



Webinar: Organizational Approaches to Staff Care and Retention

June 12, 2024, 2:00 – 3:15 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Megan Rafferty: All right, hello and welcome everyone. Thank you for joining today's training, organizational approaches to staff care and retention and resettlement.

Today's Speaker

MR: My name is Megan Rafferty, and I'll be your primary speaker for today, I am Switchboard's Training Officer, focusing on mental health and wellness, and my background is that I'm a licensed professional counselor, and I provided strengths-based, trauma-informed mental health services to refugee and immigrant populations for over a decade. Later in today's session, we will be joined by two additional guest speakers, but in the meantime, I'm so excited to talk to you all today about the topic of self-care. Oh, staff care. So, not self-care, and that's an important takeaway.

Learning Objectives

MR: So the learning objectives that we have for today's session, by the end of the session, you will be able to describe causes of staff turnover and resettlement and the impact on agencies. Define professional burnout and its root causes, and third, identify organizational strategies to prevent staff burnout and improve retention and resettlement.

Poll Question

Which of the following best describes your role?

MR: All right, so we're going to start with a Slido question today we want to hear from you, so we will be using our favorite tool called Slido, so you can get out your mobile device and you can scan that QR code on the screen, or you can go to slido.com and enter the number that you see there on the screen, 6976151 to join us. And after you answered this question, please go ahead and keep that window open because we're going to have lots more Slido questions throughout today's presentation.

MR: So I see some results already coming in, I want to know who is in the audience with us today. So, it looks like I'm seeing, we'll wait for results to keep rolling in, but right now I'm seeing program managers at about 38%, it's the highest type of provider that we've got with us, we've also got direct service providers at 19%, supervisors at around 17%, and executive leadership joining us at about 16%, we've also got some folks who



don't identify as any of these, around 11%, so awesome, thank you all so much. The reason I ask this question is because this training, as you saw in the announcement, it is geared towards supervisors, managers and executive leaders, because what we're talking about today are organization-wide approaches, but for the direct service providers who we have in the audience, I am so glad that you here with us.

MR: I hope that we can learn from you in the Slidos throughout, and that you'll also learn some new information that might help you to advocate for what you need within your organizations.

1. Causes and Impact of Turnover

MR: All right, so we're going to jump into talking about the causes and impact of turnover.

Types of Turnover

MR: And to start, I just want to clarify that today we're going to be talking about voluntary turnover, so that's when an employee leaves the job of their own choosing, we're not talking about other types of turnover that might happen because of grants ending or layoffs due to funding challenges, we're also not talking about involuntary termination due to poor performance or policy violation. Those are both also really important concerns, but the way that we would go about addressing those would be entirely different than what we're going to talk about today.

Poll Question

In your opinion, why do you think there has been an increase in turnover in resettlement in recent years?

MR: Okay, next question, if you're anything like me, you've been hearing a lot about or maybe seeing firsthand at your agencies, a lot of voluntary turnover and resettlement in the past few years, much more than we're even used to. So, we just love to hear from you, in your opinion, why do you think this has been happening? What are some of the patterns or trends that you think might be contributing to this increased turnover in recent years. Record arrivals, complex cases, no increase in salary, burnout, staff stress, absolutely increasing work, but same low pay, incredibly hard challenges, emotional overload, APA, yeah, burnout, leadership changes, insufficient support, yeah, number of arrivals, difficulty of the job and emotional strain, no upward movement, it's no longer a career.

MR: Wow, these are really great. Thanks y'all. No support from leadership, stress, feeling unappreciated and under-funded, high expectations, too much work. No appreciation, it's just a stepping stone, work-life balance. These are great. Thanks y'all, I really appreciate that.

High Turnover

MR: All right, yeah, so we'll go ahead and we'll move over into our ideas for what patterns we've seen, what we think might be contributing to the high turnover, and we're going to talk about a lot of the things that y'all have mentioned so far in that last Slido, but really, there have been unprecedented stressors in resettlement in recent years, so I know that we're tired of talking about it, but the COVID-19 pandemic was a really big stressor that we want to stop thinking about, but it still lingers. The response to crisis in Afghanistan and Ukraine, both



of which led into a jump from very low to very high client arrivals in a short amount of time. We've also been seeing increasing unanticipated arrivals, so walk-ins, out migrations and folks seeking services that we just maybe weren't expecting. On top of all of this increased need for services, many agencies have also faced staffing constraints and low funding levels, which really creates a really stressful working environment for resettlement staff with high case loads and high stress and low pay, which you all hit home in the Slido. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we shifted to remote work quickly, which led to many changes in the way that we work.

MR: So, when I look through this list, I might even argue that constant change has been our main challenge over the last year, and when responding to sudden changes, we often operate in a state of urgency that makes it difficult to develop thoughtful and effective operating procedures, which can really just be another barrier to staff feeling effective in their work.

Impacts of Turnover

MR: Okay. So, impacts of turnover, how does turnover affect agencies? Well, first of all, it's extremely expensive, researchers at Gallup have estimated that the cost of replacing one employee, can range from one half to two times that employee's annual salary, and when we think about that, that is a big chunk out of our budget. Especially when we know how much turnover there's been. Turnover can, of course, also lead to dips and team morale, as we say goodbye to our friends and further, when we ask staff to cover the duties and case loads of the workers that we've lost, where then contributing to their potential future burnout and dissatisfaction with the work. Decreases in productivity can be expected as positions are unfilled and hiring managers take time away from their regular duties to then hire and onboard new staff. And when clients have their service providers leave, they inevitably see some disruption to their services as much as we try our best so that that's not the case.

