



Managing Stress in Staff and Constituents During a Crisis

April 17, 2020 · 3pm Eastern/12pm Pacific

Note: Audio is only available via computer, not telephone because of security restrictions in using webinar software on congressional equipment.

Part of the “Life in Congress” Project by:



Presenters

Brad Fitch

President & CEO

Congressional Management Foundation

BFitch@CongressFoundation.org

202-516-5556



Rep. Brian Baird (D-WA)

6-term Member of the U.S. House
of Representatives (1999-2011)

Ph.D., Clinical Psychology



Goals of the Program

- Strategies and communication skills for dealing with emotional constituents
- Ways of managing personal emotions in this stressful time
- Resources to turn to for support and other key tools for managing this crisis and serving the public effectively

Challenges Facing Us All

- The nation
 - 632,000+ cases; 31,000+ deaths
- The district
- Your constituents
- Your staff
- Yourself

Poll 1

Currently, how many of your staff & constituent interactions are related to the health/economic implications of COVID-19?

- Most of our interactions (75% or more)
- More than half of our interactions (50%-75%)
- Less than half of our interactions (25%-50%)
- Few of our interactions (25% or less)

The Importance of Your Work

- The world has changed and our normal ways of operating have to change
- You will be dealing with death
- You will be responding to people who are suffering, angry, frightened, who have lost everything including family members and dreams
- You are vital now more than ever

The Importance of Your Work

- You have to take care of each other
- You have to take care of yourself
- You probably have to develop and apply new skills
- This is going to be hard work for a long time but it MATTERS
- You CAN do this

Practical Suggestions

- Consider shifting resources to casework
- Train the whole team rapidly on what is and is not available
- Know what the stimulus package included and how to access information (but for goodness sake don't make this political)
- Know what other resources are available federally and locally and build relationships

Poll 2

Which of the following do you personally experience on a daily or near daily basis? (Click all that apply)

- Wanting to do more for constituents who lost jobs/businesses
- Feeling the emotional pain of constituents w/health concerns
- Fear for my own health or the health of my loved ones
- Worries about my personal financial future
- A sense that the world has changed/uncertainty about future

The 6R Model of Communication

1. Readiness
2. Receiving
3. Relating
4. Reasoning
5. Responding
6. Repeating

The 6R Model of Communication

1. Readiness

- Quieting your mind
- Holding the habitual responses
- Meeting people where they are

The 6R Model of Communication

2. Receiving

- Not just listening
- Taking in everything the person is saying and feeling

The 6R Model of Communication

3. Relating

- This may be the most important thing you do to help
- Feeling what they feel and letting them know you do
- The power of listening, silence and reflecting

The 6R Model of Communication

4. Reasoning

- Think before you speak

The 6R Model of Communication

5. Responding

- Deciding what the best response is
- What does this person need most right now from you
- How you say things is as important as what you say

The 6R Model of Communication

6. Repeating

- The cycle of Rs is ongoing

Taking Action But Managing Expectations

- Knowing well exactly what you can and can't do but doing absolutely everything you can
- Building connections with those who can help

Poll 3

Since the outbreak, have you learned of or noticed staff showing signs of stress or displaying feelings of being overwhelmed?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Congressional Staff Comments

Question: How are you doing? What's on your mind?

“Each day is a new adjustment either to work load, constantly changing circumstances, or general unknowns.”

“Difficult prioritizing all the challenges constituents are facing right now.”

“Okay, but stressed and sometimes annoyed with sick husband.”

Secondary Traumatization

- What is secondary trauma?
 - A set of emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioral reactions to working with people who have experienced traumatic events.
- What are the signs?
 - Feelings of sadness, anxiety, frustration, tension, helplessness.
 - Sleep disturbance, fatigue and sometimes isolation or even confusion can also happen along with deeper questions about life and the world.

Self Care

- Physical health (and safety)
- Breaks from the phone or screen
- Healthy food
- Spiritual health prayer/meditation/other
- Cognitive health
- Family and loved one care

Team Care

- Challenges of supporting your team remotely
- Increased importance of supporting your team
- Keys to helping remotely (6Rs)
- Ethics
- Building a lasting culture of support
- Being a resource for others

U.S. Senate Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- **Goal & Mission:** Increase resiliency throughout the Senate community by helping to support happy, healthy and productive employees in DC and in State offices
- **Free & Confidential Services:**
 - Individual assessment, short term, solution focused intervention and referral services for the full array of personal and work issues that may be impacting an employee
 - Assist managers and supervisors with navigating through challenging workplace issues
- **Contact:** 202-224-3902, <http://webster.senate.gov/eap/>

U.S. House of Representatives Office of Employee Assistance

- Free & Confidential Consultation, Counseling and Information for the House community
- Management Consultation
- Executive Coaching
- Transition/Career Planning
- Training, Presentations and Retreat Facilitation
- Critical Incident Response: Organizational consultation and Management of crises impacting DC and District offices
- House Wellness Center

