

HANDBOOK

Building Resiliency in Child Abuse Organizations

Lessons Learned From the Pilot Sites of the Resiliency Project

This handbook was adapted from “The Gecko Guide” developed by

**The University of Texas at Austin
Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Center for Social Work Research
School of Social Work**

Dedication From the “Gecko Guide”

The University of Texas at Austin and the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault dedicate this handbook to the 12 pilot sites and the resiliency coaches who were engaged in the development of an organizational model for resiliency. The “Gecko Guide” captures their experiences as they took this journey to learn how to build resiliency in staff and volunteers working with children who have been abused. All of us on the project team have been inspired by their courage and willingness to take on something new in an already busy day and work with us to forge a new model that would help child abuse organizations and the child welfare field.

It is our hope that this handbook will help our pilot sites as they continue to make their resiliency programs a source of strength and renewal for their colleagues, the many passionate and hard-working men and women who make such a big difference in children’s lives.

By making their strategies and lessons learned available, we hope others will be inspired by what our first resiliency coaches are doing, and begin the journey to organizational resiliency themselves.

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Background

The information contained in this handbook was extracted from *The Gecko Guide*, which was developed as part of a 2-year training and technical assistance grant awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice to The University of Texas at Austin in 2009. The OVC Resiliency Project was managed by the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA) in the Center for Social Work Research, School of Social Work.

The Resiliency Project engaged researchers, educators, and practitioners from the child abuse field in a collaborative effort to develop, implement, and evaluate an organizationally based program to build resiliency in staff and volunteers.

Key to the project were the pilot resiliency coaches who evaluated all training and technical assistance products related to the organizational program model.

The Resiliency Coach Teams

After a national call for applications from children's advocacy centers (CAC), court appointed special advocates (CASA) programs, and child welfare programs, IDVSA selected 12 sites to serve as pilots. These sites were selected due to their commitment to the concept that the organization can take steps to help build resiliency in its staff and volunteers. Two people from each site were designated as resiliency coaches to reflect their leadership and active participation in this innovative effort to create an organizational model for child abuse programs to build resiliency.

- Adams County Children's Advocacy Center, Joddie Walker and Jamison Entwistle
- CALICO Center, Alameda County CAC, Kristy Brodeur and Karen Meredith
- CASA of Lane County, Louise Vanderford and Patrick Schrieber
- CASA of St. Louis County, Shamele Hill and Veronica Neuhoff
- Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Fiona Remko and Metoyer Ellis
- Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix, Maureen Basenberg and Mary Ducharme
- Florida Department of Children and Families, Emerald Coast Child Advocacy Center and Santa Rosa Kids' House, Debbie Hollis, Tammy Burton, and Tina Cain
- Project Harmony Child Protection Center, Debra Anderson and Ronda Newman
- Pulaski County CASA, Michelle Trulstrup, Marquita Rogers, and Darryl Capps
- Richland County CASA, Paige Greene and Lela Allen-Haines
- Safe Shores, the D.C. Children's Advocacy Center, Diamond Vann-Scott, Robert Tate, and Abyssinia Washington
- Synergy Services, Inc., Children's Advocacy Center, Jill Hazel and Jennifer Vernon

The Organizational Model

The IDVSA project team based its organizational program model on research used to develop a resiliency module for the National Victim Assistance Academy's (NVAA) foundation-level training. The NVAA resiliency module forwarded the idea of five core elements of resiliency that have been found consistently in the research and practice as strengths present in people who are resilient. Those core elements—self-knowledge and insight, sense of hope, healthy coping, strong relationships, and personal perspective and meaning—provide the foundation for the organizational program model.

The project team developed a program implementation plan that recognizes what is within an organization's power, and forwarded strategies that could be used to build strengths in the five core elements through policy, supervisory techniques, and competency-based training.

Though some of the strategies were drawn from the NVAA resiliency module, they needed to be retooled to focus on what organizations could do to build resiliency in staff and volunteers rather than what individuals could do to build resiliency in themselves. The task of testing out the strategies, refining them, and creating new ones fell to the resiliency coaches from the 12 pilot sites that were a major part of this project.

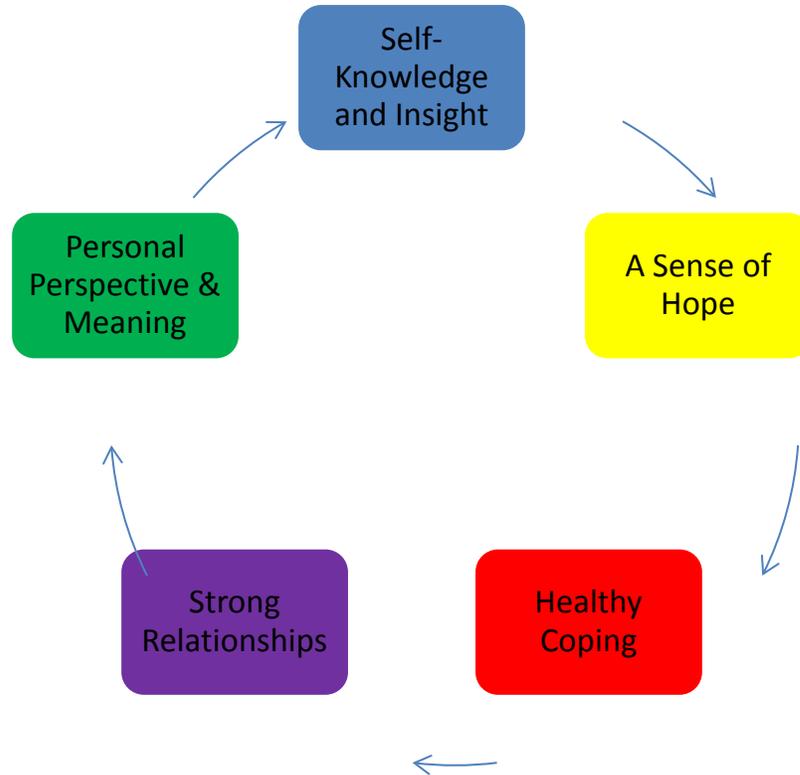
Since this was a new program model, the resiliency coaches had a lot of room for creativity as they adapted the strategies for their own organizational setting, whether it was a CAC, a CASA program, or a child welfare agency. The resiliency coaches, who represent a collective 379 years of work in children's services, brought their expertise and passion to this task.

This Handbook

As the resiliency coaches implemented the organizational model, one of the comments heard most often was that building resiliency is a journey, an ongoing process of exploration, learning, and practice. Resiliency coaches found that the journey needed to start with them; it is difficult to teach others how to be resilient until you "get it yourself." Like most people who return from a journey, the resiliency coaches wanted to share their experiences and encourage others to take the trip.

This handbook then represents what the pioneers of this organizational resiliency model brought back from their journey. The handbook begins with profiles of each pilot site, and demonstrates that each organization started with a commitment to help their workers. The profiles describe their organizations and why they wanted to take this journey, and end with a description of what impact the journey had on that organization, and tips to those choosing to take this journey themselves.

The five core elements—the basis for the organizational resiliency model—represent stops along the way. People who are resilient have strengths in each of these five core elements, so these are places one would need to visit as part of the journey to organizational resiliency.



- **Self-Knowledge and Insight** are strengthened by self-esteem, sense of control, independence, and self-compassion.
- **A Sense of Hope** is strengthened by sense of humor, ability to have fun, and optimism.
- **Healthy Coping** is strengthened by planning, using skills and abilities to address secondary traumatic stress in the workplace.
- **Strong Relationships** are strengthened by attachment to others, seeking and giving support, and speaking up for a change.
- **Personal Perspective and Meaning** are strengthened by morality and integrity, spirituality, and coherent life meaning.

Each of the five core elements has its own section and opens with reflections from the resiliency coaches about what it was like to work on that element, and what they want to pass on about using the strategies. Reflections are followed by charts that list the strategies developed and/or tested by the resiliency coaches. The pilot sites were able to select the element(s) they wanted to focus on within their organization, so the pilot sites listed will only be those that tried out a strategy for that particular element.

Strategies are listed on the charts as a policy, supervisory technique, and/or competency-based training. (Some large group events or activities are also included under competency-based training.)

The resiliency coaches were able to use any or all of these modes of implementation. You will see some instances where a site drew on all three implementation modes, and others where just one approach, a policy change, for example, fit the organization's needs.

Several pilot sites created new policies to bolster a strategy, or drew on an activity from the pilot training to share the knowledge with their staff and volunteers.

