



The Effects of COVID-19 on MDIs' Health & Wellness



WORK-RELATED STRESS AMONG MDI PROFESSIONALS: A NATIONAL SURVEY



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Medicolegal Death Investigator (MDI) professionals experience high levels of work-related stress, but relatively little is known about its impact and the kinds of supports and resources needed to address it. RTI International partnered with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) and the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME) to develop this national survey.

Nearly 1,000 MDIs participated in the survey, which was fielded in 2021 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This infographic highlights the impact of COVID-19 on respondents' work-related wellbeing.

**About 4 out of 10 MDI
professionals
experience moderate
to high levels of stress
related to their
employer and the
nature of their work**



**20% of respondents
reported that this
stress was
impacted by COVID**

"I contracted COVID-19 about 5 months ago, likely from co-workers not following all COVID-19 safety protocols in the office. It's difficult to tease apart fatigue due to COVID and regular death investigation stress. Inconsistency between district and state leadership has been an issue since before the pandemic, but has increased."

Top 5 COVID Stressors

1. Higher caseload (48%)
2. More staffing shortages (44%)
3. Receiving less accommodations than other first responders (40%)
4. Direct exposure to COVID (30%)
5. Unclear guidance on new procedures (27%)

"A significant amount of the stressors addressed in this survey existed prior to COVID-19 for me; however, they have been exacerbated by the pandemic—whether it is new policies and procedures, dealing with others' stress, or feeling that you no longer have the fallback of your normal coping mechanisms due to COVID-19."

3 out of 10 (31%) MDI professionals experience moderate to high levels of burnout



About 15% of respondents indicated that COVID was at least somewhat responsible for their responses to burnout-related items

1 out of 10 MDI professionals experiences moderate to high levels of depression. 42% of all respondents experience symptoms some of the time



Similarly, 1 out of 10 MDI professionals experiences moderate to high levels of anxiety. 35% of all respondents experience symptoms some of the time



About 14% of MDI professionals attribute their depression and anxiety responses to COVID

Takeaways for MDI Professionals and Their Employers

The results of this survey showed that COVID-19 exacerbated work-related stress among MDI professionals. Employers of MDIs can support worker wellbeing by communicating about available resources and encouraging their use, and creating intentional opportunities for social support (such as mentoring or peer support programs). MDIs are encouraged to the access wellness resources available through your employer and professional organizations in your field, such as the IACME and the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME).

If you or someone you know needs help, reach out. SAMHSA's National Helpline, for example, is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. 1-800-662-HELP (4357)



In the coming months, RTI and our partners at ABMDI and IACME will be sharing additional survey findings and recommendations for agencies and MDI professionals. Visit our website to stay informed of future publications, conference presentations, podcasts, and more: <https://forensicrti.org/understanding-work-related-stress-mdi-professionals/>.