

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF COVID-19  
**October 2021 Forecast Update**

# Brief Overview: Development and Further Reading

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## Background:

- Developed by combining academic literature, a wide variety of data sources, and the expertise of the DOH Behavioral Health Strike Team
- Highly subject to future waves, government actions, societal trends, social and economic impacts
- Continually informed by new research and data sources

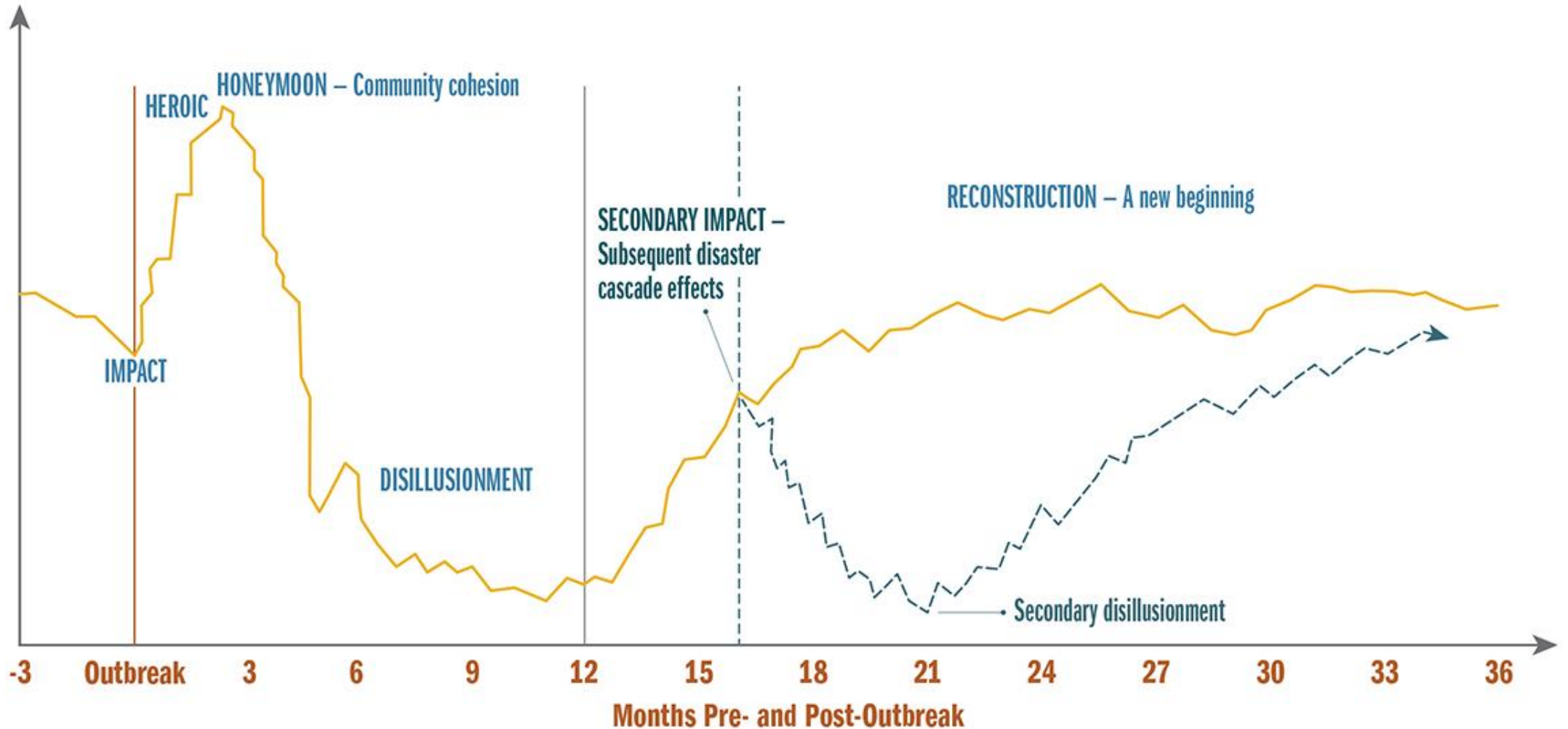
## Further reading:

- Statewide Impact Forecast (*updated monthly*)
- Behavioral Health Situational Report (*updated weekly*)
  - Youth Sit-Rep (*monthly*)
  - Aging Sit-Rep (*monthly*)
- Regional Sit-Rep (*coming soon!*)

# NEW UPDATE to reflect true Cascade timeline resulting from 5<sup>th</sup> wave

## Reactions and Behavioral Health Symptoms in Disasters

Emotional Response – Lows to Highs



# Anxiety and Depression- WA Adults



—Anxiety: Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge      —Depression: Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

## Disaster Cascade effects

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Delta and the impacts of this variant are resulting in the **experience of a “disaster cascade” in some form for most people heading into fall / winter.**

- A disaster cascade is defined as the experience of multiple disaster “Impacts” within a 12-18 month time frame (multiple waves of the same disaster, or different types – floods, hurricanes, etc)
- ***Disaster cascades further tax already depleted emotional, physical, social and economic resources.***

## Cascade Effects cont.

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- As a function of the cascade effects, risks related to increased behavioral health symptoms go up for many people.
- Experiences of burnout for healthcare providers, educators, those in public health and those in “response” to the pandemic, including other ‘front line’ and essential workers are more likely now than at any other point in the pandemic so far. This includes higher risk for new incidence of behavioral health disorders including PTSD.
- Even as we see infection rates and hospitalizations start to decrease, seasonal affective conditions may start to increase. People are more likely to have a stronger reaction to seasonal shifts due to limited coping resources.

## Areas of focus for October 2021 for Youth and Families:

- Associated youth surge (there was no summer “slump” in Behavioral Health patterns for youth and adolescents)
- Potential for school anxiety / refusal, behavioral acting out, withdrawal, regression
- Parental / Caregiver anxiety about schools closing again, or having to balance work and childcare with quarantine rules due to exposure

## Areas of focus for October 2021 for Businesses and Workers:

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- Vaccine mandates and deadlines for vaccination will be influential in shifting group dynamics in the workplace, communication patterns amongst co-workers and friends.
- For companies and agencies where employees are leaving, there may be significant shifts in workloads, job roles and other responsibilities that may contribute to intense emotional and behavioral responses for some.
- "In-group" and "out-group" or "us / them" thinking may also influence behavioral choices, sense of cohesion with others in the workplace.



## Key Takeaways

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- There potential for violence and aggression increase with “hardening” of opinions, impulsivity, and sense (accurate or not) of being threatened (by changes, uncertainties, mandates, expectations, etc) in the workplace and in social settings.
- “In-group” and “out-group” or “us / them” thinking is likely to result in a loss of social and workplace cohesion.
- Communication challenges will be significant due to general dysregulation: we all have difficulty interpreting others’ motives and meanings.

## Key Takeaways cont.

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- De-escalation and active listening continue to be highly recommended techniques for supporting others.
- Planning, thinking through, and considering options ahead of time is a valuable part of the process as we move into the fourth quarter of 2021 and into 2022. Planning and identifying alternative options ahead of time reduces the likelihood of making impulsive, risky choices.

## Resources:

DOH - Forecast and situational reports, guidance and resources:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020COVID19/HealthcareProviders/BehavioralHealthResources>

WA State – General mental health resources:

<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/information-for/you-and-your-family/mental-and-emotional-well-being>

**Looking for support?**  
Call Washington Listens at  
**1-833-681-0211**



Questions?





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