



## **Building Resiliency in Child Abuse Organizations**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is resiliency?**

Resiliency is the power to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. Resilience helps us return to healthy functioning after being in a stressful situation. (Luthar, Cicchetti & Bronwyn, 2007). Being resilient does not mean that individuals are problem-free or unaffected by difficulties. It does mean individuals draw on personal beliefs, behaviors, skills, and attitudes to cope with stress, trauma, and tragedy rather than succumb to them. It means emerging from stressful situations feeling normal and perhaps even stronger than before (Siebert, 2005).

#### **Why is resiliency important to victim service providers?**

Victim service providers encounter traumatic situations on a regular basis (e.g., respond on scene to crimes, work directly with and behalf of crime victims, hear and see graphic descriptions of violence and victimization). These experiences can cause providers to experience vicarious trauma, leaving them vulnerable to negative physical, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual consequences. Strengthening victim service providers' resiliency can help buffer potential negative reactions to trauma exposure and can help providers grow stronger through these experiences.

#### **What are the characteristics of resiliency?**

The characteristics of resiliency summarize the current resiliency theory (Harris Lord & O'Brien, 2006) and research into five core elements. People who are resilient have:

- Personal perspective and meaning.
- A sense of hope.
- Healthy coping practices.
- Strong relationships.
- Self-knowledge and insight.

#### **What is organizational resiliency?**

In victim services, organizational resiliency is a concept based on the premise that an organization can take an intentional and active role in building staff and volunteer strengths in the five core elements of resiliency.

### **What is the organizational resiliency model?**

The organizational resiliency model assumes that staff and volunteers always experience stress and the organization should be proactive, not reactive, in addressing it. This model is founded on the five core elements of resiliency, and based on the belief that it is possible to build staff and volunteer strength in these elements through:

- The policies adopted by the organization.
- The supervisory techniques practiced by managers and supervisors.
- The competency-based training offered to staff and volunteers.

### **What are some examples of ways to build organizational resiliency through policies, supervisory techniques, and competency-based training?**

There are any number of ways to build organizational resiliency through policies, supervisory techniques, and competency-based training. The strategies that are presented in the *Building Resiliency in Child Abuse Organizations* training are grounded in evidence, expert judgment, or practice wisdom based on a [review of the literature](#). Some strategies are very simple and can be implemented immediately; others may require planning and approval. Below are three examples.

- Policies: Flextime to help employees accommodate personal schedules.
- Supervisory techniques: Mentoring for new employees.
- Competency-based training: Training sessions and educational materials to help staff and volunteers understand the effects of stress on health and offer practical coping mechanisms.

### **What are the benefits of working in an organization that promotes resiliency?**

There are many benefits to both the organization and the employees (White, 2013; ACS-NYU Children's Trauma Institute, 2012; Hernandez, et. al., [as cited in Manners, K & Tieszen, L., 2013]). Among them are:

- Improved productivity
- Deeper commitment to continuing work
- Healthier, well-centered staff and volunteers
- Reduced employee turnover
- Reduced absenteeism
- Less burnout and secondary trauma
- Healthier work environment
- Improved morale
- Perceived coworker and supervisor support
- Decreasing negative emotions and perceptions of themselves and their work

- Greater hope, understanding, belief in the possibility of recovery from trauma and other serious challenges

## References

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