

Workplace Health and Wellbeing

RENT Best Practices for Managers

“Self-care within an organization is the responsibility of the individual, team members and supervisors, and the leadership of the organization itself”¹

Direct service staff work daily to support clients in solving complicated issues, navigate multiple services and sectors, manage large case loads, while fulfilling their agency’s mandate and deliverables. High levels of stress is common in these positions, sometimes leading to burn-out, workers leaving, increased sick days, as well as other health issues. As managers and organizations there are some key best practices that can be put in place to encourage workplace health and wellbeing, maintain staff , ensure continued client care, and achieve organizational goals.

This RENT Best Practices resource is aimed at providing tips on how to support staff in your organization and maintain a healthy organizational culture. It can be downloaded for free on www.housingworkers.ca.

Best Practices in Workplace Health and Wellbeing

Encourage staff to take part in training and networking events

Encouraging your staff to connect with other professionals in the field is important for strategizing around solutions to pervasive challenges, and learning about resources useful for working more efficiently and with fewer barriers. Training and mentoring provides clarity on job roles and their position in the larger sector, as well as an understanding of upcoming changes to programs and new opportunities for client support. From an organizational health perspective, providing training around managing stress, trauma, and mental health for workers in particular helps to stabilize the workplace culture and maintain a higher overall morale.

Create regular supervision and checking in opportunities

Setting a schedule to meet with staff members individually and confidentially is key to building trust and good communication, as well as problem solve issues as they arise. These are opportunities to check in around managing stress, evaluate work loads, and discuss self-care. This time can also be used to clarify responsibilities, and ensure that the organization’s understanding of the position and the actual work remain the same. Sharing control of decision making with your staff about their work increases job satisfaction and security, and in turn helps with maintaining a positive organizational culture and staff retention.

1. (Volk, Guarino, Grandin, & Clervil, 2008, p. 29)

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Routinely evaluate programs and organizational structures

Reviewing organizational policies and practices is important for evolving to meeting the sector's changes and new challenges. Incorporating input from staff and evaluating their satisfaction helps to clarify the pressures and priorities of the direct service parts of your organization's mandate. Some key points to consider when reviewing are, ensuring structures are clear and follow a standardized plan that is communicated to all staff, considering how confidentiality is handled in the organization for staff and clients, evaluating opportunities for growth and development available in your organization, updating structures and policies to match the evolution of the organization, and creating self-care plans.

For more information:

To find out more about Workplace Health and Wellbeing in practice see:

Hospital Employee's Union. (2000). *The Workplace Anti-Stress Guide*. CUPE, BC Health Services Division, Vancouver. Retrieved February 25, 2014, from http://www.heu.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2008_healthsafety/HEU%20anti-stress%20guide.pdf

Toronto Public Health - Mental Health Promotions Team. (2013). *Occupational Stress Reactions in the Helping Professions*. Toronto.

Volk, K. T., Guarino, K., Grandin, M. E., & Clervil, R. (2008). *What About You?: A Workbook for Those Who Work with Others*. The National Centre on Family Homelessness. Retrieved Feb 26, 2014, from <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/94.pdf>

What is?

Burn Out² is the mental and/or physical exhaustion that builds up from prolonged stress, depleting one's energy and coping mechanisms, and interfering with our ability to function. Burn out can be both self imposed and result from the external pressures of direct service work, but can also come from unsupportive workplace environments.

Compassion Fatigue³ is the stress resulting from ongoing work with people in extremely stressful situations. The symptoms are similar to burn out but tend to occur suddenly and without warning, recovery is often faster than from burn out.

Vicarious Trauma⁴ is a natural consequence of working with people who have experienced extremely stressful and traumatic life events. This can come from exposure to a single traumatic event or from the cumulative impact of working with many people with trauma histories. Experiences of vicarious trauma can be similar to the stress of the actual trauma.

2. (Toronto Public Health - Mental Health Promotions Team, 2013, p. 2)
3. (Toronto Public Health - Mental Health Promotions Team, 2013, p. 11)
4. (Toronto Public Health - Mental Health Promotions Team, 2013, pp. 15-17)