



## Sample Strategies to Enhance Employee Support and Engagement

The mission of Rose Brooks Center (RBC) is to break the cycle of domestic violence so that individuals and families can live free of abuse. Founded in 1978, Rose Brooks Center is the largest domestic violence agency in Missouri, providing comprehensive services to survivors of domestic violence and their children primarily in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

The mission is accomplished through a full range of the following services: 24-hour crisis hotline; 100-bed emergency shelter; onsite pet shelter; rapid re-housing program; children's programming and parenting support; advocacy services co-located within the Municipal Court's domestic violence docket, Adult Abuse Division/Order of Protection Court, Family Court, Kansas City Missouri Police Department, and five area hospital systems; a lethality assessment program, in conjunction with the Kansas City Missouri Police Department; residential and non-residential case management services, economic and employment advocacy, and individual and group therapy for adults and children; substance abuse counseling; an on-site health clinic; and a school violence prevention program offering weekly support groups in public schools throughout the city. RBC has an annual budget of \$6.3 million and 100 employees, and reaches approximately 15,000 individuals annually.

**Below are key practices in 10 different areas that Rose Brooks utilizes to engage staff, build strength, collective resilience, and at the same time improve services for survivors.**

### 1. Hiring Process

#### a. **Organized and thoughtful hiring process.**

- Transparency and intentional assessment of alignment of agency mission, values, and philosophies.
  - Phone screen and 2 in-person interviews with supervisor and next level of supervisor-provides both candidate and agency to explore whether the position and agency are the right fit.
  - Use of behavior based interview questions focused on agency values and philosophies. Includes alignment with voluntary service participation, survivor right to self-determination, low barrier rules, commitment to equity and inclusion, support and assistance accessing resources for survivors who seek emergency contraception or abortion services; principles of trauma informed care, equal access for persons with limited English proficiency and undocumented survivors.
  - Transparency and discussion about the impact of trauma exposure and expectation for all employees to be active in building resilience.

## **b. Staff onboarding and new hire training.**

- Comprehensive training curriculum of required and optional training delivered by Advocacy & Education Manager and agency subject matter experts.
  - Adopted universal design concept of ensuring each new hire has the 3 C's: Comfort, confidence, and control to fulfill their job requirements.
  - Agency required trainings and position specific training- allows for cross training and professional development. Inclusive of training required for accreditation; how trauma informed principles are operationalized throughout the agency and by all positions; equity, inclusion, and preventing implicit bias from impacting practice; and practice of advocacy, crisis intervention, and safety planning skills.
- Trauma awareness- Organizational response to secondary trauma.
  - Rose Brooks Center is committed to an organizational response to mitigating the impact of trauma exposure for its workforce and volunteers. Staff and leadership have developed multiple resources for educating staff on the signs.
  - New hire orientation on the impact of trauma exposure, recognizing signs of secondary trauma, and strategies recommended by RBC staff on how to mitigate the impact of trauma exposure.
  - Quarterly training "Trauma and Its Impact on You- a deeper exploration of the impact of trauma exposure; signs, and strategies for trauma stewardship based on the writings of Laura van Dernoot-Lipsky (Trauma Stewardship).

## **2. Staff/employee performance evaluation**

- a. Annual performance review- includes employee report of key accomplishments and professional goals for the upcoming year.
- b. Supervision- expectation for all supervisors to provide regular supervision for their direct reports; job description includes responsibility for educating staff on the impact of trauma exposure and how to mitigate impact.
- c. Employee appreciation- recognition of individual and departmental contributions in monthly staff meeting, staff retreats, and recognition of anniversaries- long term employees rewarded with gift cards, opportunity to attend national training.
- d. Clear job descriptions and roles- updated annually to reflect changes needed to be responsive to the needs of service recipients and the scope of work provided by the employee.

## **3. Support to Address Trauma Exposure (secondary trauma)**

### **a. Staff wellness.**

- Wellness and Resiliency Committee led by RBC's Health Services Coordinator plans activities promoting resiliency building and health promotion. (Sustainability of committee is achieved by including in the Health Services Coordinator's job description and the funding for this position from a local foundation).

**b. Organizational response to vicarious trauma.**

- New hire orientation education.
- Trauma and Its Impact on You training.
- Included within supervision and team meetings.
- Agency guides: Responding to Safety Crisis and Traumatic Events and Advocate Guide to Support Planning.
- Inclusion of emotional support planning into annual and new hire safety and security training.
- In process: Staff have started work on an self-assessment tool of the 10 facets of resiliency: Ability to calm yourself, care for yourself/exercise, express emotions, replenish self, support yourself without judgement, Sense of coherence, hardiness, hope, optimism. Assess where I start in building resiliency, what areas are in need of building up, and suggestions for building a particular facet of resiliency.