Pilot Site Profiles

Adams County Children's Advocacy Center Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

The Adams County Children's Advocacy Center (ACCAC) opened in 2006, after a 17-month grassroots effort led by a diverse group of community child abuse responders. ACCAC's goal is to continuously improve the support and services necessary to keep children safe and healthy. ACCAC coordinates all county responses to child sexual abuse, child sexual assault, physical abuse, child witness to violence, and child death cases where there is a criminal investigation. Active members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) include Children and Youth Services, 17 law enforcement agencies, the district attorney's victim/witness office, probation and parole, and cultural services.

ACCAC helps an average of 120 children and their families per year, offering forensic interviews, extended forensic evaluations, trauma assessments, medical assessments, six months of mental health therapy for children, assessment and support for nonoffending parents, intake and coordination with the MDT, and prevention education and training. All services are free and available in English and Spanish.

Supporting each other is a top priority for the close-knit team. ACCAC serves a small, rural area with limited resources for healthcare services, child maltreatment professionals, and funding. Workers have little relief from cases, and don't have a network of experts they can turn to for counsel. They are challenged daily to meet the varied needs of their clients. The likelihood of client-worker interaction outside of the office is high, because we all attend the same school or church activities. It is difficult to separate professional and personal lives in our community. Some staff have experienced personal trauma, and the fact that all of the staff are women with young children also contributes to a high risk for secondary stress. ACCAC had implemented some vicarious trauma prevention efforts and looked to the pilot project to learn more and help develop better ways to address secondary traumatic stress at an organizational level. ACCAC was honored to serve as an example for other small, rural sites with few financial or professional staff resources.

Impact on Our Organization

The Resiliency Project helped us create a workplace culture of awareness and normalcy around resiliency interventions. It has had a huge impact on our agency. Staff sees that the person at the top gets it, gets the impact that this work has on them, and they feel supported if they need to take a break or do some of the other strategies we have implemented.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

If I were talking to a brand new administrator, I would say that of all the things to get started on, this has to be at the top of the list. Otherwise, you will be looking for new staff or having discipline and quality-of-work issues. The more you put into this now, the less work you will do as an administrator down the road, and the greater work product you will get out of your staff.

CALICO

San Leandro, California

CALICO (Child Abuse Listening, Interviewing, and Coordination Center) is the children's advocacy center serving Alameda County, California. Each year, CALICO interviews more than 700 children, ages 2–17, and developmentally delayed adults who are suspected victims of abuse. On average, 84 percent of our clients disclose sexual abuse to our interview specialists, 13 percent disclose severe physical abuse, and the remainder discloses neglect, commercial sexual exploitation, witnessing violence in the home, and/or witnessing homicide.

CALICO is cognizant of the physical and emotional toll that working in the child abuse field has on staff. During a forensic interview, the multidisciplinary team relives the experience of abuse with the child, often times experiencing vicarious trauma which can be extreme and devastating. The team can have up to 10 interviews in a day and the effects are compounded.

It had been our goal for some time to develop a deliberate strategy to help each of us access both the internal and external resources needed to maintain a healthy equilibrium, balancing our own mental health with the needs of families we serve. In spite of these good intentions, we found it challenging to conceptualize, much less implement, a plan to lead us there. The Resiliency Project was the perfect program for us: the commitment was already there, it was the direction we were lacking.

CALICO is an accredited children's advocacy center with the National Children's Alliance and is active with the California Network of Child Advocacy Centers.

CALICO has benefitted from what we learned in the pilot. We are now reaching out to share this valuable training with our partners, providing them with new resiliency tools.

Impact on Our Organization

We talk about resiliency amongst ourselves a lot more, recognizing cause and effect and ways to keep ourselves healthy. We are kinder to ourselves as we acknowledge the impact this work has on us personally. One interviewer recognized her own fatigue and connected it to a hard experience she had yesterday. Another interviewer was able to communicate health difficulties she was having. These are big steps. Staff training has opened up the dialogue between individuals, and as issues arise, we are better equipped to process them.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

We first thought the focus for our efforts was the larger multidisciplinary team, but found it was much more than we could have done. It was difficult for us to come to terms with that and pace it, at first. Now that we went through the pilot and applied the resiliency strategies to ourselves, and made it personal, we can spread our wings. We feel very fortunate to have this core group that helped us build a strong foundation and now we can take this knowledge to the broader community.

CASA of Lane County Springfield, Oregon

Because court appointed special advocate services are delivered by volunteers, we are very glad to have staff dedicated to support them in these efforts. CASA of Lane County is comprised of committed, compassionate, and dedicated individuals who are willing to do what it takes to be the best we can be for the children we serve.

For 17 years, CASA of Lane County has served abused and neglected children ages 0-18 who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile dependency court in Lane County. There are currently 1,417 children with open cases. In 2009, we served 282 children; 48 percent were younger than age six, and 100 percent of these children's families live at or below the poverty line.

Our culture is one that seeks opportunities to improve all aspects of our work, including recruitment of volunteers, fundraising efforts, writing court reports, and supporting volunteers. Staff support, on the other hand, has not been a primary focus other than to provide a workplace that is truly family friendly and acknowledges that we all have lives and responsibilities outside of work. We are beginning to see the symptoms of vicarious trauma in staff because we do not know how to take care of ourselves. The Resiliency Project aligns with one of the primary initiatives in our strategic plan: implement effective staff and volunteer retention strategies. Being part of the pilot matched our belief that, to effectively advocate for a child, you must have an organizational culture that values and cares for the people responsible for delivering that service.

Impact on Our Organization

Participating in the Resiliency Project was a great professional experience for both Louise and Patrick and a “game changer” for the organization. This project helped us examine the culture of our work environment, see how it affects each of us on a personal level, and understand the price we pay if we don't change. Incorporating the strategies gleaned from the Resiliency Project is like going on a diet - you eat the “right” foods for a few weeks, and then slowly fall back into your old eating habits. CASA of Lane County has made an organizational commitment to embed these resiliency strategies into our work culture. We have a plan and we are sticking to it!

- Megan Shultz, Executive Director, CASA of Lane County

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Be open from the beginning and have a clear plan of how you want to implement a resiliency program. Let staff know it is going to be all-encompassing. Tell them, “We think we are already doing some of these things, and we want to bring them out more.” It needs to start right away and not be an add-on. Make it part of what all new staff and volunteers get, day one.

CASA of St. Louis County St. Louis, Missouri

CASA of St. Louis County advocates for abused and neglected children in need of safe, permanent homes through highly trained volunteers appointed by the family court. Our vision is to provide a CASA volunteer to every child in need under the jurisdiction of the family court. Currently, only the most difficult cases are referred to the agency—the cases in which the family court needs the additional support and strong advocacy that the CASA can provide. Therefore, our staff and volunteers quite often see the worst of the cases, often directly dealing with children traumatized by physical abuse, sexual abuse, and chronic neglect at the hands of their parents or custodians.

By being part of the Resiliency Project, the organization wanted to provide staff and volunteers with the support they need to work productively and passionately—with motivation and commitment—to affect better outcomes for these children in foster care. Every staff member at CASA of St. Louis County has a passion for the welfare of the children in our community. The organization is privileged to have staff with a wealth and breadth of experience in the child welfare system. Within the eight-member advocacy services team, there is almost 100 years of combined experience in the field. This experience spans nearly all areas of the child welfare system, from prevention efforts to intensive-in-home interventions, and includes investigations, case management, the court system, and family reunification services. Half of the team has advanced degrees in the field. The entire team believes in the power of advocacy to change children’s lives, both on an individual case level and a systemic level.

Impact on Our Organization

Being part of the Resiliency Project increased our awareness of strategies we already had in place. We became more aware of the concept of resiliency and what it can do in our agency; this has been very positive. Staff have been very open to some of the strategies we’ve worked to implement. Everyone appears to be open to working on this project and to making it something that is continuous within the agency. We’ve had positive feedback from everyone. Now, it is just a matter of keeping it going and developing more strategies. The next step is sticking to it.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Be prepared, because this is going to take you on a journey that you probably wouldn’t expect. It might get a little messy, but there’s a lot of growth. Go in with an open mind and be open to changes: personal and organizational. Don’t have a strict agenda. Be spontaneous.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend Rosenberg, Texas

Child Advocates of Fort Bend is one of the few umbrella agencies with both a children’s advocacy center (CAC) and a court appointed special advocates (CASA) program. Through these programs, Child Advocates of Fort Bend serves abused children from ages 0–18 and some developmentally disabled adults. The CAC serves primarily victims of sexual and serious physical abuse, and witnesses to violence including domestic violence and homicide. The CASA program serves children with all backgrounds of abuse, with most clients falling into the neglect category. Our community is made up of suburban areas and some remaining rural areas. The ethnicity of the children we serve is almost equally divided between white, black, and Hispanic.

