Introduction to Safety Culture in Tennessee

Based on the work of Michael Cull, PhD and Tiffany Goodpasture, LPC-MHSP
Nearly 75% of social workers had experienced at least one symptom of secondary traumatic stress in the previous week.

62% of child protective caseworkers exhibited signs of emotional exhaustion.

Turnover

• 30% and can range as high as 85% among our nation's child welfare agencies (Ellett & Millar, 2001, Jordan Institute for Families, 1999 and Thomas, 1998).


• Burnout may explain more than 30% of turnover Drake, B., & Yadama, G. N. (1996).
Scope of the problem

Annual turnover at 30%...

...600-700 case manager positions per year

Number of MSSWs graduated by UT College of Social work

200
Why do they leave?

• Availability of employment alternatives

• Low organizational and professional commitment

• Stress, burnout and job dissatisfaction

• Lack of social support and poor supervision

TAKE CARE
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Three Levels of Stress Response

Positive
Brief increases in heart rate.
Mild elevations in stress hormone levels

Tolerable
Serious, temporary stress responses,
Buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic
Prolonged activation of stress response systems
In the absence of protective relationships.
Interplay of Stress and Fatigue

"The emotional centers of the brain were over 60 percent more reactive under conditions of sleep deprivation than in subjects who had obtained a normal night of sleep,"

Walker et. al., *Current Biology, October 2014*
ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS
- Budget Cuts
- Limited Resources

OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS
- Service Array
- High Caseloads
- Turnover
- Paperwork

SAFE WORK BOUNDARY
- Error Margin
- Failure Point
- Safety Culture

Work as Prescribed

Cook & Rasmussen (2005)
Safety Science

– Interdisciplinary science that draws on psychology, engineering, medicine, architecture/design and may other related fields.

– Concerns itself with understanding how humans interact with and within complex system so those systems can be made more safe and reliable.

Safety Culture

– A culture in which organizational values, attitudes, and behaviors support an engaged workforce and reliable care delivery.
Safety Culture in Child Welfare

Leaders in a safety culture:
- Strive to balance systems and individual accountability; and
- Value open communication, transparency, and continuous learning and improvement.

Teams in a safety culture
- Monitor themselves, their colleagues, and their system for stress
- Anticipate and respond to unexpected events

Cull, Rzepnicki, O’Day, & Epstein (2013)
Safety Critical Industries

- Healthcare
- Commercial Aviation
- Nuclear Power
Measuring Our Safety Culture
Survey Dimensions

Safety Climate

- Personal Safety
- Psychological Safety
- Burnout
- Safety Organizing
Survey Dimensions

Perceived organizational attributes related to safety which may be induced by policies and practices.
The shared belief that team members are accepted, respected, and safe to take interpersonal risks.
Survey Dimensions

Behaviors that support rapid detection and correction of errors and unexpected events.
Exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration.
Survey Dimensions

The perception of personal safety and its impact on work behaviors.
Team Culture Check-ups
Structuring the Conversation

Equipping supervisors to have safe, thoughtful conversations with staff

• Creating a safe atmosphere
• Share and explain data
• Guided discussion
I feel used up at the end of the work day

I feel emotionally drained from my work

I dread getting up in the morning and having to face another day on the job

I feel burned out from my work
There have been times I wanted to decline an assignment because I felt unsafe
I have ended a visit early because I felt unsafe
I have left before entering a home because I felt unsafe
I feel safe working alone in the field
I feel safe in the field
Plan Forward: PREP Huddles

**Ground rules**

- Standing can be better than sitting (it depends)
- Keep it short
- Start and end on time

**Prepare**

Have needed information gathered in advance

**Review**

State the purpose

Always ask: “What are we each concerned about?”

**Enact**

Make a plan. Be intentional. Finish what you start.

**Promote Resilience**

Teams are our foundation and greatest source of safety we have. Build up, not tear down.
Reflecting Back: Planned Debriefs

Used when things did not go as intended (e.g., recurrent maltreatment, placement disruption, team member placed in unsafe situation)

Ask three simple questions
  – What went well?
  – What could have been better?
  – What will we do differently next time?

Without psychological safety, honest and supportive debriefings are unlikely to occur.
Teams: The Relevance of Appreciation and Rituals

- Engage in team building activities: lunch, bowling, walking in the park, office challenges.

- Recognizing signs of fatigue, stress, and/or secondary trauma. Find solutions to help de-stress. Be creative.

- Go for walks together. Don’t talk about work.

- Find simple, creative ways to show appreciation.
Smoky Mountain Team:

Managing Flow of P1 Assignments: Offering consistency in the midst of crisis-driven work

Beginning of every month, CPSIs select one day per week to serve off-rotation from P1 assignments

*Case closures and FAST timeliness have improved. CPSIs have spoken so highly of it a nearby CPSI team has also adopted the practice.
TN Valley Team:

Using SafeMeasures “heat maps” to promote shared casework: This encouraged the teams to become more familiar with this new technology as well as to work with their teammates to “clear the map.”
Mid-Cumberland Team:

Appreciative and Inclusive Actions: *being conscientious to express multi-program area appreciation and teaming*

In addition what is pictured here, the BSC team has initiated “team time” at the beginning and end of each week. They share **good** and **poor outcomes** in their cases and use this time to create **safe space** for celebrating successes and learning (as a **team**) from unwanted outcomes.

*They report this time together has fostered learning and trust.*
Southwest Team:

Pre-CFTM Huddles: *opening communication and minimizing risks by planning ahead*

Prior to CFTMs where hard discussions and/or removals are likely to occur, internal and external professionals get together 15 minutes early to “plan ahead” (e.g. anticipate risks, communicate safety concerns)

*CFTMs run more smoothly, feels more professional/organized, better two-way communication with providers, finding solutions to prevent custody, more timely placements, increased safety*

Additional regions, including Knox, Upper Cumberland, Northwest, and TN Valley have integrated huddles into their work.
Finding quicker solutions through Huddles:
Shelby has used huddles to quickly craft plans after unwanted events (e.g., service disruptions) and to share regional updates. One LI holds a team huddle every Monday from 3:00-3:15pm to exchange information from 1st to 2nd shift.

Shelby reports this has been successful, proactive (rather than reactive), efficient, more streamlined communication, and has prevented unnecessary custodial entrances.