MR: Of course, that happens as their case gets handed off to a different staff member and they have to start building a relationship with a new provider. And when we lose our really experienced staff who we have invested in, we also lose all of their knowledge of the systems, the clients, the community and yeah, the community resources that they've gained. And then finally, excessive turnover, if it's really excessive, really can be damaging to an agency's reputation in the community.

Common Reasons for Turnover in Resettlement

MR: Alright, so finally, I wanted to just quickly go over some patterns that we hear and that definitely showed up in the Slido about why staff are leaving their positions. We want to talk about this to make sure that we're framing out our discussion today and understanding what is going into staff's decision to leave, so that we can know where we might be able to make the most impact when it comes to retention. So, of course, the top patterns that we hear are compensation, especially with rising inflation, work-life balance, a staff's relationship with their managers, and then fatigue and burnout. In this webinar, we're going to talk about burnout and strategies for managing burnout, though I just want to plant a seed here that the other items on this list, they will be talked about as factors that could potentially lead to burn out.

MR: So, if we have a staff member that's leaving their position and they're citing a problem with compensation or a problem with work-life balance, that may be their primary reason, and that might also be someone who if they were going to remain in their position, may have continued on a path to burnout before exiting the organization.



2. Burnout

MR: Alright, so we're going to get into talking about burnout and its root causes, but I do want to just pause here briefly to acknowledge that today we're only talking about burnout and burnout prevention, because as you saw on the last slide, it's cited as a pretty common reason for turnover, but of course, we know that resettlement workers also commonly cope with issues of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue in addition to burnout. And because I think that those are both such big topics on their own, we're not going to be trying to discuss them today. If you're interested in learning more about vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, we have lots of resources in our resource library, we're going to drop a couple of links in the chat for you to check out and you can take a look at those later if you want to learn more.

Poll Question

True or false: self-care alone can prevent burnout.

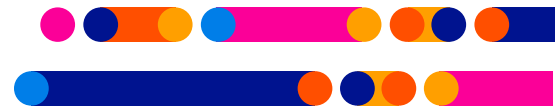
MR: Okay, we have another quick Slido for you, this one is a true/false. Self-care alone can prevent burnout. All right I'm seeing... Alright, now we've got a little bit of movement here, most people are saying this is false, but a couple of folks say, yeah, this might be true. Alright, we've got a pretty overwhelmingly false here.

Burnout

MR: I think we'll go ahead and just move along to the next slide, where we'll let you know that, yes, that is false. Self-care is a very important component in preventing burnout, but it's not the only component, so we'll go forward with the definition of burnout. So, according to the World Health Organization, burnout is the result of chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Burnout includes three dimensions, fatigue or exhaustion, negative feelings or cynicism towards one's job and reduced productivity and effectiveness at work.

MR: Burnout is often misinterpreted as a problem with an individual. So, we often say things like, Oh, this person is burnt out, she isn't setting good boundaries, she's not doing her self-care. And we talk about the things that the employee is not doing to solve the problem of their burnout themselves. When we view burnout in this way, we're placing all the blame with the employee, and we're really not placing any responsibility with the organization or the workplace factors that might be contributing to that burnout. So, I just want to share that when I was providing direct services as a case manager, I had a very large case load with very high needs individuals, and there was a time when one of my colleagues had left and I had to take on half of that person's case load in addition to my own, while we re-hired for their position.

MR: I was really overwhelmed, I could not keep up with my work, my voicemail was flooded, clients were mad at me, and I was just way behind on case notes, and one day I was in supervision and I was just in tears. I was having such a hard time, I do not like, not doing a good job. And so, my manager at that time responded by asking me, well what have you been doing for self-care, and she was very well-meaning, and that question, she meant no harm, but her asking me that question at that time really upset me. So, at that time, I was like, I'm working 60 hours a week. I'm trying to make sure that my clients have food, that they are housed, that they don't get evicted, that they're safe. That's more important to me right now. I don't have time to do my self-care



right now, but the thing that really upset me, I think about her asking that question at that time was that it really felt like it was my fault that I was struggling, so I was coming to her with these struggles, I'm in tears, I'm emotional.

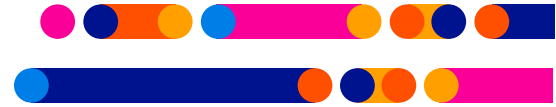
MR: And she's like, well, what are you doing about it? So, what I heard was that, this was my own fault, that I wasn't doing well, because I wasn't doing my self-care, and it may not have been what she meant at all, but it's just how it landed at the time. So, in reality, I think what I needed was more organizational support from my manager, I needed some staff care, I needed her to help me make a plan for how I was going to manage these cases and keep everyone safe and fed and housed. And maybe all I needed was for her to just say like, "Oh my gosh, I hear you, I see you are working so hard, we appreciate you so much." And like, maybe give me some light at the end of the tunnel, like maybe some update on where we were at with hiring. So, instead of viewing burnout as an individual's inability to meet the workplace demands, let's instead start recognizing that burnout is a result of chronic workplace stress, and then it's not our employees' sole responsibility to solve with self-care. We need to do what we can with what we have to make organizational changes that will serve our employees and prevent burnout.

