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HEALTH UPDATE: Orlando Mass Shooting Tragedy

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SITUATIONAL UPDATE

The tragic mass shooting at a LGBTQ club in Orlando, Florida, on June 12th has impacted many of us. San Francisco Department of Public Health is committed to supporting the community in coping with the aftermath of this traumatic event. The following information is provided to enhance the ability of providers to meet the needs of their patients.

Providers are encouraged to incorporate the following in their efforts help support healthy responses to trauma:

- **Regulation** – Traumatic events can signal a neuro-biological process known as “fight, flight or freeze” and recognizing this reaction is the first step in self-regulation. Strategies to promote to patients include taking deep breaths, mindfulness practice, and physical exercise to slow and metabolize the body’s hyper-arousal. Encourage connecting with calming loved-ones as a way to re-center and decrease stress.
- **Reflection** – People have a natural need to find meaning in their experiences. Traumatic events are often marked by feelings of helplessness, senselessness and chaos. Remind patients that tragic events also include stories of heroes, helpers and human beings reaching out to support and guide others. Create a space to slow down and consider multiple aspects of an event to help gain perspective.
- **Relationships** – Isolation can be a natural response to trauma and it is often hardest to connect with others when we need it the most. Providers can act as a source of calm and caring, which can be a vehicle for healing. Take time to connect with your patients.
- **Reasoning** – The body’s neuro-biological response to trauma can interrupt the ability to think clearly and understand connections. In times of crisis people are wired to react with very little information. Regulation and Reflection are key elements in re-gaining the ability to engage in healthy decision-making.

Additional information on trauma-informed principles can be found at: <http://www.t2bayarea.org/about/mission.html>.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS

1. **Acute posttraumatic stress** may be evident even among persons not directly impacted by the event. Persons who identify with the victims, have high exposure to media coverage, or who are already in a vulnerable psychiatric state may be at increased risk. Be aware of patients who may need extra support during this time.
2. **Help is available.** Encourage staff and community members who may be struggling to cope with the impact of this traumatic event to get support. Staff can get support through local employee assistance programs. San Francisco residents can find help at 1-888-246-3333.
3. **Difficult conversations** across both personal and professional contexts may arise. Resources are available to help you talk about trauma with your patients and to help families discuss these events with their children. See: http://www.cdc.gov/masstrauma/factsheets/professionals/coping_professional.pdf and <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA12-4732/SMA12-4732.pdf>.
4. **Threats to safety**, including actual or perceived threats toward vulnerable or protected groups, should be taken seriously. Encourage individuals who are being threatened or victimized to contact the San Francisco Police Department at 415-553-0123 for assistance.

Categories of urgency levels

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action