



**SOUTHLAKE**  
REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

# LAVENDER ALERT GUIDE

*'Responding with Compassion'*

# Lavender Alert

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## Executive Summary

Much like a Code Blue is designed to provide a coordinated care response when a patient's heart needs immediate resuscitation, a Lavender Alert response supports individuals who are experiencing an episode of high stress or emotional distress and need a chance to regroup, recover, and find support and connection. A Lavender Alert is a formalized, brief, rapid response designed to support staff, physicians and volunteers in times of emotional distress. It is a voluntary, in the moment, response of compassion, care and validation to a distressing experience.

A Lavender Alert is a powerful, yet low cost way to invest in the holistic wellbeing of Southlake's staff, physicians and volunteers (herein referred to as staff). It gives individuals permission to be honest in their emotional reaction to a situation, take a pause and is meant to assist in addressing the emotional, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing of the healthcare team.

The third goal in Southlake's 2019 -2023 Strategic Plan is to "create an environment where the best experiences happen". To provide the best experiences to our patients the wellbeing of our staff must be supported; a Lavender Alert – responding with compassion, is one method of doing this.

This guide will describe the Lavender Alert process at Southlake Regional Health Centre, and includes details for how the alerts will be managed, measured, and reported.

## Why Well-being Matters

Supporting the well-being of our staff is identified as an essential component of creating an environment where the best experiences happen, as recognized in the 2019 -2023 Southlake Strategic Plan. A Lavender Alert – responding with compassion, is an initiative that will support Southlake to achieve our third strategic goal. Recognition of staff well-being is an important part of the patient experience.

### STRATEGIC GOAL THREE

## Create an environment where the best experiences happen.

### INITIATIVES

Focus on the simple things to build momentum to achieve our most ambitious goals.

Evolve our interprofessional models of care to improve patient and provider experience.

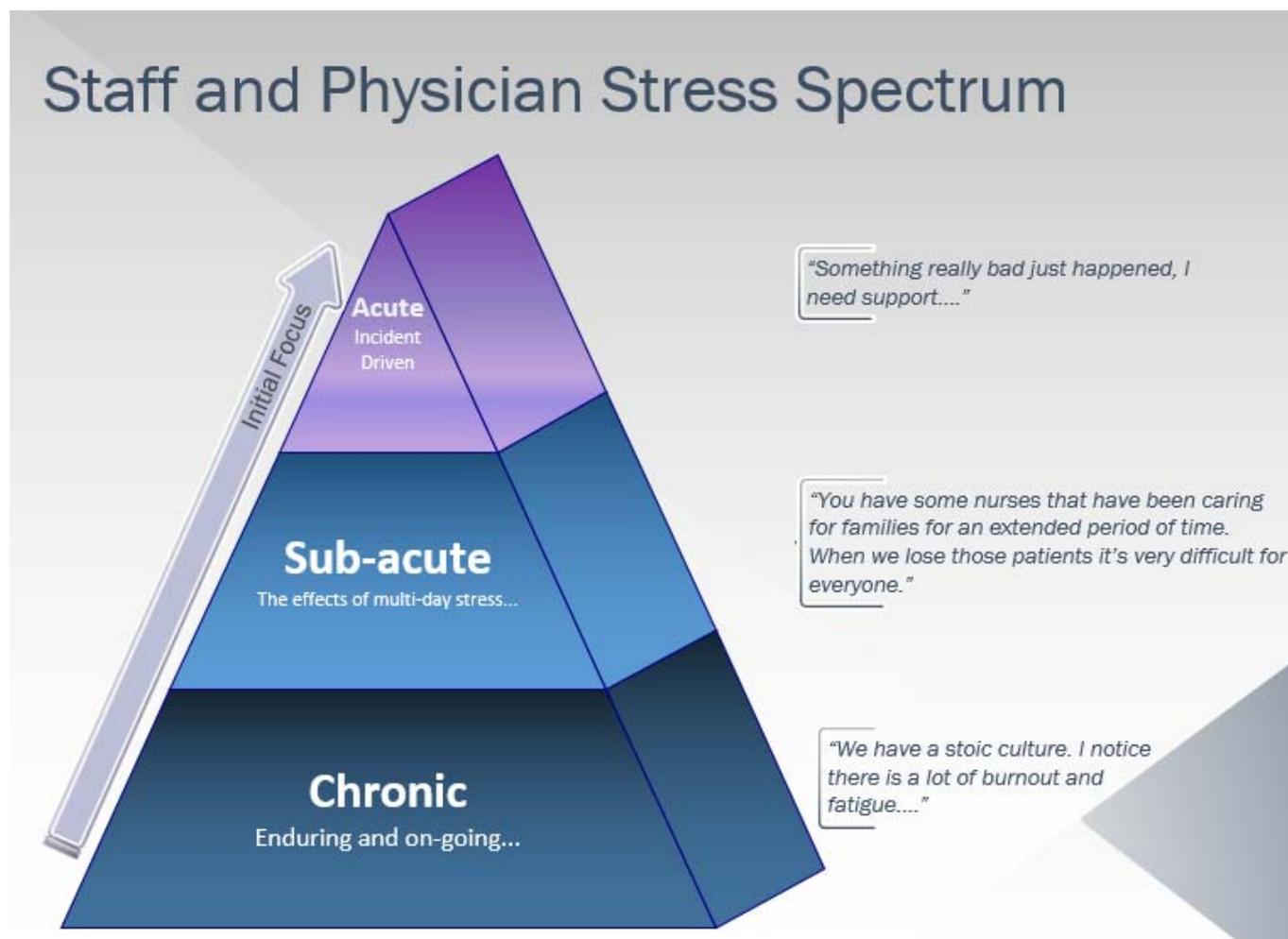
Strengthen engagement with patients and families.