Factors that Contribute to Burnout

MR: All right, so now we'll get into these six factors that contribute to burnout. This is based on decades of research on burnout that is summarized in a fantastic book called, 'The Burnout challenge,' by Christina Maslach and Michael Leiter. Much of the rest of this presentation is based on their research in that book. So, they propose that burnout rises from a mismatch between workers and workplaces. If the conditions in a workplace are not in alignment with worker needs, this can lead to a bad fit between the person and the job. And instead of leaving workers to use self-care techniques to try to manage their workplace stress, we should be spending some time trying to adapt the workplace for a better fit to the worker. So, this is a very individualized process, and even within the same work places, the same teams, different workers may be experiencing different mismatches and may need different solutions. So, these factors are categorized as work overload, lack of control, insufficient rewards, breakdown of community, absence of fairness and values conflict. A breakdown in even one of these categories can increase the risk of burnout if the stressor is chronic. So, if for instance, work overload is ongoing and long-lasting without sufficient periods of rest in between, this would be considered a chronic stressor that could lead to burn out. So, you can assess a chronic stressor as something that is exceeding a person's ability to cope over long periods of time.

MR: And we're going to get into each of these on the following slides.

MR: Alright, so the first two factors on that list that can lead to burnout are work overload and lack of control. We're going to cover these together because both results in employees being less effective at their jobs, which is ironic because high workloads and like control is usually intended to try to boost productivity, but instead of helping, they really end up doing the opposite. So, work overload is of course, just what it sounds like. It's working in an environment with high demands and low resources, which probably sounds pretty familiar to a lot of us. Another characteristic of work overload, maybe working outside of the traditional 9:00 to 5:00. So, this could be because you're working a lot of overtime because you can't fit all of the work into your 40 scheduled hours a week. It could also look like disruptions to a regular schedule, like those late night airport pickups. So, even if you get to flex the time later, not having a regular work schedule can be a risk factor depending on the employee. It's not a problem for everybody. It could end up being a problem for some people.



MR: Work overload can also result from a mismatch with competencies. So, that might be working in a job that is too advanced for your skill level or actually below your capabilities and just not challenging enough. Emotional labor, this can also be called heart work. So the work of building those trusting relationships with our clients, this type of emotional labor is often what draws us to the field. It's the thing that we're passionate about, but it can also be a risk factor for work overload, because that heart work really needs longer periods of rest and recovery. Alright, and next step is lack of control. A lack of control over your work is another factor that can contribute to burnout and make employees less effective. People want to be able to make choices. They want to be able to use the skills that they've brought with them to the job, and they want to have input in their workplaces.

MR: When employees have a lack of control at work, they can feel very ineffective and undervalued and become cynical about the workplace. So examples of how this might show up include micromanagement and a lack of autonomy. So, when superiors aren't trusting of their employees to do good work independently they might become overbearing and try to control every small task. This management style can lead to or be in response to a fear of making mistakes. So, when staff worry that they'll be punished, maybe they'll be demoted or fired for making mistakes. It can leave staff feeling really resentful and it can create an environment where people are afraid to try new things or be creative. It leads to lower productivity as staff second guess their work all the time and they're seeking unnecessary approval because they're afraid of making a mistake. And then lack of control over caseload size, work schedule, or other things, which of course may be necessary from an operation standpoint but can contribute to an overall feeling of lack of control. So, if a caseworker is feeling that their caseload is too high but they continue to get new cases, maybe they're getting cases that are really complex or outside of their skill level that can lead them to feel like there's a lack of control and a lack of effectiveness.

MR: All right, so next up, we have insufficient rewards and breakdowns in community. Both of these can create toxic work environments and work can become a place that people dread. So, insufficient rewards at work can obviously include low pay or benefits, which is what we most commonly think of when we talk about rewards. But it can also include few promotions, lack of recognition, not feeling appreciated or not feeling good about the work that's being done. So, an example of that may be like, again, if someone's caseload is getting too high, maybe client care begins to suffer. Like in my case, in my example, and caseworkers are just not feeling good about the work that they're doing, even though they're trying their best. This is really problematic in our field because most people in our line of work came here because they want to help people and they want to make a difference. So, if they're not having those types of positive experiences with clients, they've really just lost their reason for working here, and that could be just as detrimental as low pay. So, rewards are a really important way that we show employees that we value them, we think they're doing good work, and insufficient rewards can make employees feel devalued and underappreciated.

MR: Next, when coworkers are unsupportive, untrustworthy and generally uncivil, it leads to a breakdown in community. You can usually sense this right away, when you walk into a place, you walk into the room, there's a lot of tension, people aren't getting along, you can really pick up on that. A competitive environment can also contribute to this breakdown when workers feel like they're constantly in direct competition for raises or recognition, which goes back to that scarcity, if there's not enough to go around. Bias like racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination can really directly fuel a community breakdown. And lastly, unsupportive supervisors, whether that's because maybe they're burnt out themselves or they're stretched too thin. If supervisors can't provide the necessary support, it's just further exacerbating these issues because now staff can't rely on their supervisors to support them when they're in these difficult work environments.



MR: Okay. And then, finally we have an absence of fairness and values conflicts. These can both result in employees feeling disconnected from the work. So, fairness is important to building a foundation of trust in the workplace. Workers need to know that decisions are being made equitably and that they have a voice in their workplace. Absence of fairness can look like unfair or unjust decision-making or lack of respect, exploitation, favoritism, and unequal treatment of staff. And just a note on this absence of fairness is that it doesn't actually matter that much whether it really is unfair or whether it's being perceived as unfair by staff. So if, for example, if someone receives a promotion, but the hiring process was viewed as being unfair by other people on the team, whether or not that's really true, the problem is still there. And when employees are feeling like their workplace is unfair, it can quickly lead them to feeling disconnected.

