



Building a Resilient Workforce to Address Trauma and Enhance Well-Being

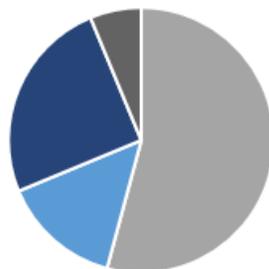
Supporting Self-Care at the System Level

KEY TAKEAWAYS

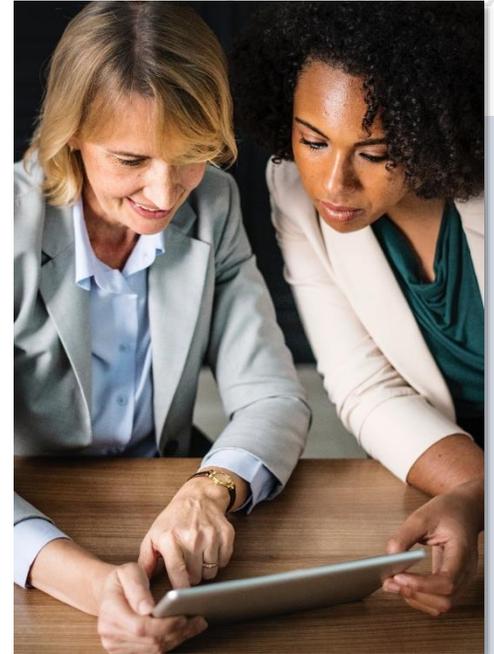
Status of System Supports for Self-Care

- Many programs are still struggling or are in the early stages of building self-care into an agency's responsibility vs. it just being staff's responsibility
- Some agencies are aware of the need for self-care; staff are often directed to do self-care but there is limited follow up
- Staff are still pretty much responsible for their own self-care
- Some organizations are implementing interesting and unique strategies, but participation is mostly voluntary, and a significant number of folks are not involved
- Some programs are still working on institutionalizing systemic supports for self-care

To what degree is self-care supported by
your child welfare program?



■ Not at All ■ Somewhat ■ Slightly ■ Significantly ■ Fully



SESSION 4 OF 5

Discussion with Dr. Annette Semanchin Jones, PhD Program Director and Associate Professor at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work

Event date:

07/26/2021

Recording available:

<https://vimeo.com/583133333>

Strategies for Supporting Self-Care at the System Level

- Use [The Resilience Alliance: Promoting Resilience and Reducing Secondary Trauma Among Welfare Staff - Participant Handbook](#) to help child welfare staff identify, better understand, and address the ways child welfare work affects them personally and professionally
- Building and supporting self-care on any level is important; it shows you value people's health and well-being
- Provide opportunities for relaxation exercises and identify a space that can serve as a relaxation or wellness room with soft music, low lighting, and calm energy
- Utilize supportive supervision practices or a reflective supervision model so that supervision is planned, and supervisors are well equipped to build resilience
- Train staff on self-care, exercises, and burnout. Include incentives for participation.
- Improve the lunchroom so it is more inviting and so a unit can eat together once a week
- Provide positive feedback, and encourage taking time off
- Pull staff into focus groups to gather ideas
- Use virtual platforms to provide mindfulness sessions and incentivize participation
- Offer mini massages and blood pressure checks
- Hold compassion workshops
- Start early on by training new employees on self-care and secondary trauma
- Create a structure for social committees and work with partners to bring in self-care activities
- Train mentors to inquire about self-care and support stress management for supervisors
- Stress the importance of proactive self-care for new employees
- Identify a wellness committee (representatives from across programs and levels of staff) that can provide a variety of self-care activities
- Use Employee Assistance Program (EAP) staff to train supervisors on supporting workforce self-care and the importance of self-care. People only buy into what they understand, so as always, it is important to start with the why behind the what.
- Build a collaborative workforce culture with team decision-making
- Use family-centered, strength-based practices
- Remove policies and practices that take away from work with families
- Provide paid leave for self-care and develop a system for covering cases so staff is not stressed out when they return from leave
- Implement telework and flexibility in work hours so staff can go to the gym during lunch or fit other self-care activities into their day
- Provide a 24/7 hotline for staff that is not just for crises but also for processing stressful events, difficult feelings, etc.
- Identify a specific place and time to vent problems or troubling issues to trusted peers
- Provide an on-site therapist for debriefing



- Create a culture of safety by having a dedicated staff person who supports staff well-being and resiliency
- Plan weekly unit meals together
- Implement peer support groups
- Support workers after critical incidents/secondary trauma - have plan in place before incident happens (remember logistics)
- Encourage prioritizing personal self-care including exercise, church, and spiritual life

Links to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Pay attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion so that everyone feels respected and heard
- Provide books on diversity, prejudice questionnaires, an employee assistance program, and debriefings
- There is still a lot of room for growth regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Many groups are increasing training, implementing things like lunch and learn options, but it's hard to get involvement
- Many programs are still in pilot/exploration phase – holding race-based affinity groups, implementing Working With and Across Difference curriculum
- Hold restorative conversations
- Facilitate a book study, with books like Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture by Tema Okun and Unpacking Racism (Intercultural Family Services) program
- Use restorative practices
- All agencies should facilitate inclusion and self-care with all staff. Not all agencies are actively offering this to all staff members. Currently retreats/outings are offered to staff at the direct CSW level and above.

