
**Purpose:**
This tool will provide BCIL with a framework to:

- Develop ongoing and sustainable organizational strategies to reduce and address the stress many staff experience in human service work; and
- Create policies and procedures that can sustainably address staff and consumer safety.

**Framework:**
This framework is structured as a set of best practices for a service agency as they address secondary trauma and safety throughout the organization. There are seven key organizational systems components, or “Operational Areas”, that constitute the foundation for this framework. These Operational Areas can be designed and implemented in ways that can reduce stress and increase safety. This framework identifies examples of such organizational strategies.

This tool was informed by the service experiences of MASS Collaboration staff, tools created by Vera Institute for Justice, nonprofit business management literature, the voices of survivors of sexual violence with disabilities, and best practices in the fields of sexual violence prevention and disability advocacy.

The seven Operational Areas are listed below. Each area includes key questions to begin reflection:
1. **Supervision:**
   - What structures and practices do you observe/experience at your organization that can reduce the effects of secondary trauma and promote staff resiliency?
   - What systems or policies are in place to address/debrief safety incidents?

2. **Mission, Values, Culture:**
   - What are the philosophical underpinnings of your work and mission as they relate to safety of both consumers and staff?
   - How are the mission, values, and culture reflected in your organization’s structures, policies and processes?

3. **Coordination & Communication**
   - How are staff and consumers informed of your organization’s expectations around safety behaviors and processes?
   - How does staff understand the agency’s commitment to preventing and addressing secondary trauma?

4. **Human Resources**
   - How does your organization support effective safety-related Human Resources policies and practices?
   - How does your organization systematically address workplace stress and staff & consumer safety?

5. **Community Building**
• How does your organization build community between the organization and partners/community to reduce the effects of secondary trauma and improve safety processes?
• How does your organization engage staff in teambuilding to institutionalize self care and peer support throughout the agency?

6. Consumer Services
• How does your organization inform consumers of their rights and responsibilities related to safety issues?
• What procedures do your organization employ to prevent and address violence that affects consumers?

7. Leadership
• How does your organization support leadership that is focused on and competent at addressing safety and stress?

Each Operational Area lists corresponding practice considerations. Trauma-informed practices take the following elements into consideration:
- Confidentiality of staff and consumer information
- Clear communication and understanding between all parties
- Empowerment of staff and consumers
- Recognition of diverse styles and identities of staff and consumers
- Explicit affirmation of staff and consumer experiences
- Promotion of staff and consumer rights and responsibilities
- Consistency of policy and procedure implementation
- Leadership behavior around self-care and professionalism as a model for staff
Safety Tool:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Area</th>
<th>Safety &amp; Secondary Trauma Considerations</th>
<th>Procedure Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Supervision   | Reflective\(^1\) and regular supervision can prevent secondary trauma in some cases and address it when prevention is not possible. It can reduce staff attrition and can support a safe working environment for staff and consumers. Assisting staff with professional identity development helps staff create boundaries with consumers and manage personal work related stress which in turn prevents secondary trauma and enables staff to be more effective in their work. | a) Supervision supports professional development through written, accessible, and well-understood processes including annual reviews based on clear goals and marketable and transferable skill development that emphasizes:  
  • competency in handing stress  
  • practicing self-care  
  • setting personal boundaries  

b) Supervision is reflective, regularly scheduled, and provides safety and support to all staff in:  
  • managing workloads  
  • addressing secondary trauma,  
  • handling work/life balance  
  • creating and sustain boundaries with consumers and other staff  
  • understanding when to use peer support and how to use it  
  • navigating the agency’s organizational structure |

---

\(^1\) Reflective Supervision is safe and supportive supervision style based on honesty and trust between supervisors and staff. Supervisors and staff work collaboratively during supervision to explore feelings about their work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Mission, Values, Culture</th>
<th>A strengths-based, trauma-informed culture of service reduces secondary trauma, improving the quality of life for staff. Relevant safety processes that are aligned with the agency’s mission and values support a safe, cohesive working environment for staff and consumers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) All procedures related to safety and self-care are written, accessible, and well-understood by staff and where appropriate, consumers, which promotes staff and consumer self-determination and aligns with the agency’s independent living values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Boundaries and consequences are clearly defined, as are processes and procedures to keep staff and consumers safe in their homes and in the office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Procedures around work redistribution anticipate the needs of staff taking leave and staff who will help them cover their workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Peer support and self-care are institutionalized through clear definitions around when, how, and why they are to be employed including clearly defined systems of support and clarity around work/life balance limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Mandated reporting policies and procedures, as well as procedures around informing consumers of their rights and respecting their privacy, align with the agency’s independent living values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3. Coordination & Communication | Consistent, accessible communication regarding safety procedures and reporting protocols help staff and consumers clearly understand agency expectations and processes. Access to information and support helps staff and consumers feel safe and prepared to make decisions. | a) All procedures regarding safety and secondary trauma are written, accessible, and well-understood by staff, and when necessary, consumers  