Although both programs deal with child abuse victims, the CAC is primarily staff driven and the CASA program is volunteer driven. The stressors experienced can affect those doing the work in different ways. Child Advocates of Fort Bend provided an opportunity to capture both programs and address their unique needs for building resiliency and reducing staff turnover. In addition, strategies were shared with child protective services, the county attorney’s office, and the district attorney’s office, which are also co-located with us.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend had come through a time when we struggled with turnover, and we recognized the emotional and financial cost of “burnout” on staff morale. The need for a resiliency program came to light after a particularly difficult case involving young witnesses to homicide that took a huge emotional toll on the staff and volunteers. We wanted to find better ways to support those doing the daily work with child victims and their families. It was important for us to retain the staff and volunteers whose longevity and experience aid their work with children. Child Advocates of Fort Bend is committed to providing a healthy environment for its workers and saw the Resiliency Project as an opportunity to establish a more formal program.

Impact on Our Organization

Being part of the Resiliency Project has made a difference. Decision-makers are more aware of what can be done and are very supportive. We can advocate for specific strategies to benefit staff and connect them to resiliency. It has helped us be more proactive in doing things for staff. We knew about secondary traumatic stress before, but being part of the pilot gave us more strategies to address it.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Set aside time to work on it. Start with strategies that are more achievable so you don’t get overwhelmed by trying to do it all at once. We found it easier to first work on the supervision pieces, and we created a committee to look at more of the policy-related strategies, because that was more than we could do on our own.

Childhelp Children’s Center of Phoenix Phoenix, Arizona

Childhelp serves primarily the city of Phoenix reaching approximately 4,500 children and families annually. Our onsite partners are the Phoenix Police Department Child Crimes Unit (30 detectives, 4 sergeants, 1 lieutenant, and civilian staff), St. Joseph’s Hospital Child Abuse Assessment Center (3 forensic pediatricians, 2 nurse practitioners, 1 forensic interviewer, 2 medical assistants), and a Child Protective Services Investigation Unit (7 investigators, 1 supervisor, 2 assistants).

The Childhelp staff includes a director, office manager, receptionist, victim advocate, children’s justice coordinator, two forensic interviewers, a volunteer coordinator, and 11 mental health clinicians. We have approximately 40 active volunteers who staff our playroom.

Our interest in being a pilot site for the Resiliency Project was based on the understanding that stress and secondary trauma impact all of our staff and volunteers on a daily basis. Learning ways to address these conditions is vital to the continuance of a strong program. Addressing it is the only way we can ensure that we are truly serving children and families to the best of our ability.

This center deals with many high profile and complex cases of child abuse. Additionally, the mental health component of the program means staff are involved with the clients’ lives for years. There is a great opportunity to strengthen this program through staff and volunteer resiliency.

Impact on Our Organization

We were already mindful of resiliency. Participating in the pilot took us to another level, and gave us an authority or permission to more directly tackle resiliency and add more layers. It resonated here within leadership and with partner agencies that are co-located, and so there has been more effort to address and further resiliency in each other. It opened the door for what came and what is continuing.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Have the commitment of boards, supervisors, and on-the-ground leadership in charge of implementation. People can be cynical about this topic, if you are not careful. If you have an environment that is a little rocky and you have half-hearted efforts, it could sink things further. This is ultimately a personal commitment and it could cause damage if not handled well. Understand the commitment that you are making, and understand the importance of having an organizational approach to resiliency. Otherwise, you will lose employees. Teach more of the reasons behind it and you will motivate people to participate more in whatever you set up.

Florida Department of Children and Families Pensacola, Florida

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides child protective investigations for the First Judicial Circuit of Florida. For this project, DCF served as a pilot site in partnership with the Emerald Coast Child Advocacy Center and the Santa Rosa Kids' House. In 2009, we conducted 4,575 investigations in three counties, with most being domestic violence and substance abuse related.

Budget cuts and declines in funding for nonprofit organizations have caused local child abuse professionals to experience higher workload demands and growing limits on training opportunities that would inspire and rejuvenate them. In the Resiliency Project, we saw an opportunity to increase the active engagement of staff and volunteers in the mission, reduce turnover among team members, and mitigate the impact of vicarious trauma on workers in three of the four counties of our judicial circuit.

This circuit has been identified as one of three innovation sites in the state. The project was consistent with our emerging program initiatives that shift the culture from a risk-based to a strength-based approach to child welfare services. Being part of the pilot furthered our investment in the retention and continued development of our child welfare professionals.

Impact on Our Organization

What started as a collaboration of DCF and two of our CAC's ended as an inclusive project that extended to the units in our four counties and included community partners such as law enforcement, the state attorney's office, and the child protection team. Resiliency is now part of the adult protective services program and our trauma informed care group. The focus on resiliency is not just at the field level, but is a focus among leadership as well. We have a resiliency roundtable where we work in partnership with other community organizations, and discuss how this work affects all our frontline workers—not just in child welfare, but those who assist the homeless population as well. There is a focus now across our whole circuit. This project has helped us build some ideas, concepts, and processes that are being generated down through our community partners with a continued focus on the environment in which our staff and community partners work.

- Patricia B. Franklin, Circuit 1 Operations Manager, Florida Department of Children and Families

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Collaboration among organizations is critical. You are building a resiliency system with and for child protective services, children's advocacy center staff, the multi-disciplinary team, and law enforcement. It's not you alone. You really do have partners. Look at your systems so that resiliency becomes the norm, not an add-on. We are now creating a new CAC, and we are building in the resources and capacity as part of the foundation, so an organizational approach to resiliency will be part of their operations.

Project Harmony Child Protection Center Omaha, Nebraska

Project Harmony is a nonprofit organization that has become a national model of public and private collaboration. The program is a co-located child advocacy center with child protective service workers, law enforcement, and medical and mental health professionals working together to protect children. The Center also houses domestic violence and short-term triage services. In 2009, Project Harmony served 2,200 children and their protective family members in two Nebraska counties and 16 Iowa counties. Children brought to Project Harmony include those who have suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence or drugs, and children who may have witnessed a homicide or other type of violence.

Project Harmony and our collaborative partners recognize that the key to successful, effective work within child and family welfare is getting and keeping quality staff, as high turnover renders any effort to maintain quality work practically impossible.

At the start of the Resiliency Project, Project Harmony was about to move to a new facility and co-locate with partners. There was concern that given the high workloads and constant changes in child protection, some staff would see the move as too much to handle. Recent privatization and restructuring within the state's human services department had also affected morale and turnover. Project Harmony saw the pilot as an opportunity to strengthen relationships among agency partners within the building, help address issues resulting from the statewide child welfare reform, and prevent a further decline in morale.

Impact on Our Organization

Project Harmony enjoyed positive relationships with agency partners before the Resiliency Project began. Now, we believe that individual employees feel more valued and appreciated, and we know that agency relationships are stronger. Absenteeism and turnover are low, and we continue to receive unsolicited applications for volunteer work or employment prefaced with comments such as, "Project Harmony has a good reputation and I would like to work there." While numerous strategies have been implemented, most have been added seamlessly, typically with little fanfare, but with positive and lasting results. We believe the strategies will continue to support the resiliency of our employees and agency partners.

– Gene Klein, LCSW, Executive Director, Project Harmony

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Begin with your managers. Things are so contingent on the messages that the supervisors give every day to their staff. Start there and recognize that what managers need to be resilient may be different than what their staff needs to be resilient.

Pulaski County CASA Little Rock, Arkansas

Pulaski County CASA serves Pulaski and Perry counties where there are approximately 361,474 residents. More than one thousand children from these counties are in the foster care system and subsequently are involved in a dependency and/or neglect court case. In 2009, our funding resources allowed us to serve 258 foster children. Our program has grown tremendously in the past 8 years. Pulaski County CASA finished 2004 with only nine volunteer advocates serving 32 children. We ended 2009 with 93 active volunteers serving 256 children.

With our program growing to meet the demand from the counties we serve, it is important that we support our volunteers. They are the ones who are seeing the children on a regular basis and know the most about the cases.

We wanted to be a part of this pilot program because we understand the value of building resiliency in our volunteers as well as staff. With the kind of program we run, it is important to have a low turnover rate. The children we deal with need a stable and steady adult figure in their lives, and the CASA is that person while that child is in the foster care and judicial system.

We hope to create a future job position dedicated to implementing this program and supporting volunteer retention. Once we finish this program, we would also like to present the program to CASA programs statewide at our annual Children in the Courts Conference.

Impact on Our Organization

I always knew that staff got burned out, but I didn't know about secondary traumatic stress and all these other things. Being part of the pilot gave us a new insight as to how we look at our volunteers. We have a high expectation on volunteers, because the work we do is life-changing for families. On the front end of their training, we are now able to address some of the trauma issues. And we can help them understand what the case managers go through in terms of burnout and secondary traumatic stress. That is a huge positive that we have seen. It has also allowed us to maintain more of our volunteers this year than we ever have. Obviously it is working.

