



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
- Empathic 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



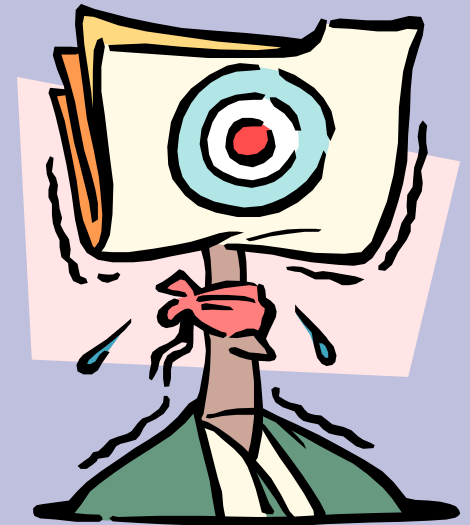
# Organizational Climate

- 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