MR: Okay, next up. Our values are often what bring us to this work. So, values conflicts can contribute to employees becoming more disconnected from the work. If an employee's moral principles clash with the values at their agency, that can cause major issues and lead to disengagement. This is also where moral injury can crop up or come into play. When employees are torn between doing what they believe is right and what their agency is expecting or demanding them to do, that can be really problematic. Again, especially in resettlement work where employees are here because they want to help people. Other values conflicts may pop up when there's a discrepancy between what is said and done at the agency or when productivity is prioritized over client care.

MR: Additionally, if employees don't find their work meaningful, if they've lost their why for doing the work, that's a really big risk factor for disengagement.

Discussion Question

Which of these six factors do you think is the biggest concern for your employees?

MR: Okay, so we've got another Slido for y'all. I'd love to know of this six factors that we just went over, which do you think is the biggest concern for your employees right now? You know, it's likely that there's multiple of these, but you can only pick one. So, let me know. Okay, I'm seeing work overload come in as the biggest here at 54%, that's huge. Next is insufficient rewards at 22%.

MR: And then we have lack of control, absence of fairness, breakdown of community, and finally is values conflict, which is not super surprising to me, of course, because many times the values are going to be aligned with the workers who are in resettlement and then doing the work. So yeah, work overload. That's a big one.

3. Organizational Strategies for Prevention

MR: Okay, thank y'all. We'll move now into strategies to help prevent burnout.

How Can We Cool the Kitchen?

MR: So, we can start getting into the positive here. But just to frame out this conversation we'll start by talking about the American expression. If you can't take the heat, get outta the kitchen. So, if you're unfamiliar with this expression, it means if you can't handle the stress or pressure of a situation, then you should leave. And I think it's a pretty good metaphor for how we sometimes treat our employees who are burning out.



MR: Like we've already discussed, we say that's on them. They couldn't handle the workload, they should have done their self-care. And when we go to hire the next person who's going to replace them, we ask a lot of questions about like, how well do you work in a fast-paced environment? Trying to figure out if the next person's going to be able to handle the workload better. When instead we should just consider asking ourselves, how can we cool the kitchen? Like what environmental or organizational changes can we make to help our employees stay? Like, do we need a fan in the kitchen? Do we need an air conditioner? Do we need less fires or like more breaks outside of the kitchen? So, we're going to revisit those six factors that we just described but from the lens of what can we do as employers to create better matches between workers and workplaces?

MR: Alright. And so, before we launch into lots of ideas that we have for creating better matches, I want to pause for a little disclaimer. Every agency, every office, every team, every worker is unique. And so, I can't sit here and give you the exact solution that's going to work for your situation, for your office, but we can talk through some general guidelines and see some examples. So, if you want to start putting some new strategies in place in your office, that is amazing. That's all I could ever hope for at the end of this presentation. But just consider these three steps before you embark on any big changes at your agency. So, number one, make sure that you're collaborating with your staff. We may think that we know what the primary mismatches are for our staff, and maybe we know generally speaking, what's the problem for most of our staff.

MR: But until we ask and truly collaborate with them, we may end up wasting a lot of time trying to solve the wrong problems that aren't really going to get us anywhere. Second, customize any strategy to meet your agency's unique needs. And third, you really have to be committed to sustained effort on this. We know that the problem of staff turnover and professional burnout are big issues in our field. We know that they can't be solved with things like pizza parties or with minimal effort really. So, addressing employee burnout really needs to be a priority for leadership if you're going to make any sustained lasting progress here.

Poll Question

As an employee, what would help you be more effective at work?

MR: Okay, another question for you all. As an employee, what would help you feel more effective at work? That's a tough one. So, you might also think what have you heard from your staff recently about some barriers that are getting in their way? What might help them be more effective? Work-life balance, support, dedication, knowing that the job is bigger than me. Feeling appreciated, merit increases, sure. Not feeling, afraid to go to management, to ask for emotional support. More clear systems like that one. Respectful communication, written and enforced SOPs, financial resources for clients. More training, upper management, listening to ground level staff. Paying for my gym membership, I like that.

MR: Annual raises being appreciated, more clear systems and training, yeah. Word of supervisors. Ability to provide health insurance, training for new employees. Having a forum to share ideas, actual decision making power, respect. These are really great... An espresso machine, better snacks. Alright, amazing. Regular acknowledgement, better systems, four day work week, I like these. Affordable mental health support. Cool.

Result: Increased Effectiveness

MR: Okay, I'm going to move on just in the interest of time, but these are really great. I so appreciate that. Okay. And we're going to talk about how can we address workload when we can't control the number of arrivals



and when we don't have funds to hire more workers. This was the biggest question that came in in our pre-registration question for this webinar.

MR: So, on this issue of workload, again, which we saw as like the highest priority in our Slido. Here are some ideas for what you can do if you can't hire more folks and reduce caseload size, focus on recovery. Find any ways that we can to support workers rest and recovery throughout the year. So, this might look like anticipating busy times and planning for them. It might also be encouraging staff to flex their time if they're working extra hours to meet an important deadline, allowing them to then flex that time later on. Maybe planning for some downtime for staff during the beginning of the fiscal year when we know that we see fewer new arrivals. And making sure that even though when a job gets really busy, that we're able to create some balance and some periods of rest and recovery. Like maybe we're going to have some times where we're sprinting, but you have to stop and have like a little bit of a break before you can go on to the next sprint. So, consider creating spaces in the office for employee breaks and relaxation.

