RESILIENCY: BUILDING AND RETAINING A RESILIENT STAFF

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Workplace Management and Child Welfare Policy, Planning, and Administration Curriculum Module
CONTEXT

- “Burnout”
- Resiliency Theory
- Learning Organizations
- Caregiving Organizations
Levels of Intervention

MACRO

MICRO

MEZZO
Micro Level

- Current trends
  - Workplace concerns regarding retention of staff
  - Caseworkers anticipate “burnout”
  - Research focused on “burnout,” “compassion fatigue,” and “STS” (secondary traumatic stress)
  - Recent move to examine “resiliency” factors that provide buffer and lead to adaptive coping
Micro Level (cont’d)

- Intervention strategies at this level focus on what the individual practitioner can do to promote “resiliency”
  - Traditional approach
    - Good nutrition
    - Physical exercise
    - Psychological coping techniques
Traditional Stress Management

- Nutrition

  - Balanced diet – new “food pyramid”
  - Include Vitamin B
  - Limit intake of sweets and alcohol
Traditional Stress Management (cont’d)

- Physical exercise
  - Pick an activity that you can do on a regular basis
    - Walking
    - Jogging
    - Swimming
  - Some respond well to group activities or sports
    - Agency baseball teams, bowling teams
Traditional Stress Management (cont’d)

- Psychological techniques
  - Deep breathing
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Guided imagery
  - Self hypnosis
  - Meditation
  - Yoga
Mezzo Level

- Mezzo level is the work unit
- Research in the past and present find the role of the supervisor to be crucial to recruitment and retention of staff
- How is the role of supervisor seen within the context of learning/caregiving organizations?
Intervention strategies at this level include:

- Supervision/Unit leadership is critical – training provided
- Team building – motivating and supporting staff
- Social support network
  - Understanding small group dynamics
  - Mentorship – formal or informal
- Opportunity for additional training or education
Macro Level

- Recent research in human service organizations
  - Learning Organization
  - Caregiving Organization
Interventions at this level

- Systemic approach to providing a “safe” environment for all levels of staff
- Encouraging creativity and a degree of “risk” for providing services in an innovative manner (provided the risk does not endanger clients)
“Failures” are seen as opportunities for increasing knowledge and not necessarily as opportunities for discipline/negative response.

Administrative levels must support and model these changes:
- Capacity to demonstrate empathy and compassion for staff and the challenges that they face in delivering services.
Summary Points

- Building resiliency involves all levels
  - Agency, supervisor, and staff can provide various ways in which each level supports and encourages each other

- Uniqueness of human service agencies in providing “help” to clients both voluntary and involuntary
  - The need to acknowledge that services are only as good as the staff and agency are “healthy.” Toxic environments are contraindicated for building resiliency
Summary Points (cont’d)

- Environment that encourages learning, creativity, and innovation
- Environment that supports “safety” for staff in both physical and psychological arenas
- Resiliency thrives in environments that provide opportunity for growth and development
- Resiliency provides motivation to continue challenging work