Promote continuous learning, recognize our people and support their well-being.



Emotional well-being of staff is identified with lower levels of clinical stress and burnout. This reduced stress and burnout is linked in the literature to reduced medical errors<sup>1</sup>, improved patient satisfaction<sup>2</sup>, reduced staff turnover<sup>3</sup> and lower medical liability. The literature reveals upwards of 50% of nurses and physicians as reporting burnout. Staff and Physicians face many stresses from the overcapacity of the system, documentation challenges associated with the electronic health record, managing patient and family expectations along with daily stress of the job. Stress may be acute, from a single event, from a series of events (sub-acute) or from a cumulative effect of ongoing regular stressors (chronic). See Figure 1

**Figure 1. The Spectrum of Stress**



<sup>1</sup>Shanafelt TD<sup>1</sup>, Balch CM, Bechamps G, Russell T, Dyrbye L, Satele D, Collicott P, Novotny PJ, Sloan J, Freischlag J. *Ann Surg.* 2010 Jun;251(6):995-1000 Burnout and medical errors among American surgeons.

<sup>2</sup>McHugh, M. D., Kutney-Lee, A., Cimiotti, J. P., Sloane, D. M., & Aiken, L. H. (2011). Nurses' widespread job dissatisfaction, burnout, and frustration with health benefits signal problems for patient care. *Health affairs (Project Hope)*, 30(2), 202–210. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2010.0100

<sup>3</sup>Hamidi, M. S., Bohman, B., Sandborg, C., Smith-Coggins, R., de Vries, P., Albert, M. S., ... Trockel, M. T. (2018). Estimating institutional physician turnover attributable to self-reported burnout and associated financial burden: a case study. *BMC health services research*, 18(1), 851. doi:10.1186/s12913-018-3663-z

Several standards and guides identify employee support and well-being as foundational to a strong organizational culture. Supporting employee well-being has been identified as a critical component in the National Standard of Canada, CSA-Z1003-13 on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. The standard states that “a psychologically safe and healthy organization actively promotes emotional well-being among workers while taking all reasonable steps to minimize threats to worker mental health in a healthy and safe place to work”.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) developed the IHI Framework for Improving Joy in Work with organizations and associations from across the United States. This framework identifies the following critical components of a system for ensuring a joyful, engaged workforce: Physical and Psychological Safety, Wellness and Resilience as well as Camaraderie and Teamwork.

