long has this been happening ?

LINK



Social Supports: Encourage brief or ongoing contacts with primary support persons and other sources of support, including family members, friends, and community helping resources.

Information and Services: Provide accurate information on COVID-19 and available services needed at this time or in the future.

Encourage Positive Coping Strategies: Help clients identify coping skills and/or strategies to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning.

Sources and for more details

<https://rescue.app.box.com/s/gyyamhkhznhiqpe9g8w32yiw6ro0u34>

<https://pscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IFRC-PS-Centre.-Remote-PFA-during-a-COVID-19-outbreak.-Final.-ENG.pdf>

<https://childhub.org/en/series-of-child-protection-materials/support-pandemic-times>