- Michelle Trulstrup, CVM, Executive Director

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

You need to have buy-in from all of the staff who will help implement it. It goes back to CASA work - you have to have buy-in to the mission. Get a solid game plan down before rolling this out to everyone else. Get staff excited first, and then include everyone else.

Richland County CASA Columbia, South Carolina

Richland County CASA (RCCASA) is a mature organization that has been in existence for more than 27 years. In 2009, RCCASA volunteers served a total of 1,173 maltreated children in Richland County. Of these children, 51.6 percent were male and 48.4 percent were female; 10.6 percent were white and 89.4 percent were people of color. Over 85 percent of all children and families served in our urban community are indigent. The number of RCCASA volunteers has doubled over the past 5 years, with 420 active advocates.

The timing for RCCASA's participation in the Resiliency Project could not have been better. Effective July 1, 2010, two months before the pilot began, RCCASA was statutorily required to accept 100 percent of the child maltreatment cases before the family court. Historically, the organization has been able to serve approximately 85 percent of these cases with CASA volunteers. While RCCASA embraced the new legislation, it was mission critical for us to retain current staff and volunteers to meet this unprecedented challenge.

The CASA is the only constant, caring adult in the life of a child seeking a loving, nurturing, and permanent home. Resiliency skills are critical for CASA volunteers to be able to sustain the level of advocacy that is required over time. RCCASA saw the Resiliency Project as an opportunity to embrace organizational growth and learn initiatives that will keep our volunteers healthy so they can be there for the children who count on them.

The RCCASA team has been recognized locally, regionally, and nationally for our commitment and dedication to volunteer management. We had devoted extensive resources and time toward resiliency and hoped the pilot would help us formalize these processes.

Impact on Our Organization

Being part of the Resiliency Project far exceeded our expectations. For the third consecutive year, RCCASA staff had not received any pay increase for cost of living or performance. At the same time, the cost of living soared for all of us. One tenured CASA employee has a 45 mile commute to work - each way! Although this employee planned to retire with RCCASA, she was giving serious thought to the reality of her situation. Most RCCASA employees began working second jobs just to survive. Thus far, we have weathered the economic storm together and our workforce remains intact. I sincerely do not believe this would be the case if we had not participated in the Resiliency Project.

- Paige Greene, Executive Director

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Buy-in from the top is what is the most important. You need to have the drive and energy to do new things. Be open minded and interested in trying new things.

Safe Shores, the D.C. Children’s Advocacy Center Washington, D.C.

Safe Shores is a fully co-located child advocacy center, with members of the multidisciplinary team sharing the same building in the heart of downtown Washington, D.C. The children’s advocacy center (CAC) serves child and adolescent victims of abuse or neglect and witnesses to homicide. Well over 80 percent of the children served are African-American and many of the children have experienced more than one trauma.

Safe Shores has long been proactive and a pioneer in efforts to reduce or mitigate the impact of secondary trauma on members of its child abuse multidisciplinary team. Recognizing that the quality of care given to victims and their families is affected by the overall wellness and functioning of members of the multidisciplinary team (MDT), the organization believes that attention given to strengthening resiliency factors in team members strengthens the overall delivery of services to victims and their families. As part of the Resiliency Project, Safe Shores wanted to maximize the opportunities the new co-location offered to more readily engage in joint efforts to improve resiliency among team members.

Impact on Our Organization

Having the research basis for different strategies to strengthen resiliency gave us more teeth. Being a nonprofit organization, anything with fiscal implications is considered, and we were able to cast our budget in that light—that taking measures to build resiliency can pay off for the organization.

Because we had been engaged in resiliency efforts already, hearing about secondary traumatic stress and the need to address it was not new anymore. Being part of the pilot helped give our efforts a context; it was not just one voice arguing for resiliency. We were able to see our efforts as part of a movement trying to make change not only in our own organization, but in the field, and that was encouraging.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Having buy-in at the top is critical. We were fortunate in that resiliency is something the National Children’s Alliance supports and the management team at the Washington, D.C. CAC supports. It is hard work, and resiliency champions often don’t have the energy or time to **fight for** this and **do** this. Management needs to understand that it is a process. It is not doing a training session and no one feels trauma anymore. It’s not a silver bullet. It needs a programmatic plan like other agency initiatives, and it needs to be institutionalized like a benefits plan.

Synergy Services, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center Parkville, Missouri

The children’s advocacy center (CAC) is one of many programs at Synergy Services, Inc., a well-recognized social service agency with a long-standing history in the Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area. Housed within Synergy’s youth resiliency center, the CAC is designed to provide a dedicated, neutral, child-friendly environment that is sensitive to the needs of children who disclose sexual abuse or severe physical abuse or who have witnessed a homicide or abuse of another person. The CAC was formed in 2001 in collaboration with 42 community partners, including family service agencies, medical and mental health staff, law enforcement, prosecution, and court systems.

The CAC works with a multidisciplinary team to provide a coordinated community response regarding the investigation of child abuse. By coordinating forensic interviews, the CAC responds to the problematic trauma faced by children who would normally undergo multiple interviews and investigations by diverse agencies at numerous sites. In addition, the CAC provides victim advocacy and referrals to services such as counseling and medical care. Synergy is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and its CAC program is accredited by the National Children’s Alliance.

At the start of the pilot, Synergy Services was in the process of implementing strategies to measure resiliency among the youth served at the youth resiliency center, where CAC clients also receive services. Synergy was interested in applying strategies their CAC staff learned from the pilot in this setting as well. We hoped that by building overall staff resiliency and reducing

turnover, there would be an increased continuity of care for children from the investigation stage through the intervention and treatment phases.

Impact on Our Organization

The biggest impact came from trying to get every staff member involved in a conversation with us about resiliency. We trained on the five core elements, making it common language. As we had hoped, people are now more willing to come to us with things that relate to resiliency. People are holding conversations and the language has become more focused. They are identifying their experiences more readily and are able to break them down in terms of the core elements of resiliency.

Tips to Other Organizations Considering a Resiliency Program

Be open to looking at your policies and procedures and make changes if necessary. Be open to having conversations with your staff when there may be disagreements and view it as a way to move forward. Really commit time to work on your organizational resiliency program. Meet every week to review where you are.

Self-Knowledge and Insight

Self-knowledge and insight is the first of five core elements identified as strengths in people who are resilient. Its components are self-esteem, a sense of control, and independence.

Strategies used to strengthen self-knowledge and insight in workers focused on helping them identify strengths and challenges, including recognizing how the work affects them; finding a match between their motivation for doing the work and the values and expectations of the workplace.

Reflections From the Resiliency Coaches

Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center

This material made it a priority for me to be attentive to the seriousness of the impact this work has on folks and to make sure it is addressed and strategies are implemented. Philosophically, how can I tell the community we care about kids and families, but then not do the same thing with my staff? How can I sit in this chair and say I care about children and their mental health and then not give the staff the tools they need to have a healthy work-life balance?

CALICO

It was hard to recognize secondary trauma in myself and understand it. I still find it very difficult. It’s easy to understand resiliency and teach the strategies, but really difficulty to “do” it and make decisions and choices to implement resiliency in yourself. I can understand it intellectually and emotionally, but you really put yourself out there when you say it to someone who doesn’t understand it. It took a lot of time and courage for me to take that on.

CASA of Lane County

One positive change from the pilot is being able to give staff better updates on what I am seeing in the training of volunteers. I am noticing red flags sooner in our recruitment process and bringing it to the attention of our program manager. Earlier detection of this helps the resiliency of the supervisors which is also part of my job. I can help handle some of these issues—talking to volunteers and exploring whether there is a good fit—before it becomes a problem a supervisor has to deal with and become stressed over.

CASA of St. Louis County

We revamped our interview tool for volunteers and now we are able to screen them to find out exactly why they are pursuing this type of volunteer experience versus other opportunities; really, what their motivation is. The new tool is a good predictor of triggers and lets us see how they’ve dealt with past trauma. If they have experienced trauma, we are not judging them; we want to see how they got to the other side, how they express the experience, and how they might respond to the children here. We’re also looking at flexibility. Being a CASA is hands on and requires flexibility. We’re also screening them to see if they can be supervised—if they are open to receiving feedback from their

supervisor as well as from the team. We need them to be able to work in a professional manner and as a team player. The change in volunteers we are letting through is rewarding for us. We have advocates taking care of themselves from the beginning of the process. We are really able to practice having resilient volunteers helping resilient children. It's very exciting.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

Before volunteers graduate from their training class, we sit down with them and ask them what they are worried about or what's causing them anxiety. We let them put it out on the table and we validate that what they're worried about is normal. Then we work with them as a group to come up with strategies to help them combat those fears or anxieties. We were prepared for the newer volunteers to like the resiliency pieces. It was surprising that the veteran volunteers liked it as well. Some told us they wished they'd had this when they started.

Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix

A big thing has been to admit that sometimes we get burned out or feel the stress. One personal part for me related to really being present and listening to colleagues after I had a tough session. I've gained the ability to say "No" when I really cannot do anymore, instead of always saying okay. I'm taking care of myself a little better.

Florida Department of Children and Families

One of the biggest things was recognizing when people are having problems and the supervisors' role in doing something about it. We sent information out to staff on all levels—leadership and frontline—and it spurred great communication, with everyone talking about resiliency, everyone having a buy-in to it and wanting to participate. The ongoing discussion raised the awareness about the need to focus on it with good cross-work between agencies—specifically between child protective services and the children advocacy centers. People are actually willing to listen to ways they can take care of themselves. A lot of people are actually doing those things—that is good to see.

Project Harmony Child Protection Center

Our new employee orientation program is for anyone on the multidisciplinary team. It is only an hour (covers parking, smoking policy), and the first question is "Why do you do this work?" or "What brings you to this work?" It has been an invigorating, fun thing for them to hear each other talk. It is one of the most gratifying things we are doing, putting them in touch with their own motivation.

Pulaski County CASA

The knowledge for our staff and volunteers, what this is and how we can reduce stress, had never crossed my mind until we started this project. I have learned so much through this. This wasn't even on our radar. We feel excited and fortunate to have been chosen. Our program is so much better now that we have been part of this project. We can now openly acknowledge the stress that this puts on volunteers. The perspective of what happens, how some people respond. Being able to look for it and give better attention to people who might be drowning. I really wasn't looking for that a year ago. We have also been offering a lot of outside trainings for volunteers. For example, they've seen a lot of

fetal alcohol syndrome so we brought in an expert on the subject. I want our advocates to feel like they have the tools they need and that they are having an impact.

Safe Shores, the D.C. Children’s Advocacy Center

Having our law enforcement partner as one of our resiliency coaches was critical. It was an acknowledgement of the problem and the need to do something for officers involved with child abuse cases. Our law enforcement partners were more open to it because it came from law enforcement and not from us, as a nonprofit. It was a shift they were willing to make. They were able to share how the work was affecting them more candidly. Another side of them opened up when they were discussing cases. It was like the floodgate opened once their leader showed the way.

Synergy Services, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center

When I do interviews with people, I ask why they want to do this work, their motivation behind it. We developed a better screening tool for retention. We really worked with our human resources people to review all the interview questions and see how we could address those issues more. Now during new employee orientation, we talk more about secondary traumatic stress, and we’ve done the five core elements training for all of our staff.

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Self-Knowledge and Insight

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center, Pennsylvania	Created wellness policy .	Held annual community conference “Pinwheels” focused on providing information on resiliency and skill enhancement.	Conducted training for staff and another CAC on burnout, STS, and five core elements.	✓
CALICO, California	Displayed mission statement.	Implemented a monthly resiliency hour for every staff meeting. Explored options for onsite weekly or biweekly therapist for all staff.	During monthly staff meetings, trained on five core elements and connection to mission.	
CASA of Lane County, Oregon	Displayed CASA mission statement in strategic areas. Formed resiliency committees to host activities each quarter. Trainer and program manager reviewed applications and references during 11-week volunteer training for possible red flags re: fitness for the job.	Conducted individualized supervision to help staff and volunteers use their personal insights into what cases are energizing or diminishing for them. Developed recruitment and screening tools that explore applicant’s motivation for working with children.	Trained on five core elements. Held all-staff meeting to discuss raising awareness about mission statement.	

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Self-Knowledge and Insight

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
CASA of St. Louis County, Missouri	Revised screening tool to better identify motivation, healthy altruism, optimism, and sense of control. Updated application, reference request form, and informational meeting packet.	CASA advocacy supervisors meet with volunteer coordinator if pre-service interview identifies any concerns that may screen volunteer out.	Training on secondary traumatic stress and resiliency for potential volunteers helped inform them about what children in care have experienced.	✓
Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Texas		Use “Sources of Stress” exercise to help new volunteers identify areas of discomfort, connect with others around common fears, and share coping strategies.		✓
Childhelp Children’s Center of Phoenix		Created resiliency puzzle to show connection among the agencies in CAC: large puzzle pieces were laid out and everyone answered the question, “What keeps you doing this job?” Puzzle is displayed in training room; shows that although agencies may work in different areas of the CAC, they have same reasons behind what keeps them going. See “Why Do You Do This Work?” activity .		✓

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Self-Knowledge and Insight

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Florida Dept. of Children and Families, Emerald Coast CAC, Santa Rosa Kids' House			Presented five core elements at integration meeting. Established monthly "lunch and learn" to share new ideas and knowledge.	
Pulaski County CASA, Arkansas	Created self-care policy . Placed mission and vision statements put in all offices and training areas as a reminder of why we do what we do.		Implemented annual meeting with shareholders, board, volunteers, and staff to plan for coming year to foster sense of inclusion and connection with our work.	✓
Richland County CASA, South Carolina	Foster open dialogue about self-care and how it affects us all differently. Normalizing it removes stereotype.	Encouraged workers to use employee assistance program (EAP).	Used Resiliency snapshot exercise to put workers in touch with existing strengths.	✓
Synergy Services, Inc., Children's Advocacy Center, Missouri	Placed mission statement in waiting area and each office. Discussed social networking policy re: boundaries. Implemented new interview protocol asking "Why do you want to do this work?"	Implemented EAP; supported asking for help.	Convened staff to discuss what would make them more resilient. Compiled list and after review by board of directors, implemented policy changes, training, and supervision.	

Sense of Hope

A Sense of Hope is the second core elements identified as a strength in people who are resilient. Its components are a sense of humor, ability to have fun, and optimism.

Strategies used to strengthen a Sense of Hope in workers focused on helping them practice looking for the good, showing gratitude, and making the work site a place where the negative aspects of the work is balanced by humor and lighter, fun activities.

Reflections from the Resiliency Coaches

Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center

Staff who had done child protective services (CPS) work prior to coming to our children’s advocacy center are telling us what we are doing really does make a difference for them and the energy they have for the work—they are happy doing the work. They had considered leaving the work when they were at CPS, and now they are not considering leaving it. It was a bit surprising that it really was that effective, but it gives us hope that we can still reach some of our other partners where there may be some resistance.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

We’ve always been good about having outings and making sure we are doing fun things for staff, such as a pseudo-ropes course or fun painting activities. The pilot got us thinking about how we can show that we appreciate our staff and volunteers. When we had some items left over from our silent auction, we thought, “Let’s make those fun gifts for staff and volunteers.” Now, we hold a raffle at Friday staff meetings. It was easy and a good example of trying to “think resiliency” with everything we do.

Childhelp Children’s Center of Phoenix

The Childhelp All Stars recognition program helps keep awareness and action related to awareness at the forefront. Something is always happening related to this program. People are always able to nominate someone, and quarterly awards offer that reinforcement and recognition. It works from the broad level of an e-mail reminder to nominate someone for this quarter all the way to department meetings when we talk about how to use all-stars as a strategy to build partner relationships. We’re being purposeful in how we employ these strategies. There is good discussion about the reasons people are nominated. We have seen more positive response from partners than anticipated.

Florida Department of Children and Families

Exercising was resiliency for some people. Some of the staff made a game out of it and had awards for fitness challenges. It was great because the line workers came up with that and did it on their own. It was great to see them being creative within the limits we have. We made root beer floats every once in a while or held breakfast events—there was always something fun going on. That increased our sense of humor, and we communicated better. The project helped lower the risk of turnover.

Project Harmony Child Protection Center

People are hungry for this and they don't even know it. They want to reconnect and find ways to be resilient. They want help with it. When we open up a meeting with a question or two from the training, it is amazing what answers we get. The tone of a meeting can flip, just turn on a dime.

Pulaski County CASA

It was encouraging to see how easily people accept change. They say people don't like to change, but I disagree with that now. Our volunteers have been very receptive to what we have brought to them and how we want to move forward. They are very willing to jump on the train and come with us. I have younger and older volunteers (ages 21–83), and they're all on board.

Richland County CASA

For several years, we have tried to implement resiliency strategies but just didn't know quite what to call it. The pilot gave us the language and tools to support what we were already doing. We were ahead of the curve in implementing creative things. Having a fun and healthy work environment has always been number one for me and our managers. As soon as we returned, we put what we learned into practice. We could see that it's more than just training. You have to be able to live and breathe it—to get to a point where it comes out automatically and you don't have to struggle to try to define it or defend it. When you believe it in your soul, the importance of it, you internalize it and it guides your actions. It has affected how we planned recruitment and diversity initiatives for 2011. It has helped in talking to funders—I have used this package in the last five grant applications. You can't sell anybody on contents or ideas if you don't believe it yourself.