The healthcare provider involved in an adverse patient related event may be recognized as the second victim. HIROC has identified that trauma related to patient safety incidents by staff includes guilt, loss of confidence and shame and this can lead to second victims. The Lavender Alert program will provide the initial support identified as a need for second victims.

Southlake Regional Health Centre acknowledges that only a strong, supported workforce can create an environment where the best experiences happen. Southlake is investing in the Lavender Alert program to connect with and support staff members in times of emotional distress. Any member of the Southlake staff may initiate a Lavender Alert.

The typical response for a Lavender Alert is intended to:

- Provide comfort measures;
- Offer relief and respite space;
- Provide individual or group support;
- Offer resources;
- Identify opportunities for follow up.

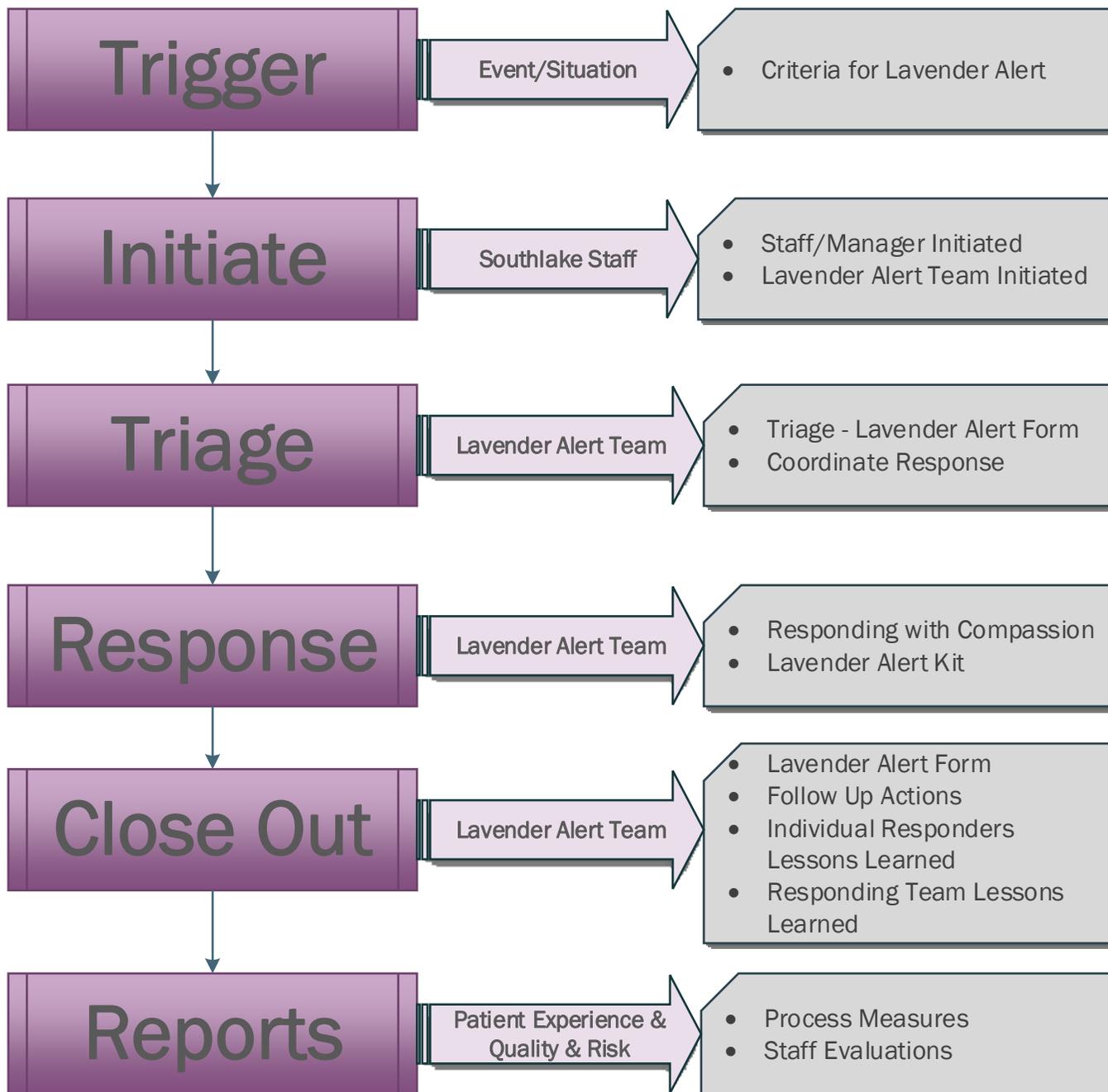
A Lavender Alert response is one mechanism to support staff and physicians through an acute difficult situation, the cumulative effect of many situations, or the longer-term effects that may reduce one’s resilience after chronic stressors. A Lavender Alert is not intended to take the place of a critical incident stress management debrief that can be coordinated for larger numbers of staff after a critical incident but compliment it because of the rapid response. The purposeful integration of compassion into care delivery can improve patient experience and outcomes, while creating more positive work places, with more engagement and less stress, burnout, absenteeism, and turnover.

