



Next Steps & Resources

Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being

Everyone can have a critical and positive impact on addressing stress, burnout, and trauma within teams and fostering a culture that is more trauma-informed.

Where to start?

Take the time to first identify what work-related stress staff are experiencing.

ENCOURAGE candid discussion amongst staff to identify the root causes of stress in the workplace:

- Try an anonymous, open-ended survey
- Use a [Workplace Stress Survey](#)

VALIDATE (and acknowledge) employee stress and burnout and address the most prevalent or common stressors reported by teams:

- Make changes to risk factors that can be modified such as workload, management style, and improving staff sense of control
- Where is there room for change that can help to reduce stress and burnout? Get creative!
 - › Flexible work hours, additional PTO, staff rotations/job sharing
 - › Discourage round-the-clock work
- Maintain connections: acknowledge others' work and check in on a personal level
 - › Start meetings with meaningful check-ins
 - › Extend grace to one another: give the benefit of the doubt when staff are not able to show up as their best selves
- Collaborate internally and with external partners to be more effective and to remember that you are not alone in this work

"Since COVID-19, we've had to work smarter and as a team came up with how best to cover all 11 counties to get more food into the communities. We've been able to divide our counties so 1 staff member is accountable for 2-4 counties, strengthening community relations with funders, city government, new nonprofit partners, schools, etc. Being accountable for counties has encouraged ownership by staff when we are in those communities."

—Linda Hamilton, CEO
West Ohio Food Bank

PROMOTE a healthy work-life balance:

- Organize and promote health initiatives and support organizational wellness programs and committees that already exist
- Encourage physical activity, yoga, meditation, and "walking" meetings
- Reward or acknowledge creativity and resilience in working towards a positive work-life balance when you see it
- Don't demand video on calls; it may create stress about being monitored
- Support regular, reflective one-on-one meetings, in which staff and supervisors meet regularly to address feelings
- Encourage conversations that cultivate hope and mitigate fears
- Lead by example and be willing to be vulnerable in sharing your stories of challenge and resilience with your teams

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ENCOURAGE staff to:

- Utilize Employee Assistance Programs
- Seek care from a trained, trauma-informed provider who can recognize trauma and retraumatization symptoms and offer evidence-based treatment and guidance
- Develop effective coping skills (stress management, self-care, and social support, especially peer support)
- Have a self-care plan that includes strategies for building resilience (get regular exercise, set aside time for meditation or relaxation)
- Practice spiritual beliefs or reach out to a faith leader for support
- Connect with people who understand and can help them through possible triggering events and lean on their support systems
- Review guidelines for promoting employee well-being in the workplace

"Throughout this pandemic, while I have been concerned about someone contracting the virus, I have been equally concerned about the impact of stress and the emotional state of our team. We have made available resources to our staff... but I worry that our team will be hesitant to utilize them and be unsure of how to know if they need help. There needs to be more education and awareness around this issue than simply providing phone numbers and references. Perhaps, some in-house counseling and guidance to steer them in the right directions."

—Stuart Haniff, CEO
Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley

"Our staff, is on the front lines. We believe in recognizing their sacrifices. We are going to memorialize their efforts... we have a walkway with engraved pavers reflecting historic events & personnel in the history of our food bank. The pavers will be engraved with the names of every staff member who "fought" during COVID-19 and we will also list personnel from each of our 4 PDO's. In years to come they will look back and talk about how they helped feed the hungry during one of the nation's worst pandemics."

—Richard Deem, CEO
Montgomery Area Food Bank

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING!

- Addressing chronic stress and burnout is a process, not a one-time thing
- Supporting employee mental health and the well-being of an organization is a commitment that requires ongoing efforts to engage staff in the conversation and promote a resilient, supportive, and healthy work culture

"I am aware that some of our staff have been experiencing increased stress, anxiety, depression, and even trying to stay focused upon their daily work. As we implemented our COVID-19 procedures and protocols, the need to address any mental health issues were taken into account, and that's why we reduced the work week from 40-35 hours, and staff would still be paid for 40 hours. It was implemented to provide all our staff with additional breathing time to focus on the needs of their families and themselves."

—Paule Pachter, A.C.S.W., L.M.S.W, CEO
Long Island Cares

TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

- Be mindful of historical [trauma contexts for the populations you serve](#)
- Ensure staff are appropriately trained on trauma-informed care by a [certified trainer](#)
- Incorporate client voice to guide the process of becoming a trauma-informed organization and review hiring practices to promote a trauma-informed workforce
- Consider completing a Trauma-Informed Care [organizational assessment](#)

"Burn out, how much longer can we go? How much more can we take? How much more can our personal lives take? What do you even do about it? We signed up for this, this is our passion our drive why we come to work every day. So, how do you get us to stop from one disaster to the next and try to stop for ourselves? Because if we stop, a child won't eat, an elderly person won't have milk or produce. We just keep pushing, with no end in sight."

—Libby Campbell, CEO
West Texas Food Bank