b) Regular, consistent, reflective agency and departmental meetings and trainings are held to communicate and coordinate staff policies, procedures, and other agency processes inside and outside the office  
c) There are written, accessible, and well understood processes for communicating organizational safety concerns among all staff include protocols around:  
• Reserving meeting spaces with consumers so staff can intervene if a safety issues occurs  
• Reassigning and terminating consumers  
• Preventing isolation of staff and consumers  
• Emergencies in and outside the office  
d) There are written, accessible, and well understood emergency protocols that include information on:  
• Behavior thresholds (i.e. which behaviors need immediate intervention and which can be addressed through coaching) |
### 4. Human Resources

| **Human Resources** | **Who to contact in an emergency**  
|                     | **Reporting protocols**  
|                     | **Written, accessible, and well understood home visit safety procedures include:**  
|                     | **Planning for the visit**  
|                     | **Understanding danger signs and what to do about them during the visit (including emergencies)**  
|                     | **Keeping in constant contact with the agency**  
|                     | **Reporting protocols**  
| Human Resources     | **institutionalizes organizational safety by providing an entry point for staff to access information, a central communication source for staff, and a legitimate resource of policies, procedures, and options around preventing secondary trauma.**  
|                     | **a) There is a written, accessible, and well-understood, and consistent on-boarding orientation process for staff that includes training staff on:**  
|                     | **personnel policies**  
|                     | **consumer reassignment policies**  
|                     | **processes for staff support outside supervision**  
|                     | **the organizational chain of command**  
|                     | **information about the stressful nature of the job**  
|                     | **expectations around staff behavior and consequences**  
|                     | **b) There is a written, accessible, and well-**  

| 5. Community Building | Strong community support between staff in an agency fosters safety and prevents secondary trauma through belonging and peer sharing and validation. Organizational partners in the community help share best practices for staff and consumer safety. | understood process for inquiring and training new staff about self-care, vicarious trauma, community building, and stress management skills.

c) Human resources roles and processes are written, accessible, and well understood for:
- handling violence
- responding to disclosures of violence
- sexual harassment
- home visit safety

a) There are written, accessible, and well-understood procedures that institutionalize peer support- (i.e., annual office parties, lunch-and-learn) and clarify when and how to use it

b) There are written, accessible, and well-understood processes for encouraging staff to join professional organizations that provide networking opportunities with other professionals in their field to advance their self care practices

c) There is a written, accessible, well-understood process for vetting safety procedures and reviewing best practices around staff and consumer safety, and staff |
| 6. Consumer Services | A safe and supportive agency fosters consumer safety through professional, accessible services that are understood and articulated by staff to consumers. Expectations are set with consumers around appropriate behaviors and safety related processes. | stress with other, knowledgeable community agencies and experts  
d) The agency works with other independent living centers to identify best practices around preventing secondary trauma and keeping consumers and staff safe  
a) There is a written, accessible, and well-understood on-boarding process for consumers that includes sharing a consumers’ rights policy and contract and explaining the agency’s mandated reporting process  
b) There is a written, accessible, and well-understood process for addressing the needs of a survivor and their perpetrator that includes safety planning, service plans that reduce the chances of both parties meeting, and confidentiality concerns.  
c) There is a written, accessible, and well-understood process for responding to disclosures of sexual violence from consumers that is understood by all staff.  
d) There is a clear, trauma-informed, neutral process of holding staff accountable for |
assaulting consumers that maintains consumer safety and confidentiality.

e) There are written, accessible, and well-understood processes to guide staff in understanding what to look for when advising consumers around hiring and managing Personal Care Attendants (PCAs).

| 7. Leadership | Leaders in the organization project the agency’s mission and values through safe, trauma-informed practices. Leaders provide effective examples of professional decorum and boundary setting. | a) Supervisors are trained around how to identify and address secondary trauma in themselves and with each other.

b) Leadership understands and communicates a clear, accessible chain of command process for staff

c) Leaders practice good self care strategies, employ strong boundaries with staff and consumers, and manage work-life balance well in a transparent way |

Many procedures that prevent staff stress and increase staff and consumer safety intersect through various Operational Areas identified above. Codifying the procedural or process areas list below could be especially effective in improving safety for consumers and staff and reducing the effects of secondary trauma:
• **Office Safety**- While office safety procedures can address and prevent incidents from occurring, the policies themselves can reduce secondary trauma among staff and create a sense of safety by emphasizing safety as an organizational priority.

• **Consumer Reassignment**- Consumer may be reassigned to different staff for many reasons. When consumer reassignment occurs because a staff member or consumer feels unsafe, a codified trauma-informed processes can prevent staff and consumer re-victimization.

• **Institutionalized Self-Care**- By a self-care policy in place, agencies emphasize self-care as an organizational priority. By institutionalizing self-care processes, staff well-being is valued and a culture of professionalism and caring is established.

• **On-boarding Staff and Consumers**- On-boarding allows for an agency to set expectations with staff and consumers around behavior agreements and consequences. It also provides an opportunity for relationships and trust to be developed between the agency, staff, and consumers.

• **Professional Development**- Effective human services operations can help incorporate secondary trauma prevention and effective safety processes, as well as improve the working environment to prevents staff attrition and ensure staff experience and skills are not lost through career transitions out of the industry.