

# FREE

## Faculty Resources for Educational Excellence



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## Supporting Each Other's Well-Being: A Vital Focus During the Holidays

By **Sarah Harendt, PhD, MS**

*Manager, Education & Faculty Development, Office of Continuing Professional Development*

*Teaching Excellence Academy for Collaborative Healthcare (TEACH)  
Carilion Clinic & Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine*

& **Kim Butterfield, MPH**

*Well-Being Manager, Carilion Clinic*

The holiday season, while often joyous, can bring heightened stress, emotional challenges, and burnout—particularly for faculty. Balancing patient care, teaching responsibilities, research, and personal obligations can become overwhelming. Recognizing and supporting the well-being of colleagues during this period is not just compassionate but essential for maintaining a thriving professional community.

For some, the holidays coincide with increased patient loads due to seasonal illnesses, end-of-year administrative deadlines for others, and sometimes limited staffing. Simultaneously, personal expectations—family gatherings, financial pressures, or even grief—can weigh heavily. A study by West et al. highlights that these stressors often compound pre-existing burnout, a pervasive issue in healthcare and academia.<sup>1</sup>

Monitoring and supporting one another can mitigate these pressures. Research indicates that workplace social support can buffer stress and improve job satisfaction, even in high-demand professions.<sup>2</sup> Simple actions such as checking in with colleagues or expressing gratitude can significantly improve morale.

We can promote well-being by creating a culture of openness where struggles are normalized, not stigmatized. Discussing well-being openly in meetings or offering

resources can foster an environment where seeking help feels safe and encouraged. Multiple support options exist within our organization and are listed below.

Here are some signs you can watch for that indicate a colleague may need support:

- Increased irritability or emotional withdrawal.
- Missed deadlines or meetings.
- Physical symptoms, such as fatigue or changes in appearance.

Addressing concerns early and compassionately—perhaps with a private conversation expressing care and offering support—can make a significant difference.

Supporting each other during the holidays is more than a seasonal act; it builds resilience and camaraderie within the organization. By fostering a culture of care, we ensure not only our own well-being but also that of our learners and patients, making the entire system stronger.

If you or a colleague needs support, please reach out to one of the resources below:

- The **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is a voluntary, confidential service providing professional counseling and referral services designed to help you with your personal or job-related challenges. To request support as a Carilion Clinic employee, please call 1-800-992-1931 or 540-981-8950 or 540-231-8878 as a VTCSOM employee. You will be connected to an EAP consultant, who are all licensed or license-eligible providers. All EAP records are kept strictly confidential.
- VTCSOM employees can access [TimelyCare](#) which provides full-time faculty, staff, and non-student wage employees with 24/7 unlimited on-demand mental health support via phone or video through the TalkNow feature. Additional well-being resources are available through [Hokie Wellness](#).
- If you are a resident or fellow looking for well-being support or a manager wishing to refer a trainee in need of support, please call or text **GME Well-being Manager Lindsay McKinnon** at 540-728-0116 or email [ldmckinnon@carilionclinic.org](mailto:ldmckinnon@carilionclinic.org).
- Whether you're facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, or just need someone to talk to, **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** counselors are here for you. You are not alone. You can call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Reach out to the **Director of Well-being for your department**. [Dr. Lisa Uherick](#), Chief Well-being Officer for VTCSOM and Carilion Clinic, can ensure you are connected with the [appropriate representative](#).

#### References

1. West, C. P., Dyrbye, L. N., & Shanafelt, T. D. (2016). Physician burnout: contributors, consequences, and solutions. *Journal of Internal Medicine*, 280(6), 463-474.
  2. Shanafelt, T. D., et al. (2015). The role of burnout in the quality of care and patient safety. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, 90(4), 507-517.
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## Office of Continuing Professional Development (OCPD)

### **[Shari Whicker, EdD, MEd](#)**

Senior Director, Office of Continuing Professional Development  
Assistant Dean, Faculty Development  
Director, Teaching Excellence Academy for Collaborative Healthcare (TEACH)  
Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics  
Carilion Clinic  
Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine

### **[Professional Development](#)**

**[Mariah Rudd, MEd](#)**, Director, Office of Continuing Professional Development

**Sarah Harendt, PhD, MS**, Manager, Education & Faculty Development  
**JT Addair**, Curricular & Media Coordinator  
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**Office of Continuing Professional Development**



Carilion Clinic | Office of Continuing Professional Development 15 Old Woods Ave | Roanoke, VA  
24016 US

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