MR: So, this might be a special room or an area of the office that is for staff to take a break to relax, maybe even take a nap. And management should model using these spaces too, so that staff see that it really is okay to use the break room to take a break. And of course, encourage staff to leave at the end of their shifts, to take breaks and to use their paid time off. Second, achieve a better balance by either increasing resources or decreasing demands. So for example, if we can't decrease caseloads, can we reduce administrative tasks? Can we reduce paperwork or data entry or meetings? Can we increase resources for direct service staff, maybe with support from volunteers whenever possible. I think that this came up in our, in our last Slido as well try to improve organizational processes that are going to help people work more efficiently. And then finally balance new additions with subtractions. So, our work is ever changing...

MR: We're constantly refining our processes, and sometimes that means adding new things on to workers plates to prevent tasks from piling up, whenever possible when you add a new procedure, see if there's something else from an employee's workflow that you can remove and take away.

MR: Third, secular boundaries between work and non-work. So, help staff separate from their work when they're off the clock by not sending emails or text after hours, or helping your employees make sure that they are disconnecting from their email, turning off a workflow, that thing. Consider ways to help staff get the work done while they're at work, so many people have found success with initiatives like no meeting Fridays so staff can engage in deep work or scheduling times when the entire office is close to clients, so that everybody can have a little buffer for paperwork time.

MR: Okay, next is increased choice and control. So, having more control over how and when you do your work can also make a really big impact when it comes to increasing our effectiveness. So, one tip here is assume the best of your workers when they are out in the field, when they're working remotely, trust that your employees are going to provide reasonable levels of productivity without intense monitoring that is really undermining your trust in them.

MR: When staff have good onboarding, they are much more likely to feel competent in their work or be able to do their jobs independently and then can be given more autonomy. So, even though it can be a lot of time upfront, one of the core recommendations is not to skimp on the onboarding training.



MR: And then advocating for changes that will improve the work. Find out what is bothering your stuff, maybe it's having to enter data into multiple different places, wherever you can alleviate a pain point, do so even if it's small, even if it seems minor, anything that you can do to take off of our employees plates is helpful.

MR: Create flexibility in policies. So again, make sure that our policies are flexible so that supervisors are able to accommodate a variety of working styles and preferences. Don't underestimate the power of flexible policies like allowing employees to work for 10-hour shifts, which I know was one of the ideas we saw on the Slido.

Poll Question

In one word, how would you describe a “healthy” work culture?

MR: Okay. Next up, a healthy work culture. What does that even look like? How would you describe healthy work culture, if you can? Please paint me a picture. So to me, I think this is an environment where employees feel valued, supported, they feel motivated to do good work. Trust is coming through, really big here.

MR: Fairness, it's clarity. Super important equity. Respect, balance, autonomy, structure, absolutely. Being open and honest without fear of judgment, mutual respect and support, these are great. Synergy, teamwork, positivity, happy, productive, peaceful, life-giving, yeah. Vacation, this is a very healthy workplace, I love it. Collaboration, welcoming work-life balance. Yeah.

Result: Healthy Work Culture

MR: Okay, thank you. I think we'll go ahead and move on. Okay, so adequate rewards and recognition and supportive work communities are to me, a big part of what make up a healthy work culture. Rewards contribute to a healthy work culture because they convey that positive feedback and are making employees feel that their work is valued. So, make it a priority to create balance between the effort that your staff put in and the rewards that they are receiving. I would also challenge us to think about how we might be able to get creative with promotions that keep our staff doing direct services. So, most often in our field when folks get a promotion, they're being promoted to supervisor, and they're no longer working with clients, so a great conversation that we've had here at Switchboard and with other folks is, how can we keep our talented staff doing what they're best at while still providing them with opportunities to grow and advance in their careers?

MR: More on rewards, provide positive feedback really goes a long way for people, and think about how you might create a culture of appreciation among employees. Where employees have the opportunity to celebrate each other and express gratitude to each other, and that's just the culture of the organization.

MR: And create opportunities for fulfilling work. Most of us did not join the field because we love writing case notes, so whenever possible, let's try to sit down and think about how we can, of course, while still doing case notes, make the work more meaningful for staff. Okay, next, develop a supportive community and a sense of belonging at work, work to establish psychological safety for all your staff, staff should be provided with open communication, clear expectations, respect and a safe environment to make mistakes. I'm not going to go into depth about how to create psychological safety in this presentation, but it is important to have some ongoing trainings on the topic for all of the supervisors, managers and leaders at your organization.

MR: Additionally, we hope that you will be able to provide training opportunities to your staff so that they can continue to deepen their skills and feel like they are progressing in their careers. To some people, fulfillment at



work means that they are learning and developing new skills, and then finally create opportunities for mentorship. So, ensure that social support is available, that people have trusted colleagues that they can turn to for advice and help. Mentoring, especially when it has that professional development component can be really invaluable.

Poll Question

What is your “why” for doing this work?

MR: Alright, and now it's time for our favorite question here at Switchboard, what is your why for doing this work? Why do you do this work? The work is so hard. We know that. So what keeps you going every day? Making a difference, I'm a refugee myself. Passion for helping people, cool team. People depend on me, be here for staff. Okay, I'm seeing, I don't know anymore. That's important. I thank you for the honesty with that. Help people, alignment with my goal, want to inspire people, believe in a better world, passion to help. Knowing that I'm making a small change in a funky world, contribution to social justice, growth of clients, love our clients, helping people. Love our office and co-workers.