Synergy Services, Inc., Children's Advocacy Center

I was pleasantly surprised at how open the staff was when we had meetings about implementing the resiliency program. Participation was good. Everyone is on board. We're looking at starting a sports team as a way for people to have fun and get exercise.

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Building a Sense of Hope

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Adams County Children's Advocacy Center, Pennsylvania		Sent personal thank you notes to staff and the multidisciplinary team periodically and when case is completed.		
CALICO, California	Executive director applied for innovations grant for funding. Not awarded but looking at other options.	Held taco truck appreciation luncheon for partners. Personal e-mail invite increased RSVPs from 20 to 108.	Discussed resiliency and bouncing back as part of a fun event.	
CASA of Lane County, Oregon			Shared ideas on laughter to relieve stress and become more resilient and encouraged stepping away from the desk to take a break.	
CASA of St. Louis County, Missouri		Displayed mission statement and boosted morale of staff who had worked so hard to develop the values part of it earlier this year.	Incorporated findings from Emmy Werner research on resilient children into CASA training.	
Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix, Arizona	Created Childhelp All-Stars: Staff from all agencies nominate people who go above and beyond for fellow staff and families.	Supervisors selected winners quarterly, and announce why they were nominated. Winners get a reserved parking space for a week and are entered into a \$100 annual drawing.		

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Building a Sense of Hope

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Florida Department of Children and Families, Emerald Coast CAC, Santa Rosa Kids' House		Conducted activities for fun and optimism: Staff helped with large fundraiser; four of the seven agencies participated in a football-themed door decorating contest and pot luck lunch.	Held a fitness challenge competition that was well-received by child protection investigators. Held bowling staff meetings in partnership with legal and community-based provider staff.	
Project Harmony Child Protection Center, Nebraska	Expanded building newsletter to include all agency partners. Staff were identified and profiled so that all building partners could celebrate their accomplishments, whether it was for 30 years of service or being recognized as a "shining star" by a supervisor.	Had a designated parking spot for employee of the month, selected from all MDT members.	Implemented a "snack and swap" event—management brought food and staff brought in unwanted items to swap with each other. The food and swap items were put into a meeting room and staff could come and go all day.	
Richland County CASA, South Carolina	Engaged everyone in the pilot effort.	Used humor and a sense of fun to support staff (Songs of Hope activity).	Did the " Make a T-Shirt " activity as part of resiliency retreat with OVC-TTAC speaker.	✓
Synergy Services, Inc., Children's Advocacy Center, Missouri		Praised staff at every opportunity.	Conducted Three Blessings and Gratitude exercises .	✓

Healthy Coping

Healthy coping is the third core element identified as a strength in people who are resilient. Its components are ones that develop one's capacity to cope in crisis: recognizing and addressing negative aspects of work, planning, using skills and abilities, and creativity.

Strategies used to strengthen healthy coping involve paying attention to how the work impacts one in mind, body and spirit, and taking steps to address those consequences through exercise, debriefings, and reflection. Using skills such as time management helps distribute more stressful tasks and build in respite. Being creative opens the door for new ways of problem-solving and creates opportunities to develop new skills for healthy coping.

Reflections from the Resiliency Coaches

Adams County Children's Advocacy Center

Within my own CAC, the only limitation is money. I would love to be able to pay for gym memberships or give staff a stipend for gym costs but we can't. So, we contacted an area gym to request membership discounts and developed a policy that gives staff flextime when it's used for physical exercise. The policy also allows staff to go to personal counseling on work time. We also started doing two supervisory meetings, so during one, we check on how the employee is doing with this work, and we separate that discussion from meeting with the worker to discuss performance or measures. We also implemented quarterly debriefings to help connect staff with one another and help them talk about the hard cases.

CALICO

Some staff have been doing this work for a very long time and have come up with their own strategies to survive it, so it was a challenge to re-route them and to create new neural pathways. It was difficult for them to bring the wall down and talk about it, because it's scary to drop the wall. We had to approach this in a gentle way and now people are getting more comfortable with the language and talking about it. We found that in this line of work, it helps to have a professional on board or have a professional therapist available for staff.

CASA of Lane County

One of our goals was not to have turnover, and we had three highly experienced people leave in the last nine months. Their reasons for leaving were not related to stress, but rather to life changes, retirement, and a spouse's job change. We also had a shift in staff structure. So not only are we trying to build resiliency and keep staff, but we're trying to change the way we do the work. We've had people here for so long. As people get tired, our director is right there supporting the program, seeing these as things we can address from a resiliency standpoint. She recently brought on a new human resources manager, and asked that these strategies be built into our hiring policies and procedures, so it's become all encompassing. Our supervisors have also been receptive. They like learning how to take care of themselves. If you have supervisors taking care of themselves,

working well and building strong relationships, then it trickles down to volunteers. We're getting positive feedback from experienced CASAs who comment on the increased communication and support from supervisors.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

We have been trying to use some of the skills and techniques in our daily practice, with the new awareness that those are resiliency building. We may have done some of these things before, but being able to be intentional and focused on them as resiliency building helps us.

Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix

People were generally eager and ready to talk about resiliency. I get the sense that anything we put forward would be entertained, considered, and embraced. Feeling out the different cultures in the building is part of it. We have the most direct influence over Childhelp, but the other groups have all rolled with it and been fairly engaged as well. One of our partners in particular has taken the fact that we have this focus to do things in their own organization, such as looking into other trainings, adding treadmills. There is a new openness and awareness. The law enforcement partners have really seized on it. The change in attitude and awareness has been helpful. Now that this topic is on the table, the dialogue exists and changes how people express their needs for self-care. That openness has gained us a safety net that has had a positive impact on keeping people here.

Florida Department of Children and Families

This project came when things began to get much tougher, especially in Santa Rosa. From a management perspective, it allowed us to give more focus to building the capacity for frontline staff to bounce back. That helped level out some of the staff frustration. Given the dynamics, people would be more apt to look elsewhere, and the turnover would have been worse without the project.

Project Harmony Child Protection Center

Since we are government, the flexibility or ability to do anything with policy was a little more challenging. I was able to get out in writing to everybody that in fact flexibility is the one thing that we have to offer. I told every supervisory team that they are to entertain any and all work schedules that employees come forward with, as long as we are getting the work done and meeting expectations. That has been very successful.

Richland County CASA

It was important to understand how secondary trauma can affect us as a workforce, and our 400 volunteers. We are charged with representing 100 percent of the children. We are under more stress today than we were this time last year. There are fewer caseworkers, and every day the children go without the services that the court ordered and they deserve. Court dockets are overcrowded. The stresses are still here and in fact are greater. They are the highest in my tenure in this business. There is no question in my mind that turnover would be worse without the Resiliency Project.

Safe Shores, the D.C. Children's Advocacy Center

Our new building has a meditation room and a gym, but for some, a paradigm shift was needed to use them and embrace wellness as part of their professional development. As

part of our “Take Care to Give Care,” campaign, one of our resiliency coaches set her own personal goals and it was contagious. A social committee was established, and it brought in others to carry the torch, spreading the message that it was not just up to management or the team captain— everyone is responsible for moving this initiative forward. The activities helped interpersonal tensions. We use the “Take Care to Give Care” approach now in every training. Something is interwoven every time.

Synergy Services, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center

This information helped me as a supervisor. When I hired two new people, I talked to them about specific stressors of their jobs and how I want them to think about things. It made it more of a conversation in supervision. The project has helped me hone in on this piece. Sometimes staff struggles with shelter kids turning over every couple of weeks and their not being able to build long-term relationships with them. I was able to let new hires know coming in that it is going to be that way, so they can have that in mind from the start. I’ve taken one new person around to all of the different programs, talked to her about the different types of cases each program sees, and explained that not every case will be prosecuted. We can only handle what we can handle. It’s really helped to let new hires know what to expect.

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Healthy Coping

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Adams County CAC, Pennsylvania	<p>Created debriefing policy.</p> <p>Offered wellness policy with flextime for counseling sessions, physical fitness. (See wellness policy in Self-Knowledge and Insight.)</p> <p>Held two different supervisory meetings, one for case review, one for worker wellbeing.</p>	<p>Offered quarterly team debriefing, which is voluntary, with time off work to participate.</p> <p>Sent outreach letter to local businesses and secured discounts for staff on gym memberships, holistic health services, etc.</p> <p>Surveyed staff on workplace safety concerns.</p>	Conducted five-hour training with child welfare supervisors and covered secondary traumatic stress, five core elements, and possible strategies.	✓
CALICO, California	Made outside consultant available to meet with staff on a monthly basis. Sessions are an hour long.	Surveyed staff about the need for a critical incident consultant available to staff.		
CASA of Lane County, Oregon		Counselor debriefed with program staff twice monthly, which supports staff through many difficulties on the job.		

