WORKPLACE WELLNESS STRATEGIES

There are a variety of policies, tools, and resources to support workplace wellness. Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Parts, HIV prevention programs, community-based organizations and other entities can implement and/or advocate for wellness supportive opportunities internal to their organization and incorporate requirements for workplace wellness into subrecipient contracts. Organizations should review state-level and union policies before making any changes.

KEY
For ease of reference, strategies will be noted as the following (some may fall into multiple categories) when appropriate:

- 🔵 Mental/Emotional Wellbeing
- 🟩 Physical Wellbeing
- 🔺 Social Wellbeing

PRACTICES

Organizational practices offer creative opportunities to ritualize wellness and strengthen organizational identity and camaraderie among staff.

🔵🔺 *Group support can be a powerful and skill-building aid for the team.* It may be particularly helpful when facilitated by someone outside of your organization.

🔵🔺 *Peer support and mentoring* can be powerful tools for organizational healing. Peer support gives staff an opportunity for collaboration and teamwork. Staff can benefit from being in community with folks impacted in the same way from their work which allows them to feel more connected. Staff may also seek out peer support or mentorship on their own, but organizations are encouraged to set up structures for peer support or mentors.

🔵🔺 *Incorporate celebration and affirmation* in all parts of the organization. Create tradition around celebration* of birthdays, life transitions, recovery anniversaries, and professional advancements. Provide space to create a joy board where staff are invited to share good news stories and photos that bring joy.

Gain input and consent from staff on what life moments or accomplishments will be celebrated.

🔵🟩 *Provide opportunity for bodywork.* Schedule practitioners to regularly provide free massage, acupuncture, or Reiki for staff. *Take interest in staff physical health* by providing healthy snacks and beverages.

▲ *Music, art, play and laughter* are powerful vehicles for resilience and healing. Set aside time and space in your organization (such as Friday Fundays) to facilitate space for right brain (more visual, expressive, and creative than left brain) activities.

▲ *Icebreakers* provide an opportunity for staff to get to know one another better. Consider incorporating them, or some type of check-in, into meetings regularly.

● *Use NASTAD's Vicarious Trauma Assessment and Prevention* to monitor the level of vicarious trauma over time.

●▲ *Provide and prioritize trauma-informed supervision*, in both individual and group settings, for all staff. Ensure supervision is regular (at least weekly), predictable (in terms of discussion in supervision), and valued (supervisor is physically and emotionally present during the meeting). Ensure supervisors are trained in trauma-informed supervision and have a reasonable number of supervisees.

● *Ritualize practice of mindfulness* in your organization. Opportunities to practice mindfulness, even for just one or two minutes at the beginning of a meeting, strengthen resilience and healing for individuals.

● *Utilize trauma-informed meeting principles.*

● *Separation of work and personal time* is important as more organizations embrace telework. Tools for separation, whether working from home or in an office/clinic, include unplugging from technology, turning off phone notifications, or "book ending" the day (i.e., sharing of successes at beginning and end of the day). Discuss separation of work and home life during supervision.

POLICIES

Policies are an important tool for ensuring standardization of a culture of wellness in an organization.

●▲▪ Assess organizational policies and procedures for eliciting unintentional trauma.

● Allow for flexible scheduling. For many, a standard 40-hour, Monday – Friday work week isn't viable. Flexible schedules allow staff to personalize work – personal time balance which helps to create a culture of trust by putting value on quality of work rather than time spent in the office. Organizations can provide flexible schedules in the form of alternative worktimes or telecommuting. Be explicit about your organization's commitment to flexible scheduling in job announcements.

▪ If your organization supports telecommuting, ensure staff have adequate technology and resources to work from home effectively and safely. Provide ergonomic support regardless of work location.

●▪ Set realistic caseloads for case managers, social workers, and similar positions. Readjust budgets and identify additional resources to ensure your organization is not understaffed. Commit to organizational resilience and healing to reduce staff turnover.

● Establish "stay" (regular check-ins on what people need to stay) and "exit" (trauma-informed off-boarding when people wish to leave) interviews as a quality improvement exercise. Exit interviews can also be used to better understand reasons why staff are leaving and harvesting of helpful suggestions.

●▲▪ Provide standards and resources for continuing education and mentorship.

● Commit to planning and development of professional development to understand staff needs and desires for growth and advancement. Incorporate wellness-related goals and activities in these plans.

BENEFITS

While a significant cost to organizations, provision of generous benefits for staff demonstrates commitment to organizational values and a healing-centered approach.

Provide competitive pay and raises that ensure a living wage for your community. Transparent decisions related to starting salaries and pay increases are important.

Offer comprehensive paid leave policies.

o Holidays – including federally recognized holidays and those in line with agency values (such as Juneteenth or non-Christian religious holidays).

o Ensure adequate paid leave is accessible from a person's start date (versus having to accrue time off). Offer paid family leave, bereavement leave, sabbatical policies, and "use it or lose it" vacation policies to incentivize time off. Separate sick leave from other paid leave so staff aren't disincentivized from taking time off for physical or emotional issues; normalize taking off for mental health days. Finally, ensure a work culture where staff aren't penalized for taking time off by providing mechanisms for back-up and coverage while people are away. Leadership should model the importance of taking time off so staff feel empowered to do the same.

o Use a 1:1 compensatory time policy (one-hour compensatory time for each potential overtime hour worked) to disincentivize overtime. Ensure adequate staffing so overtime is an option of last resort.

Offer comprehensive, affordable health insurance policies that include coverage for gender-affirming treatment therapies and alternative/complementary care, such as massage and acupuncture.

Provide access to comprehensive Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and other crisis intervention services. Ensure the EAP offers culturally and linguistically responsive providers for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color staff.

Provide access to onsite opportunities for exercise and movement. Designate building space for exercise, yoga, meditation, or napping. Bring in exercise instructors or compensate staff who are qualified to lead classes. If space is a barrier, subsidize membership to a nearby gym or community center. Provide time outside of the lunch hour for exercise and rest.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Attunement and Self-Assessment in Supervision
- Momento – Surprise video gifts for when physical distance is a barrier for celebration.
- The Five Senses Worksheet or the 3-Step Mindfulness Worksheet
- Fifteen Art Therapy Activities, Exercises, and Ideas
- Work Life Balance