Although employee burnout is not measured directly, the following indicators can be used to evaluate the initiative:

- Employee and physician engagement scores;
- Patient safety culture survey scores;
- Absenteeism;
- Employee turnover rates.

## The Lavender Alert Process

The following algorithm describes the Lavender Alert process:



June 10, 2019

## Triggers for Lavender Alert



Below are some examples of situations which may trigger a Lavender Alert:

- Hearing news of an employee illness, injury or death;
- The death of patient(s);
- Major trauma or code;
- A stressful dilemma in patient care;
- When a harmful mistake has been made;
- After difficult encounters with a patient/family member or among staff;
- In times of high stress or emotional distress, either on the unit and/or individual level; and
- External tragedy impacting staff emotional well being.

## Initiate a Lavender Alert



Any Southlake staff may initiate a Lavender Alert. The lavender alert responder may also initiate an alert.

Lavender Alert companion phone ext. #7494. You may leave a confidential and private voice message if not answered immediately.

## Triage of a Lavender Alert



### Lavender Alert Form

- Initial responder documents the request in the Lavender Alert Form (Appendix B).

### Coordinate Response

Initial responder will coordinate with staff or leadership to:

- Find an appropriate time to respond;
- Determine who should be involved;
- Decide how widespread the Lavender Alert response should be; and
- Determine the location – on the unit in a quiet space.

It is critical that a Lavender Alert response aligns appropriately and does not add additional stress to an individual or unit, but rather respects their workflow, supports their needs, and connects to purpose.

The responses are intended to be:

- Anonymous – no names are kept on file, no notes, and information;
- Safe – confidential, allows for emotional expression;
- Supportive, without judgement – intent is strictly for support, not intended as treatment;
- Voluntary – the individual will determine if they want support, and what actions if any that will follow; and
- Unique – every response is as different as the individual in need

### Resources to Coordinate

For the initial implementation, responders will be available Monday to Friday 0800-1600 hrs.

The Lavender Alert boasts an interprofessional approach with responders from the following programs:

- Spiritual Care;
- Mental Health Crisis Team;
- Quality and Risk; and
- Ethics.

## Response to a Lavender Alert



### Responding with Compassion

- No two Lavender Alerts are the same; the uniqueness of each alert will drive the response
- The recipient/staff will help to decide what is needed

Southlake Regional Health Centre Value	Meaning	Lavender Alert
Always with compassion	We treat everyone like friends and family	We respond to the needs of our Southlake family, with compassion, empathy, dignity and respect
Power of many	We cultivate partnerships within and beyond our walls for positive change	Both internal and external support may be needed to support our staff, we respond as equals
Serve with purpose	We are passionate about making a difference in the lives of others	This is important for our staff well-being as well as our patients.
Every voice matters	We value all perspectives, listen respectfully, and take action	Let us know you need support: you will be seen, heard, and are not alone
Courage to think differently	We embrace creativity, diversity, and innovation in everything we do	Lavender Alert is an opportunity to find a different way to support staff