MR: Amazing. Making a difference. So, one of the reasons that this is one of our favorite questions at Switchboard is because sometimes we misplace that why and we lose the focus. So, any time that we have even a minute like this just to reconnect to why we do this can be really helpful. Right. Well, we'll go ahead and move forward again, just in the interest of time, sorry to cut anyone off who was still responding.

Result: Meaningful Connection to Work

MR: But the next slide, help connect your employees to their why. It's important for you to stay connected to yours, and if you're supporting employees, try to help them connect to their why. Always work to make fairness, respect and social justice the norm at your agency. Do this by prioritizing transparency throughout the agency, but especially when it comes to performance metrics and promotion processes, these types of things, if staff know what they need to do to be successful, they will perceive the workplace as a fair place. Create a culture of respect, which of course includes not just your words, but your actions, rotate unpopular tasks at work whenever possible, if you can rotate who makes the coffee in the morning or unloads the dishwasher, I think that would make everybody a little bit happier.

MR: Promote equality and equity by treating everyone without bias or favoritism and giving every employee what they need to achieve equal outcomes. And then finally, aligned values will connect your employees to meaningful work. So here we want to do our best to help our employees have positive experiences, of course, smaller case loads, decreased workload would help immensely. That might help service providers get to know their clients better, might help them feel more connected to each of their clients and were connected to the work.

MR: Help staff see their impact. So in the helping field, we want to feel like we're helping. If you can, again, people forget, sometimes help remind them of the impact that they're making, since case notes are an important part of the job. Help staff connect why the paperwork is important, help them make the paperwork work for them, it's tracking all of the great work that they're doing and all of the client's progress.

MR: And then our last note on this slide is about hiring the right people. I know that's a bit challenging, but what it really means is trying your best to match competency levels with the job, so as we discussed before,



working in a role that's too simple or too challenging can both be factors that lead to burnout, so let's just do our best to get people in their right roles and then support them with continued training and opportunities to challenge themselves.

Discussion Question

What innovative approaches can resettlement offices take to support staff care and retention?

MR: Okay, and now we'll move on to our last Slido before we have our amazing guest speakers. So, you've heard a lot from me, you're going to hear some more from our guest speakers, but I know that we have a wealth of knowledge in the Zoom room with us today, so I want to take this opportunity to hear from you all, what ideas do you have, what innovative approaches do you think resettlement offices can take to support the efforts of staff care and retention. Research pay for major projects, Summer Fridays, I want to learn more about Summer Fridays.

MR: I don't know what that is. But that sounds really cool. Four-day workweek, better training, team retreats, decreased staff documentation with better systems. I saw a move it four-day work week is up there you guys, half day Friday in the summer. Okay, that must be Summer Fridays. Work from home autonomy. Flex working. Oh my gosh, these are going so fast because you'll have so many ideas.

MR: Templates for documentation that are up-to-date and comprehensive, staff retreats, better software, better software, [chuckle] better pay, regular supervision times, really important, and that seems like a problem that could be solved. Art therapy available, counseling. Better software.

MR: Transparency, clear, consistent systems. Team Spa Day, that sounds really nice. Okay. Encouraging staff to use PTO. Sincere acts of appreciation from leadership. Absolutely. It's so huge. Encouraging self-care, updating software to allow quick case notes from template, yeah, that would help. Activities outside of work. A routine employee surveys. Alright, great, I think we're going to go ahead and move on, because I want to have lots of time for our speakers today.

Q&A Panel

MR: So, I am delighted to introduce two folks from Interfaith Works of Central New York. We're going to share six successful staff care initiatives that they have implemented in their office.

MR: I think that these initiatives are just a beautiful, glowing example of some ways that you can put the organizational strategies that we've just discussed into practice like they've done it. So let's hear from them. First, I'm going to introduce Marwah Alobaidi. She serves as the director of resettlement services at Interfaith Works of Central New York based in Syracuse. With 13 years of extensive experience in the resilient sector, Marwah primarily focuses on the initial resettlement process through the reception placement program, employee services and housing programs.

MR: As a former refugee from Iraq, Marwah resettled in the United States in 2008. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Executive Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. And we have Genevieve Marshall, who serves as the Director of Health and Integration services for the Center of New Americans at Interfaith Works. She holds a master's degree of social work from Syracuse University, and first started working with refugee and immigrant communities during her 2015 field



placement where she supported exceptionally vulnerable refugees with complex medical mental health and social needs. Genevieve officially began working at Interfaith Works in 2017, and currently oversees the intensive case management, immigration services and health and wellness programs. Big welcome to you both, and I'm going to hand it over to Marwah to get us started.

Marwah Alobaidi: Thank you, Megan. Thank you for including us in today's webinar. As Megan mentioned, my name is Marwah Alobaidi, and I am the Director for Resettlement Services here at Interfaith Works. And today, I am excited to walk you through some of our key initiatives that are designed to enhance the well-being and the professional growth of our staff.