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CASA of St. Louis County, Missouri		Held individualized monthly supervision with each CASA volunteer focusing on the case and/or the volunteer’s personal well-being. Supervisors appreciated commitment to the need for them to have time to do this.	Incorporated information about working with traumatized children into CASA training and gave volunteers an opportunity to voice concerns and learn coping strategies. (See identifying challenges and meeting challenges activities.)	✓
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Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Healthy Coping

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Child Advocates of Fort Bend, Texas	Revamped policy for more flexibility, time off, and coverage that is more fair to staff. Set up Emergency on-call system for children’s advocacy center staff.	Created “Recharge and Regroup” session where staff and volunteers process cases, frustrations, and challenges; led by licensed therapist.	Held partner appreciation party. Brought in outside trainer to train board, staff, and partners on secondary traumatic stress.	
Florida Department of Children and Families, Emerald Coast CAC, Santa Rosa Kids’ House	Drafted debriefing protocol for critical incidents , such as a child death. Launched with trauma informed care workgroup and still finalizing.	Introduced concept by providing to everyone a copy of the book, “Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others,” and discussing with staff.	Conducted debriefing training for supervisors.	✓

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Project Harmony Child Protection Center, Nebraska	<p>Created policy for CPS staff flexibility in scheduling work hours; encouraged supervisors to use.</p> <p>Developed detailed building protocols for dealing with specific crises (e.g., violence in the workplace), providing clarity and guidance to supervisors.</p>	Invited administrator to speak frankly to employees about pending layoffs in open dialogue. Even if many answers were not known, trust and respect were built. Brought in outside counselor to allow staff to talk freely about changes.		✓
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Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Healthy Coping

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Pulaski County CASA, Arkansas	Created a critical response team headed by long-time volunteer and area pastor.	Developed self-care policy for agency that helped supervisors see a CASA as a whole person, not just as a CASA, and to approach supervision with that in mind. (See self-care policy in Self-Knowledge and Insight.)	Consistent with policy, revised training schedule to focus on the importance of exercise, health, and nutrition in healthy coping.	
Richland County CASA, South Carolina	Asked staff to bring a stress buster to share with others at monthly staff meeting. “Stamp out stress” or SOS is now a regular agenda item. Ideas so far include sharing coupons for free yoga, and organizing a book club and a dinner club.	Scheduled weekly sessions just to discuss secondary traumatic stress with staff who need more intensive support.		
Safe Shores, the	Created organizational	Clinical and direct staff received weekly	Created program to support	

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D.C. Children’s Advocacy Center, Washington, D.C.	resiliency program “Take Care to Give Care.”	face-to-face supervision. Identified quiet spaces for reflection.	continuing education of workers: \$2,500 for staff, \$3,500 for clinical staff, and \$1,000 MDT scholarship fund. Held annual training.	
Synergy Services, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center, Missouri	Drafted a policy on the importance of diversity among staff and volunteers.	Developed new employee orientation to include discussion of secondary traumatic stress. Staff asked to identify healthy stress reducers.	Trained more than 50% of staff on secondary traumatic stress and five core elements. Attended training on stress and secondary trauma in the workplace to increase own knowledge.	

Strong Relationships

Strong relationships is the fourth core element identified as a strength in people who are resilient. The components of strong relationships are attachment to others, seeking and giving support, and speaking up for a change.

Strategies used to strengthen strong relationships include fostering an organizational culture where people give and receive support, and having policies and supervisory practices in place that encourage teamwork, address conflict and channel communications to positive change.

Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center

Personally, one of the big pieces that has stuck with me and made a big difference is thinking about the power of assumption. When we work off of our assumptions, it spirals out of control and affects relationships. I try to pause more now and reflect—is this an assumption or a fact? I’ve been stopping and gathering more facts before spiraling into a big, unhealthy direction.

CALICO

We did not make the inroads we wanted to with law enforcement, but we learned it needs to start small in that department, and let them work it from within. As part of our strategies for after the pilot phase, we are looking to do more with them. We do a collaborative training every year (we are in our 14th year), where we invite law enforcement and child abuse professionals from the whole county. We are billing this one as a resiliency collaborative with the theme “Bouncing Back.” We are bringing in a speaker through the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center and we are hoping we can reach people we have not been able to reach yet.

CASA of Lane County, Oregon

Seeing how the other pilot sites were doing things was similar to learning you have a life-threatening disease, and then you go to a support group and you feel less alone. Whether you are from a CASA, a children’s advocacy center or child protective services, you are working toward the same goal. You can come together and try to build resiliency together. Our programs here are all housed separately, so we have to work harder at those relationships. When I first started 11 years ago, the relationships were not very good with our child protective services partners or attorneys. We had to build those relationships from a distance. For me, it was important to see how the other pilot sites work together so closely, whether they are co-located or not.

CASA of St. Louis County

The pilot helped us get back to the basics of providing one-on-one supervision to our volunteers. Being able to focus on that goal has been a positive change. We had each supervisor schedule a time to meet in person or talk over the phone to discuss the case, and get to know the CASA on a more personal level. Through doing that, I have gained more insight into where the volunteers are at and why they are volunteering with us. Some of them have been experiencing secondary trauma and I hadn’t been attuned to that.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

We work closely with our partner agencies, but we have zero control over their time or what they're allowed to do. We could engage them in bigger things like the partners' party last year. We know they're under a lot of pressure and we're trying to find things that will work with the time we have.

Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix

Everyone copes in different ways. Some people have a stronger desire to connect and share and debrief than others. At one recent meeting, we shared with one another how we deal with a hard time and what we would ask our partners to do for us (e.g., give me space, talk to me, ask me how I am doing). It helped us understand how we each operate and what we need from one another.

Florida Department of Children and Families

Bringing in our partners built in another level of support, and it became a system approach. It was very beneficial that the Department of Children and Families and the two CACs worked together with the whole network, putting resources together in innovative ways. You can work outside the box with that kind of partnership and it increased communication with each other. If something is wrong, people aren't afraid to speak up and say what it is.

When we had our big hiccup and lost one of our coaches, I really appreciated the support from the University of Texas project team. We really didn't realize that we were dealing with a resiliency issue. It put a whole other perspective on how to look at things. We were feeling very supported—which made me think—maybe we are missing opportunities to provide support to our own staff. We take a lot of things for granted that really are opportunities to build resiliency.

Project Harmony Child Protection Center

Law enforcement is socialized differently than social workers. Law enforcement might say, "If you've got problems with secondary traumatic stress, you shouldn't be in this field." And they're done with it. You really have to start where they are. It's a continuing challenge that we will always have—relationships and trust. It seems that a lot of it is based on philosophical pillars—what do you base decisions on? Sometimes our pillars are different than law enforcement's pillars, so it makes for a natural bumping into each other. The way the building is structured is a little problematic; we're more isolated than we were before. It takes real work to keep those lines of communication open.

Pulaski County CASA

The economy has affected our budget, and we lost a position. Even though we're down a person, the morale of the program and integrity is elevated compared to last year at this time. We've been able to maintain a better structure. We've been meticulous about making sure we have kept our volunteers informed of the changes. We gave them training topics for the whole year, and we gave them a way to give us feedback on what they wanted to have training on. We had our first annual meeting with volunteers, board members, and stakeholders together. We had open discussions and then broke up into smaller sessions to talk about what is going well and what needs to be changed. We had great feedback from that.

Richland County CASA

We have a mature, bonded staff. When we bring something back to them, there is automatic credibility and buy-in. We engaged them from the beginning, and we were abundantly blessed to be able to have an OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center speaker for our resiliency retreat. I would not have even known about this resource had I not been participating in the pilot project. It was really so wonderful for the staff to take part in the retreat together. It helped with cohesion. The resiliency trips were great, but having the entire workforce (staff and volunteers) able to participate in training on the five core elements—and not just get blurbs and copies of handouts—made it an enriching experience. It truly solidified the whole message from the resiliency team. At the retreat, we did the t-shirt exercise. Everyone was given a piece of paper and asked to reflect on their life motto—what is important to them. We got clothesline and clothes pins and hung the t-shirts up and down the hallway at the office. At first people thought it was corny, but it is a daily, visual reminder of why we do the work we do.

Synergy Services, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center

We have seen more connection between some of the different programs in our agency. People are getting together more and building strong relationships, outside and inside the office. We had ten different meetings with staff and made it clear we were not going to reveal who said what. We never once heard that somebody had revealed something. People held to their confidentiality and honored it, and that made people feel good about this process. We are looking at a social networking policy to make sure boundaries are honored.