### Responders Guidelines

#### 1. Assess:

- Physical state (weakness, shaking, nauseous, tearful, shock, etc.)
  - Respond as appropriate (sit, walk, hydrate, nutrition, tissues, etc.)
- The event (e.g. hospital event vs personal/external event – this is not a debrief)
  - Response: remember most healthcare workers are “doers for others” – affirm actions (hospital event - others are caring for your patients – take this time to care for yourself; personal event – “don’t know what to do” - is there anyone else I can call for you?)
- The emotional state (sad, mad, glad, afraid, etc.) (“How Are You Feeling” sheet)
  - Response: Be fully present and as non-anxious as possible (silence can be as important as words). Affirm emotional response to events as a vital part of our humanity and role as a

healthcare provider; *healthcare is not a “biological garage where dysfunctional human parts are repaired or replaced.”* (Gibbons and Miller, 1989).

Lavender Alert is about emotional distress – awareness and sensitivity to the range of emotions from the start is important (shame in calling, guilt in asking others to cover, embarrassment, etc. may be present in addition to emotional distress related to the event):

- Acknowledgement (words of affirmation);
- “you did the right thing by knowing your limits and reaching out”;
- “that’s exactly what Lavender is for”;
- “I have a few things I can offer, but what do you think you need?”
- Share Lavender Alert Kit;
- Offer resource list and support;
- Agree on follow-up as requested by recipient;
  - Notify as required (Occupational Health Safety and Wellness, Manager, Director, and SLT)
  - Check-in on staff well-being at later date (Responders)
- Complete Lavender Alert Form and send to [lavender@southlakeregional.org](mailto:lavender@southlakeregional.org) (Responders).

### Lavender Alert Kit

- Acknowledgement Card “We care about your well-being”;
- Comfort measures such as water, tea bags, tissue, nutritional support;
- Employee and Family Assistance Program cards;
- Wellness resources available;
- Survey Card
  - Did the Lavender response meet your needs? Yes/No. Why/Why Not? - Comments
  - How likely are you to recommend Lavender Alert support to your peers? 0-10
  - How could we improve the Lavender Alert response?

## Closing out a Lavender Alert



### Lavender Alert Form

- Responder to complete the Lavender Alert form – Appendix B
- Submit to the Lavender Alert administration email [lavender@southlakeregional.org](mailto:lavender@southlakeregional.org)
- Identify follow up actions ( close out section)

### Follow Up Actions

- Complete as described on Lavender Alert form

### Lavender Alert Responders Lessons Learned

- What went well?
- Were there any learning opportunities?
- Send learnings to share with all responders to email
- Complete responder feedback survey

### Lavender Alert Recipients Evaluation

- What went well?
- Were there any learning opportunities?
- Complete responder feedback survey

## Reports on Lavender Alerts



### Process Measures

- Number of Lavender Alerts activated
- Trigger – Type(s), Theme(s)
- Resource utilized
  - People
  - Time Spent
  - Days of the Week
  - Time of Day
- Costs
  - Resources
  - Kits
  - Education

### Responder Evaluations

- Survey
  - Themes, reflections, and lessons learned

### Staff Evaluations

- Survey Questions:
  - Did the Lavender response meet your needs? Yes/No Why/Why Not? – Comments
  - How likely are you to recommend Lavender Alert support to your peers? – 0-10
  - How could we improve the Lavender Alert response?

## REFERENCES

Cochrane, B., Ritchie, D., Lockhard, D., Picciano, G., King, J., Nelson, B. (2019) A culture of compassion: How timeless principles of kindness and empathy become powerful tools for confronting today's most pressing healthcare challenges. *Healthcare Management Forum*, 32(3), 120-127.