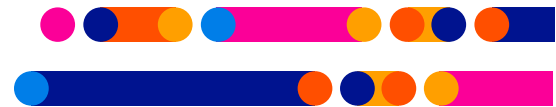
MA: So as a human service organization centered around serving people, our staff needs with our clients every day, they listen to their stories, to the all trauma that our client has gone through, our staff is always busy, and as of just recently, most of you mentioned our work load factor, so the agency considered the importance of helping employees find ways to relieve the stress, while at the same time creating an appreciative workplace culture. So, one of the things that the agency has come out with is launching our Wellness at IFW program. So the program launched in 2019, and it's aimed at promoting the mental and the physical well-being among our staff. So the sessions are typically 15 minutes a break that take place twice a week, every Tuesday and Thursday from 2:30 to 2:45. And the activities led by Wellness Committee who's formed from various staff from different departments of our agencies, and the activities are very weekly.

MA: So examples, if the weather is nice, we have an outdoor work. We sometimes have guided meditation sessions like yoga or Tai chi, or even sometimes we have fun games like bingo or musical chairs. So, these activities are not only fun, but also have become highly anticipated part of our work week.

MA: The other thing that I would like to share also is our recharge room. So, as we try to engage different sets of employing needs, we found that people love the socialization aspect as well as they love to have their private time when it comes to resting too. So as a response to the staff need, in March of 2023, the agency took another step towards the enhancing the stuff and the well-being by opening our recharge room. So, the recharge room is available to all the staff in a 15-minute reservation slots, and the space provides a quiet retreat where staff can take break to decompress during a busy day, or even sometimes if they want to take 15 minutes nap or if they want to use it as a space for a prayer. The room is equipped with amenities such as laundry, meditation cushion, refrigerated salt water, and wellness resources and information.

MA: And as we always try to engage our staff feedback, we found that this initiative is already proven to be valuable resources for our staff, and it's offering a much needed pause in the midst of their day-to-day responsibilities. The last thing that I will share with you today, then I will pass it to my colleague, is our onboarding program. So, two years ago, our agency introduced a comprehensive onboarding program tailored specifically for our needs. So, the program includes both agency specific trainings and job specific training modules. We also have an onboarding committee, which is a cohort of staff who volunteer to assist in the onboarding process. So, after we have implemented, after one year, we conducted an assessment to measure its impact, and through focus group we gather insight, which led us to update our training to include our morning meet and greet for new staff members.

MA: So, the session of meet and greet include inviting all staff members from all across the agency to meet the staff, the new staff members in the morning while enjoying coffee and donuts. The session received very positive feedback from the new staff member and it helped us building the social connections among our staff, we've also implemented a greeter that welcome the new staff member at the door and a buddy staff member



who is designed person, who is available to answer question or helping new staff navigate the agency through the onboarding phase as this is our approach for ensuring our new employees feeling welcome and supported from day one. And I will pass it for my colleague Genevieve.

Genevieve Marshall: Thank you so much Marwah, and thank you guys again at Switchboard for having us today. So, as Megan said, my name is Genevieve Marshall and I'm going to share with you today the last three examples of our staff and wellness, retention strategies here at Interfaith Works. So, professional development is really a key initiative in staff care and retention for us here at this agency. And we've always had professional development opportunities available throughout the years to our staff, but we had not always had them with any type of consistency. So, that changed for us in 2022 when we introduced a more formal professional development project called Affirming Leadership. So, Affirming Leadership is an internal program that's really geared towards staff with supervisory responsibilities at all levels at the organization.

GM: So, coordinators, managers, directors, all the way up to our president and CEO come together to participate in these sessions. And sessions are held on a monthly basis. Typically there's a formal training opportunity that's held one month and then a conversational or a debrief group that's held the following month to discuss progress towards implementation of any new strategies or challenges that folks have experienced or successes and things like that. So, activities typically in these sessions have included... We've utilized external trainers primarily, and partners, and they've come to do sessions on conflict management, best practices and supervision, right? So like how to structure supervision sessions or how to provide feedback. So, a little bit of a roadmap there as we have new people being promoted up into supervisory level positions, trauma informed supervision practices and more.

GM: We also have had, through affirming leadership, a fair number of peer led sessions including training on best supports to LGBTQIA plus community members, how to navigate staff accommodations and then also highlights from seven habits of highly successful people training that some of the staff attended came back to share with the rest of us. And that ultimately actually resulted in a spinoff book club session with 20 of our staff. So, we have tried that as well. We have about 23 supervisors and managers that are currently participating in these monthly training sessions. And that number is continuing to grow as we promote up from within. And then during these sessions, we also elicit input and feedback from the affirming Leadership group to shape agency policies and practices including how to enhance employee recognition and acknowledgement for retention.

GM: So, next we have what we lovingly refer to as four out of 40. So, this is a program that really came about in response to kind of, we talked about this... Megan talked about this a little bit earlier, to the idea that another way to care for our team actually is creating a work environment for folks that allows them to be productive. So, there's tons and tons of interruptions obviously in this work and that come up during the day. And we have many staff who get even more stressed out from not actually feeling like they are or being productive throughout the course of the day. So, they have a new crisis that comes up, but then all of that other work is piling up simultaneously. So in February, 2023, we piloted this four out of 40 program, which is a four hour block of time on Wednesday afternoons, which is really dedicated for our staff to do deep work.

GM: So, during this time we try to limit interruptions as much as possible. So, our front desk team takes messages from both people coming in... Clients walking in or incoming phone calls really trying to limit our team getting interrupted. And then we're also asked towards one another not to knock on doors or call each other during this time to have that protected time. So, we first started doing this, it was actually intensely quiet in the offices during this time. So, it was a very audibly a huge difference. And then obviously this isn't always



feasible, so in the event of client emergencies or appointments that cannot be rescheduled, we ask that the team member try to take their quiet time on another day of the week if possible.