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Building Strong Relationships

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Adams County Children's Advocacy Center, Pennsylvania			Trained MDT and staff on five core elements, focus on impact of the job and reducing alienation.	
CALICO, California	Added an MDT coordinator who will maintain and foster relationships with partner agencies.	Sent 5–10 handwritten thank you notes to partners.	Partnered with the district attorney's office to develop resiliency training for police officers.	
CASA of Lane County, Oregon		CASA supervisors are involved throughout the whole 11-week training process for volunteers, beginning with intensive interview.	<p>Provided training on PIN pyramid to reinforce positive communications that lead to better understanding of issues. (Related activity, Tell Me More.)</p> <p>Provided training on computers to use technology in the most friendly, efficient way.</p>	✓
Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix, Arizona	Implemented a mentorship program to help playroom volunteers feel more supported. Volunteers are matched up with therapists from the CAC mental health team so that they have someone to connect with regarding the work.			✓

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Building Strong Relationships

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
Project Harmony Child Protection Center, Nebraska		<p>Met with new staff regularly regarding their experiences, fears, successes, and recommendations.</p> <p>Hold “rounds” during which staff review every case, discuss what went well, and what they may have missed. Great way to debrief and improve practice.</p>	<p>Convened meeting of training directors and coordinators from public and private child welfare agencies. Share ideas, resources, joys, and challenges.</p>	
Pulaski County CASA, Arkansas		<p>Made phone calls rather than sending e-mails to communicate better with volunteers.</p>		
SafeShores, the D.C. Children’s Advocacy Center, Washington, D.C.	<p>Encouraged workers to ask for help when needed.</p>	<p>Created a professional culture to support informal supervision and debriefing.</p>	<p>EAP conducted training on vicarious trauma for approximately 40 police officers and supervisors.</p>	
Synergy Services, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center, Missouri	<p>Brought in an outside facilitator to establish a process to meet challenges, using activity such as addressing relationship or teamwork challenges.</p>	<p>Implemented a welcoming committee and mentoring program for new employees.</p> <p>EAP counselor holds regular group session with staff to talk about the stress of the job, the trauma with the kids, and other issues staff want to raise.</p>	<p>STAR committee (staff training and recognition) gave workers a day out of the office to inspire and educate them and to do team-building exercises. Employee awards were handed out.</p>	

Personal Perspective and Meaning

Personal perspective and meaning is the fifth core element identified as a strength in people who are resilient. Its components are ones that support meaning making: morality and integrity, spirituality, and coherent life meaning.

Strategies used to strengthen personal perspective and meaning include reflective practice, journaling, and narrative storytelling. Personal perspective and meaning is broader than the others but according to the research and practice wisdom materials, it may be the most crucial in terms of the link between work fulfillment and resiliency.

CALICO

After learning about resiliency and understanding it better, I tried to create boundaries within what I was doing to maintain my own resiliency and I couldn't do that, so I am moving to a different assignment outside of the CAC. Things might have been turned out differently if I had been able to implement some things that would have helped me, for example, have another prosecutor who could rotate in, just like the forensic interviewers do. I couldn't accomplish that in the confines of my job. It's hard to leave the CAC itself, but I see it as an opportunity to tweak the model and provide more flexibility in the future. I always thought I was a very resilient person, but I've learned that it ebbs and flows. It's about keeping yourself strong and healthy so that you are resilient.

CASA of Lane County

At first, staff did not want to do the vision board activity. Then we couldn't get them to stop!

CASA of St. Louis County

For me, personally, this has been a huge growing time. I had a block initially. I couldn't focus on it. I was having a really hard time. I was interested, but the only time I could engage was when we were all together. I finally decided that because of the merger, I was struggling with my own secondary traumatic stress. Once I addressed those issues, I realized that it wasn't that I didn't have enough time, it was that I wasn't functioning at a high enough level. This has been so beneficial for me because what I discovered is that you have to take care of yourself. That's what I found. I was able to more fully engage once I started doing some of the strategies, living resiliency.

Applying it to myself helped me be more empathetic with my own volunteers, and more understanding about what they are going through. We become somewhat hardened in this work, and I know things don't affect me the way they once did. Being able to pull from how I used to feel and react has helped me be a better supervisor. Connecting secondary traumatic stress with my own professional life and some of the things I have personally gone through in my career—and understanding what that really meant—has been important. Resiliency is not just about staying with the agency. It will remain an important part of my work regardless of where I work. We leave pieces of it where we are and take it with us wherever we go.

Child Advocates of Fort Bend

It was good to meet people from around the country and learn from one another. That was a very valuable part of the experience: to feel part of something bigger.

Childhelp Children's Center of Phoenix

At first, we heard some "Sigh, another thing on my plate." We worked together so staff could see we are all working toward this anyway, we are not adding more. It got them to re-focus on the reason we are doing this work, and that's where the resiliency puzzle really worked well.

Florida Department of Children and Families

Listening in to the monthly conference calls as part of the "Gecko Hour," I learned that there is a lot of work going on across the nation on this issue. That was surprising to me. You tend to get isolated in your little world, and it is nice to see that there are ideas and suggestions and a venue to share those.

Project Harmony Child Protection Center

Resiliency and the connection back to meaning and finding your philosophical base is really a message that I've pushed in every meeting I have. It's a wonderful tool and it has formed the basis of where I go and how I process and proceed in my work. It deepens my understanding of what is going on. Child protective services is going through privatization and there is always tension and role confusion. The one common thing we can always find in every meeting is that philosophical base. It is the touchstone. It unites us and helps us move forward. Some state employees who used to be frontline workers are doing outcome monitoring now and no longer have contact with families. It involves higher pay, but there is so much dissatisfaction and so much stress. Nobody really wants to do it, even for regular hours and better pay. I think it is because they don't have their touchstone anymore. My own personal growth also comes from the connection to finding meaning in this work. That's why everybody came here. You can really tell the people who have lost that connection. To be able to help people reconnect with it as a manager has been great.

Pulaski County CASA

Being a part of the Resiliency Project has allowed me to be a better director and a better person. I have a new and different perspective on our program. Now, I look at volunteers more as people, holistically, not just for what they do as a CASA. They have lives and families, and we are interested in their overall well-being. It's not just about their work as a CASA. As a result, we have retained more volunteers since we began this program. We hope the trend continues as we sustain the programs that were put into place during the pilot.

Richland County CASA

I didn't fully understand the impact of resiliency until we were part of the program. Ten short months later, resiliency is woven into the themes of everything I write—presentations, grants, speeches. It has truly been instrumental in sending a message to potential funders that emphasizes our care and concern for our community, whether that is the children or employees and volunteers. That is not something I anticipated.

Safe Shores, the D.C. Children's Advocacy Center

I came to a better understanding about my own resiliency. Resiliency means you're not so susceptible, but it's not a bullet proof vest to everything. I could bounce back, but I was still traumatized. It was like our expectations are out of sync with reality. I could see that it was okay to say that I needed support. Seeing the changes that could happen made it apparent that things don't have to be that way. Sometimes the vicarious trauma or the compassion fatigue is normalized. Now I have a greater level of advocacy about the need for this that is non-negotiable. That level of enlightenment opened other options for me that had not been on my radar. The abuse of children should not lead to the trauma of adults trying to help them.

Synergy Services, Inc., Children's Advocacy Center

It's been good to be part of the pilot and have the support of other people working on this, seeing where we all struggle with similar things. And it's made me feel part of something bigger.

Strategies the Pilot Sites Used for Strengthening Personal Perspective and Meaning

Resiliency Pilot Site	Policy	Supervisory Technique	Competency-based Training	Item in Participant Manual
CALICO Center, California		Implemented reflective practice.		
CASA of Lane County, Oregon			Conducted a “vision board” activity where workers made a collage of pictures representing their resiliency, and how they make meaning in this work.	
CASA of St. Louis County, Missouri		Held quarterly all-staff “salad” potluck to allow staff to talk about what has been going on in their personal lives. A severe tornado had just hit our area and being able to share concerns and talk about what happened to colleagues was helpful.		
Project Harmony Child Protection Center, Nebraska		Conducted the T-shirt exercise with management staff, providing them an opportunity to reconnect with their purpose and create symbols of their personal philosophy and meaning. They also discussed hard parts of their jobs and exchanged strategies on how to handle them.	Developed an orientation program for new employees to the building (e.g., CPS, law enforcement, CAC), asking them to identify why they chose their occupations and what meaning it brings to them. A second training asked them to recall those reasons. Supervisors will be able to draw on this “ meaning making activity ” when working with their employees on an ongoing basis.	 T-shirt activity in Hope. Meaning making in this section.