**c. Flexibility/work-life balance- see leave time and flexible work schedule.**

**4. Compensation**

- a. **Salary-** equity adjustments made to be competitive; pay differential for staff who work evenings, overnights, and weekends.
- b. **Leave time-** generous leave time benefits - vacation, personal leave, holidays, sick leave, employee choice holiday.
- c. **Benefits-** Regular assessment of benefits valued by employees.
- Retirement plan match.
  - Tuition reimbursement.
  - Employee Assistance Program.
  - Discretionary budget for clinicians to licensing fees and CEU training.
  - On-site gym.
  - Fitness challenge to earn leave time.
  - Annual budget for each department to hold staff retreats.
  - Wellness program offers onsite activities including yoga, mindfulness activities, and discounted massages.
  - Flexible work schedules and opportunities for remote work.

**5. Staff development**

**a. Meaningful and challenging development plans.**

Annual performance evaluation process offers option for setting professional development goals.

**b. Training**

- Created an Advocacy and Education Manager position to develop and offer staff and community training on a variety of topics.
- Encouragement for staff to participate in community-based learning opportunities (e.g. multi-disciplinary team recently completed an Enhanced Suicide Care Academy- will be using knowledge and skills gained to inform updates to agency procedures and training

- Request staff training dollars in grant requests when this is an eligible expense (EMDR, play therapy).
- Leverage funding opportunities to hire consultants (Equity and Inclusion, Trauma Informed Care, Building resiliency).

## **6. Leadership Strategies**

### **a. Integrate staff retention into agency policy, formal practices, and resource development.**

- Agency strategic plan and annual goal plan established for staff retention and engagement.
- Goals and objectives for staff retention and capacity building added to grant requests and logic models.
- Required staff training on trauma stewardship.
- Performance and Quality Improvement (PQI) Plan includes measures for staff retention. The Performance and Quality Improvement Team comprised of staff and supervisors from all agency departments conduct a Plan, Do, Check, Act change model for staff retention/engagement projects.
- New in 2020: Key Performance Indicator for staff retention selected for a Value Based Payment project funding.

### **b. Staff involvement and feedback to inform staff retention strategies**

- Staff Engagement & Satisfaction Survey Annual: informs strategic plan, annual departmental goal plans, Performance and Quality Improvement plan, the annual training plan, supervision and staff development, and resource acquisition (e.g. training dollars for staff training; licensure fees, improvements to physical and communications environment).
- Equity and Inclusion Survey to guide the Equity and Inclusion Plan and the work of the Diversity Connections committee, Black Leadership Advisory Council, and Equal Access committee (ensuring equal access for persons with limited English proficiency).
- Wellness and Resiliency Committee open to any agency employee. The committee plans activities and shares resources throughout the year focusing on overall wellness and the 10 facets of resiliency. Activities include ongoing education on the 10 facets of resiliency, on-site tai chi classes, weekly mindful movements sessions, yoga, on-site gym, discounted on-site massages, celebrations, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction classes.

### **c. Leadership conducts annual evaluation of factors impacting staff retention, quality of services, and sustained agency operations:**

- Annual work load/capacity evaluation for each position.
- Annual Training Needs- identify specific training and skills building needs for all departments and positions.
- Use the Praxis International/community safety assessment model for systems change: When our own system and coordinated care is not working as intended, we assess for how staff are organized to do their work (training, resources, linkages, rule and regulations).
- Annual and quarterly risk prevention and management evaluation of issues that may compromise the safety, well-being and health of service recipients, staff, and the organization.

## **7. Workplace environment and culture**

- a. **Space- intentional about creating safe and accessible work and service delivery spaces incorporating principles of trauma informed care and universal design for accessibility.** Features include:
  - On-site gym.
  - Walking track.
  - On-site pet shelter with opportunity for staff to be trained in pet socialization.
- b. **Employee feedback/input**
  - Annual staff satisfaction and engagement survey.
  - Equity and Inclusion staff survey.
  - Performance and Quality Improvement committee, Diversity Connections (Equity and Inclusion), Wellness and Resiliency.
  - Debriefings after each security incidents and other critical incidents to identify what worked well, what did not work well, what resources are needed, and recommendations for improvement.

## **8. Communication**

### **Management transparency**

- Regular updates on agency activities via staff meeting, emails, training.
- Regular opportunities for involvement in strategic planning, program evaluation.
- Example: Safety and Security Incidents: follow each incident with a follow up email explaining what happened and agency response to address safety of service recipients and staff; followed by voluntary “debriefing” session to explain in-person what happened and agency response, staff identification of what worked well, what did not work well, and recommendations for improvement.

## **9. Organized staff meetings**

- Monthly all staff meeting, include: agency updates, departmental highlight, introduction of new staff, and departmental updates.
- Staff retreats.
- Weekly team meetings for all departments.
- Staff invited to participate in agency committees (Equity and Inclusion, Equal Access Committee, Black Leadership Advisory Council, Performance and Quality Improvement, and Wellness and Resiliency Committee).

## **10. Clear mission and values**

### **Sense of purpose in the workplace- see also Leadership strategies**

- Staff are involved in the strategic planning process and developing annual goals for their department- strategic plan directly linked to the mission and vision of the agency
- Agency shares the outcome/impact of services, collaborations.