GM: But it does work really, really well when it's a strategy that can be utilized. And I'll also add, I think for us really trying to provide a lot of variety in the strategies that we are utilizing is key for us to support as many staff people as possible. So, finally, I will move on to our staff newsletter this is the last example that we'll highlight today. So, based on feedback from the staff satisfaction survey that we conducted in 2021, we introduced our agency newsletter. So, we call it, The 1010 Today. And it's really to improve communications between our growing team to keep staff members updated on notable developments happening at the agency. So, when we're having building renovations or agency events and all staff members are invited to contribute content to each edition.

MA: So, this is released on a monthly basis. We also have a staff member highlighted in every single edition. So, they're interviewed by our development team and then other staff can learn more about this individual's interests or their personal background. And the newsletter also includes a shout out section where staff can really highlight the great work that one another is doing on the team. We also include employment, anniversaries, birthdays, or other notable personal milestones such as graduations or a birth or adoption of children in the newsletter. So I'll toss it back to Megan.

Are there survey tools to regularly assess staff burnout?

MR: Okay. Thank you so much, Marwah and Genevieve. I mean, I can talk all day about ideas and strategies, but to hear from you guys about what you've done to really put these into practice, what's actually... You've actually done and what's actually been working is just so great. I really appreciate you both being here. So, we have some time for take... We can take a few questions, I don't see much going on in the Q&A right now. So, I might turn us to a question or two that we received in our pre-registration for this webinar. And one of them was a question about are there any survey tools to more regularly a staff... Address or assess staff burnout? Are there survey tools to more regularly assess staff burnout? So, I have linked the professional quality of life tool in our resources.

MR: But I will note that this is only to be used for your employee's self-reflection and that the answers to that are to be private to the employee. So, that's probably not super helpful as a survey tool but it is a helpful burnout assessment. In the Maslach and Leiter research that I have, shared about throughout this presentation, they mentioned both the areas of work life survey and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. I can put those names in the chat if you're interested in looking into those some more, but I'd also love to pass that back to Genevieve and Marwah if there's anything else that either of you would like to share about that survey that you said you did for your staff in 2021.

GM: I mean, I think I would just add, I mean we did not at the time do... We've done a few all staff surveys. We've done some generally about how the agency feels as a whole related to environment, workplace culture and things like that. And then we've done other sets of surveys that are targeted more towards the staff care aspect and like evaluating the offerings that we've tried and trying to elicit feedback around what would get employees engaged and what really do they need. So, I don't think we've taken throughout any of those areas anything off of peer reviewed models or anything like that. But we definitely have had questions in terms of around feeling like workload is out of balance or hours aren't ideal or even things around compensation, things like that.



How do you get teams to volunteer for wellness sessions?

MR: Yeah, absolutely. Definitely doesn't have to be a researched and peer reviewed survey to be really beneficial and to hear back from voices of staff. So, thank you for that. We have another question for Genevieve and Marwah that's in the chat. And the question is, I would love to hear more about the wellness sessions. How do you get teams to volunteer for those? Any thoughts?

MA: So, as I mentioned, throughout the agency, we have many committees. So, we have the onboarding committee, the wellness committee, the environmental committee and staff are always encouraged and welcome to participate. So, we announced that through our like staff meetings or when we have any activities, if staff like to involve and participate in putting their ideas they can do that. So, that's how we usually form our committees.

GM: I would add too, initially we had some incentives. When we first started the program, it was really incentive based because it was brand new and we were really trying to get involvement. And so, out of that also came for the participation level. It was like as many people that were participating in leading sessions. If we reached a certain number of participation points, we were going to get a smoothie maker for the office and like other things to add benefit. So, we did initially have some incentive based initiatives as well.

MA: And I also would like to add that we always make reminders for staff to utilize these sessions or utilize the recharge room. So, our front desk coordinator always make these announcement like if you feel busy, feel free to make a reservation for the recharge room. Or the same thing when we hold the wellness session, we make announcement and encourage staff to participate.

Conclusion

MR: Thank you both so much. There are so many more great questions in the Q&A and we'll see what options we have for maybe addressing some of these in a future offering from Switchboard. Because unfortunately we have to move on, we have just one minute left. But thank you so much Genevieve and Marwah.

Reviewing Learning Objectives

MR: You'll see here we have our learning objectives back up on the screen. We do hope that we have met our learning objectives for today and we will move on to our feedback survey.

MR: We want to make sure that we have a chance to have you all open up this survey and get it started. This is just five questions long, it takes only 60 seconds to complete and it is so invaluable for us. We look very closely at all the feedback that we get. I read every single comment and it can really help us improve our offerings for you all. So, please take out your mobile device, scan that QR code, or I know that my colleague has put the link in the chat, so you can click the link there and we'll give you just a couple of seconds before we move on.

MR: All right, thank you. We'll also send that link out in our email that will come out in the next 24 hours. So if you didn't have time right now, please try to take that survey when you have a chance.

Recommended Resources



MR: We have recommended resources for you, of course, continued learning on this topic. All of these links will be available in the copy of the slide deck that we send out, so you'll have access to all of these resources within 24 hours.

Stay Connected

MR: And finally we hope that you will stay connected with us. Visit us at switchboardta.org, check out our social media. On behalf of all of us at Switchboard, thank you so much for joining us today and we hope to see you all again soon.

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