Creating a Green Workplace: Developing an Emotionally Non-Toxic Environment to Prevent Home Visitor Burnout
Presentation Outline

• Findings from a home visitor survey by Eunju Lee, Center for Human Services Research, University at Albany

• Details of program management by Nikki (last name), her center?

• Review of PCA Training by Ellen Butowsky
Findings from a Survey of Family Support Workers

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Purpose

• To gain an understanding of Family Support Workers (FSW)
• To gather worker data for program evaluation
• To contribute to the literature on the relationship between work environment and burnout
Previous Research

• Burnout is a serious concern in social services considering its relation to job satisfaction, effectiveness of service delivery, and turnover rate (Arches, 1991)
• Work stress is related more to organizational aspects of the work environment rather than to personal attributes (Dollard et al., 2000)
• Administrative support is an important part of the empowerment of staff in an agency (Gutierrez et al., 1995)
Data Collection

• 3 randomized sites in 2002, 7 sites in 2005, and 10 sites in 2006
• Site visits
• Mail surveys
• Incentives ($25)
• Confidentiality
• Response rate: above 90%
• Final Sample Size: 179
Measures

- Socio-demographic characteristics
- Standardized instruments on:
  - Supervision
  - Empathy: empathetic concern and emotional contagion
  - Perceived sense of control on the job
  - Work environment: organizational efficiency and work pressure
  - Worker burnout: feeling emotional exhaustion
Sample Characteristics

• Sample Size (Total N=179): Round 1 (N=49) Round 2 (N=62) and Round 3 (N=68)
• Average age of FSW: 38 years
• About half of FSW finished at least two years of college
• Race
  Hispanic (N=55, 32%), Black (N=42, 24%)
  Non-Hispanic White (N=77, 44%)
• Majority of FSWs satisfied with supervisor (N=155, 87%)
Maslach Burnout Inventory

• Maslach & Jackson, 1981
• Emotional Exhaustion
  – Describe feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work
  – Ex. I feel used up at the end of the workday
• Norm was created by testing a large sample of people working in social services: 21
• Higher number means feeling more emotional exhaustion
Empathy

• Two types of empathy, *empathetic concern* and *emotional contagion*, influence feelings of emotional exhaustion differently

• Empathetic Concern (Davis, 1983):
  – *feeling for* another person
  – Ex. I am often touched by the things that I see happen

• Emotional Contagion (Dillard & Hunter, 1986):
  – *feeling with* another person
  – Ex. I cannot continue to feel okay if people around me are depressed
Empathic Concern & Emotional Contagion

- Emotional contagion scores are negatively related to feeling burnout from work.
- Emphatic concern is not related to feeling burnout from work.
Supervision

- Supervisory support questionnaire (Shulman - 1982)
- Measures perception of supervision
- General satisfaction with supervision
- Home visitors satisfied with their supervisor reported a lower level of burnout from work
Sense of Control at Work

• Pearlin & Schooler (1978) - 7 item scale regarding empowerment

• Modified “on the job”
  – Ex. I have little control over the things that happen to me on my job

• Home visitors with a higher sense of control reported a lower level of burnout from work
Organizational Climate

- Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1974)
- Widely used instrument
- Measures the workers’ perception of their organizational climate in 9 areas
- Each scale has 9 items
Organization Efficiency and Pressure

- **Organizational Efficiency**
  - The degree of planning and efficiency at work place
  - Ex. People pay a lot of attention to getting work done

- **Organizational Pressure**
  - The degree to which high work demands and time pressure dominate the job milieu
  - Ex. There is consistent pressure to keep working
Organizational Efficiency & Pressure

- Home visitors who viewed their organization as efficient reported a lower level of burnout from work.
- Home visitors who viewed their organization as a high pressure workplace reported a high level of burnout from work.
Predicting Burnout: Model 1

- Emotional Contagion on Burnout
- Home visitors with high emotional contagion scores were more likely to experience burnout
- The effect of emotional contagion remains strong even after considering perceived sense of control at work, relationship with supervisor, and two organizational attributes
Predicting Burnout: Model 2

• Supervisor Relationship and Sense of Control on Burnout

• Higher the sense of control at work, less likely to feel burned out

• Satisfying relationship with supervisor does not reduce burnout without worker’s sense of control at work
Predicting Burnout: Model 3

• Organizational Climate on Burnout
• In an inefficient organizational climate with high pressure, home visitors were more likely to experience burnout regardless of their satisfying relationship with supervisor and their sense of control at work
Summary of Findings

• Two constructs of organizational climate, organizational efficiency and pressure, were better predictors for worker burnout than personal traits, relationship with supervisor, or perceived sense of control.

• Worker’s perceived sense of control on the job was an important predictor for worker burnout, but its effect was reduced by organizational climate.
To Improve Organizational Climate

- Creating work settings that provide participatory management and allow workers to make independent decisions
- Providing advanced training and support for actualizing special interests and talents of workers
To Improve Organizational Climate

• Creating employment settings that emphasize advance planning and getting work done efficiently

• Focus on the results without keeping pressure on workloads
To Empower Workers

• Promoting a collaborative team approach among colleagues where there is shared power and information among all levels of staff