Encouraging Staff Wellness in Trauma-Informed Organizations

Building a Culture of Health in New Jersey: Thriving Communities Transform Lives Conference

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Today’s Focus

1. Highlight how staff wellness is a key ingredient for trauma-informed care;
2. Describe the impact of chronic emotional stress on providers and organizations; and
3. Share innovative approaches for health care professionals and organizations to promote self-care and wellness.
About the Center for Health Care Strategies

A nonprofit policy center dedicated to improving the health of low-income Americans

**CHCS priorities:**
- Advancing delivery system and payment reform
- Integrating services for people with complex needs
- Building Medicaid and cross-sector leadership and capacity

**CHCS core activities:**
- Expert technical assistance
- Collaborative and peer learning
- Best practice dissemination
Multi-year initiative supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Objective: Understand and spread practical strategies for implementing trauma-informed approaches across the health care sector.

- Two-year multi-site pilot demonstration and learning collaborative with six leading health care organizations
- National dissemination of project lessons to spread emerging best practices
- Implementation analysis conducted by the Urban Institute
Why is staff wellness important?
Impact of chronic emotional stress on staff

- **Secondary traumatic stress** is emotional duress that mimics post-traumatic stress disorder caused by hearing about another person’s firsthand traumatic experiences.

- **Vicarious traumatization** is the cumulative effect of consistent exposure to hearing about other people’s traumatic experiences.

- **Burnout** is a form of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by chronic work-related stress.

Sources:

Impact of chronic emotional stress on organizations

- **Lower quality patient care** as staff may not have the emotional resources to provide high-quality care.

- **Higher staff turnover** as staff who have experienced chronic emotional stress are more likely to leave an organization which contributes to:
  - Dissatisfaction among co-workers
  - Increased cost and staff time

How can staff wellness be promoted?
Opportunities to Encourage Staff Wellness

General Wellness Activities

Education and Awareness Building

Organizational Policy and Practice
General Wellness Activities

- Encourage and incentivize activities like yoga, meditation, mindfulness, and exercise
  - Promote nearby classes and consider bringing them in-house
  - Create wellness spaces

- Incorporate staff wellness activities into meetings and daily work
  - Pre-meeting “check-ins”
  - “Mindful minute” during clinical team huddles
  - Daily wellness breaks
Education and Awareness Building

- Build awareness about the impact of chronic emotional stress and the importance of self-care
  - Offer trainings
  - Hang posters throughout the office
- Provide opportunities for staff to safely explore their own trauma histories and to destress
  - Utilize “listening partners”
- Train supervisors on management techniques like reflective supervision
Foster a culture that allows providers to seek support and promotes wellness
- Retreats and team-building exercises
- Generous PTO packages
- Meeting-free workdays or periods of time

Provide supplemental mental health benefits

Support wellness through policies that promote work/life balance
- Leave work phones in office
- Only schedule patient appointments during work week
- Keep caseloads manageable
- Encourage mental health days
Learn More

For more information and practical resources, visit CHCS’ Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center at TraumaInformedCare.chcs.org.
Questions?