Vicarious Trauma Toolkit: Becoming a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Part 1—Getting Started
Technical Overview

- If you are experiencing any technical issues, please let us know in the chat box.

- If you have technical difficulties during the webinar, contact—

  **Jason Adams**  
  Jadams@OVCTTAC.org

- Today’s session will be recorded and made available on the OVC TTAC website.

- If you have questions, type them in the chat box.
The Purpose of This Training

“Getting Started-Getting Buy-In”
Friday, October 18, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m. mountain time, 9:00–10:00 a.m. pacific time)

“Taking Our Temperature - Using the VT-ORG Assessment”
Friday, November 8, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m. mountain time, 9:00–10:00 a.m. pacific time)

“Now What? Moving Forward With Your Vicarious Trauma Action Plan”
Friday, December 6, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m. mountain time, 9:00–10:00 a.m. pacific time)
Today’s Presenters

Katherine Manners

Lisa Tieszen
INTRODUCTION

It takes courage to help child and adult victims of sexual abuse, assist survivors of acts of terrorism and mass violence, fight fires that may have taken people’s lives, or respond to shootings and other crime scenes. It also takes commitment to do this work despite the personal, physical, emotional, and mental impact it can have.

The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit (VTT) was developed on the premise that exposure to the traumatic experiences of other people—known as vicarious trauma—is an inevitable occupational challenge for the fields of victim services, emergency medical services, fire services, law enforcement, and other allied professionals; however, organizations can mitigate the potentially negative effects of
Goals of This Webinar

After completing this webinar, you should be able to—

- Define vicarious trauma.
- Discuss the spectrum of responses to vicarious trauma.
- Describe the concept of being "vicarious trauma-informed."
- Name one of the five pillars of a healthy organization.
- Describe Step 1 of the Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Organization.
What Is Trauma?

Individual trauma results from an EVENT, series of events, or set of circumstances that is EXPERIENCED by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse EFFECTS on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

What Is Vicarious Trauma?

Exposure to the trauma of others.
The Importance of Addressing Vicarious Trauma
The Prevalence of Vicarious Trauma

- 50 percent—traumatic stress symptoms in the severe range
- 50 percent—high to very high levels of compassion fatigue
- 37 percent—clinical levels of emotional distress
- 34 percent—meet PTSD diagnostic criteria
## Risk Factors

**Personal**
- Trauma history
- Preexisting psychological disorder
- Young age
- Isolation; inadequate support system
- Loss in last 12 months

**Professional**
- Lack of quality supervision
- High percentage of trauma survivors in caseload
- Little experience
- Worker/organization mismatch
- Lack of professional support system
- Inadequate orientation and training for role
Vicarious Trauma

Change in Worldview

Spectrum of Affective and Behavioral Responses

Negative

Vicarious Traumatization
Secondary Traumatic Stress
Burnout
PTSD
Unhealthy Behaviors
Compassion Fatigue

Neutral

Resilient, Healthy Workers

Positive

Vicarious Resilience
Post-Traumatic Growth
Vicarious Transformation
Compassion Satisfaction
“...the transformation or change in a helper’s inner experience as a result of responsibility for and empathic engagement with traumatized clients.”

(Saakvitne et al. 2000)
Neutral Responses to Vicarious Trauma

- Negative
  - Vicarious Traumatization
  - Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - Compassion Fatigue
  - Burnout

- Neutral

- Positive
Negative Effects of Vicarious Trauma

Negative
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout

Neutral

Positive
Personal Effects of Vicarious Trauma

- Physical
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Spiritual
- Relational
- Cognitive

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Professional Effects of Vicarious Trauma

- Morale
- Behavioral
- Performance
- Relational

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So, why do you do this work?
Positive Responses to Vicarious Trauma

Negative
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout

Neutral

Positive
- Vicarious Transformation
- Vicarious Resilience
- Compassion Satisfaction
Organizational Effects

- Loss in Productivity
- Staff Turnover
- Poor Organizational Health
Organizational Effects: Lost Productivity

Lost productivity stems from—

- Low staff morale.
- Blocked lines of communication.
- Lack of collaboration and cohesion.
Organizational Effects: Staff Turnover

Staff turnover can lead to—

- Additional stress on staff.
- Limited time and resources.
Poor organizational health is caused by the erosion of—

- Concentration.
- Focus.
- Decisionmaking.
- Motivation.
- Performance.
“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

—R. N. Remen, M.D., 1996
Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

1. Recognizes that vicarious trauma is an occupational challenge and has potential negative consequences.

2. Proactively addresses impact through policies, procedures, practices, and programs.
The Five Pillars of Organizational Health

- Leadership and Mission
- Management and Supervision
- Employee Empowerment and Work Environment
- Training and Professional Development
- Staff Health and Wellness
Strategies for Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organizations

- Promote a healthy organizational culture.
- Provide supportive leadership.
- Offer quality supervision.
- Debrief staff.
- Have formal and informal opportunities to socialize.
- Encourage peer support.
- Acknowledge stress as real, no stigma.
- Provide training on victim services and on vicarious trauma.
- Encourage staff health and wellness.
Getting Started: Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

BLUEPRINT FOR A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

"Where Do We Begin?"

Much like building a house, an organizational response to vicarious trauma requires vision, commitment, and a methodical approach that starts with laying a foundation and then builds up from there. This blueprint, informed by research and lessons learned from the field, was created as a step-by-step guide to assist organizations in becoming more vicarious trauma-informed. It provides guidance on using the Vicarious Trauma—Organizational Readiness Guide (VT–ORG) to assess your organization's current capacity as a vicarious trauma-informed organization, and offers suggestions on how to use the free, online repository of policies, research, and websites in the Compendium of Resources, including the New Tools for the Field, created specifically for the VTT.
Getting Started: Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Step 1: Lay the foundation for success.

Step 2: Assess current organizational capacity for addressing vicarious trauma.

Step 3: Determine priorities, and develop an action plan.

Step 4: Explore the VTT for resources to implement your action plan.
What’s Your Role Going To Be?
Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

1. Obtain commitment to establish an organizational response.
2. Designate an individual or team to coordinate and guide the effort.
3. Encourage open communication with staff.
Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

1. Obtain commitment to establish an organizational response.

Tasks
- Gather leaders.
- Discuss “why” you should have an organizational response.
- Evaluate the benefits of using the VTT as your approach.
- Show the video and see what your peers are saying.

VTT Tools
- Making the Business Case
- Talking Points: Using the VTT to Address Vicarious Trauma
- Victim Services Video Testimonial
- Introduction to Vicarious Trauma
Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

2. Designate an individual or team to coordinate and guide the effort.

- Gain buy-in throughout the organization.
- Create a workgroup that represents the organization.
- Give the workgroup the authority to act.
- Convene the workgroup and introduce members to the VTT and their role.
Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

3. Encourage open communication with staff.

- Keep management and staff informed throughout the process.
- Use sample emails to communicate with staff.
BLUEPRINT FOR A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

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https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/blueprint-for-a-vicarious-trauma-informed-organization
Webinar 2: Taking Our Temperature – Using the VT-ORG Assessment

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REGISTER
Review of Webinar Goals

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- Describe Step 1 of the Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Organization.
Final Questions?