Experience Innovation Network. (2016). *Human Experience at the Forefront: Elevating Resilience, Well-being, and Joy in Healthcare* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <https://www.vocera.com/sites/default/files/vc-resilience-well-being-and-joy-report.pdf>

# APPENDICES

## Lavender Alert Form – Appendix A

 <b>LAVENDER ALERT</b> FORM	
<b>REF# Q1-###</b>	Please use this form to capture <i>Lavender Alert</i> details.
Date: _____ Time: _____	
<b>Activated by:</b>	Role _____ Unit/Department: _____ Program _____
<b>Recipient of Lavender Alert:</b>	Role _____ Unit/Department: _____ Program _____
<b>Trigger:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient Death <input type="checkbox"/> Code <input type="checkbox"/> Trauma <input type="checkbox"/> Patient Care Stress <input type="checkbox"/> Serious Safety Event <input type="checkbox"/> Patient   Family Conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Employee Death <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>Triage: (Situation Description)</b>	
<b>Response:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lavender Alert Tool Kit Shared <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Health Safety and Wellness Suggested <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Suggested Comments: _____ _____ _____
<b>Form Completed by:</b>	
<b>Responder Survey:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I have completed the Lavender Alert Survey <input type="checkbox"/> No, I have not completed the Lavender Alert Survey
Please return to the Office of Patient Experience within 24 hours of initialing Lavender Alert. Refer to Lavender Alert Guide.	

## Wellness Resources – Appendix B

Item	Purpose	Contact
<b>Wellness Oasis – in library</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massage Chair</li> <li>• Daylight light</li> <li>• Reading corner</li> </ul>	To provide a quiet place to rest, recharge and refresh	Occupational Health Safety and Wellness, Ext. 2383
<b>St. John Therapy Dogs visits to staff</b>	Benefits of therapy dogs are intended for micro breaks for staff	Occupational Health Safety and Wellness, Ext. 2383
<b>Yoga classes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hatha Yoga Mondays Rehab gym</li> <li>• Mindfulness Yoga Wed Cancer Centre</li> </ul>	Provide fitness opportunities for staff that can arrange longer lunch hours	Occupational Health Safety and Wellness, Ext. 2383
<b>Mindfulness Resources</b>	Provide opportunities to learn and practice concepts and tools for mindfulness	Occupational Health Safety and Wellness, Ext. 2383
<b>Walking Challenges</b>	Individual and team walking challenges over a 2-4 week period	Occupational Health Safety and Wellness, Ext. 2383
<b>YR CISM</b>	To provide crisis intervention and stress management to first responders in York Region	Spiritual Care Ext. 2539
<b>Incident Debriefing</b>	Ad hoc incident debriefing as a result of a medical error / mishap	Quality & Risk Ext. 2244
<b>Monthly Labyrinth</b>	A spiritual tool for staff, visitors, OP, Volunteers that is a walking meditation for spiritual, emotional, mental support	Spiritual Care Ext. 2539
<b>Spiritual Care</b>	Spiritual Care staff support staff on an “as needed” basis; visits range from 1X to multiple visits over time	Spiritual Care Ext. 2539
<b>Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFPA)</b>	Receive counselling and coaching for a variety for life balance and health issues, or get expert support to better manage your career.	1-800-663-1142 (24/7) <a href="http://www.homeweb.ca">www.homeweb.ca</a>
<b>Mental Health Urgent Clinic Adult Crisis Intervention Program</b>	Physician Referral required for Southlake or one can access support through their local hospital	SRHC Online Referral Form Mental Health intranet link
<b>Staff Wellness Centre</b>		MAB, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor

## Lavender Alert Responding with Compassion

# We value your feedback!

**Why:** Your lavender alert response will improve the services provided to our staff during times of emotional distress. This survey is to help us understand how we might better support you and your team in times of acute stress.

All responses to this survey will remain anonymous.

**What:** Please complete the 4 question survey! (2-3 minutes)

**How:** To submit your feedback, use this QR code or web link to access the questions in Survey Monkey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MT3GNSN>

Step one: Open up the camera app on your device

Step two: Hold the device's camera up to the QR code

Step Three: Survey Will open