202-225-2400 · employee.assistance@mail.house.gov

Information available on HouseNet.house.gov under Personnel

The long struggle, the long vision

Q&A

Rep. Brian Baird

Kristin Welsh-Simpson

Senate Employee Assistance Program

Liz McBride

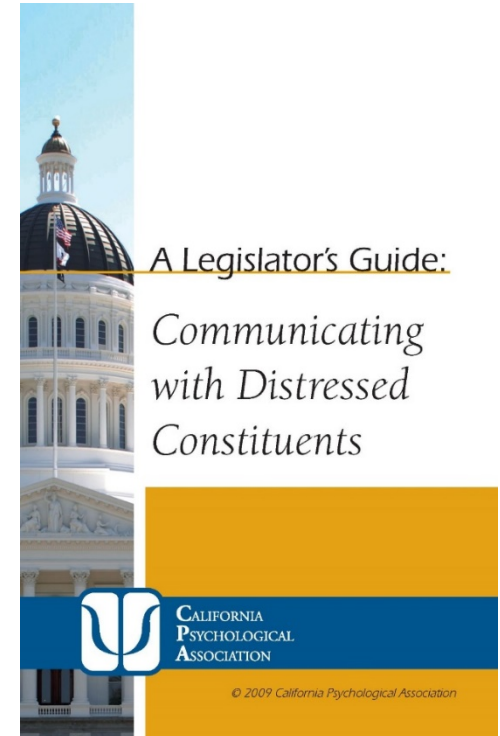
House Office of Employee Assistance

Conclusion

Evaluation and Additional Resources

Additional Resources/Handouts

- CPA Guide: *Communicating with Distressed Constituents*
- CMF Handout: *Casework Burnout & Stress*
- House & Senate training and EAP/OEA offices offer variety of services & programs – check intranets for more info



SHRM COVID-19 Resources

Visit

<https://pages.shrm.org/covid-19-resources>

for

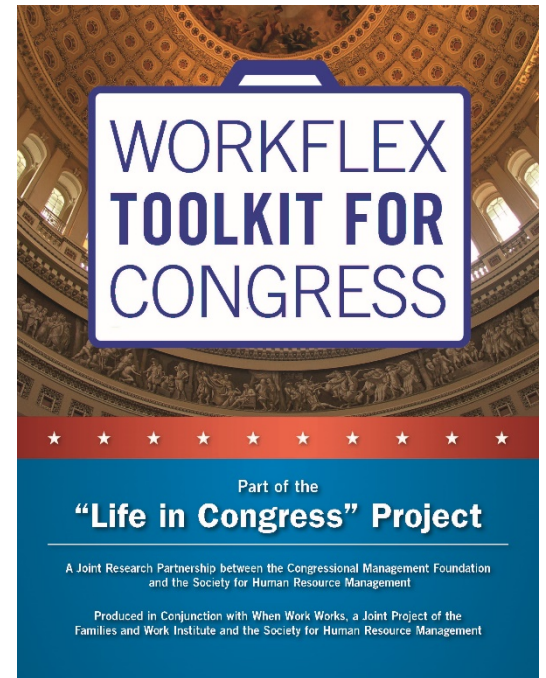
Coronavirus and COVID-19 Resources

and

Government Response and Resources

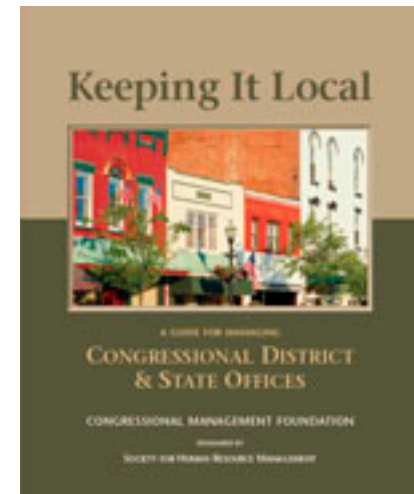
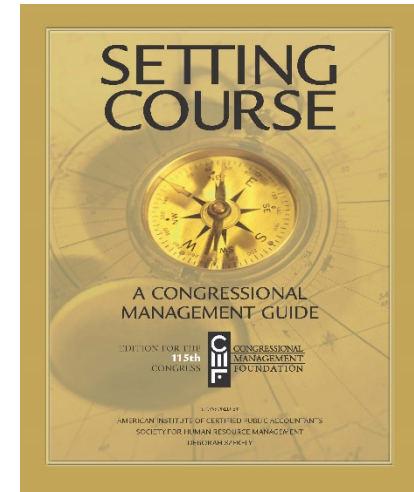
“Life in Congress” Reports

- *Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate*
- *The Member Perspective*
- *Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff*
- ***Workflex Toolkit for Congress***
- *Congressional Benefits & Personnel Practices*



Complimentary Management Guidebooks

- *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*
- *Keeping It Local: A Guide for Congressional District/State Offices*





Managing Stress in Staff and Constituents During a Crisis

April 17, 2020 · 3pm Eastern/12pm Pacific

Part of the “Life in Congress” Project by:

