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To: NCSTICN@LISTSERV.FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV

Subject: TICN Special Edition *Trauma-Informed Supervision During COVID-19* Part 2



Trauma-Informed Community Network

Part of the Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax

The last time we reached out with resources related to Trauma-Informed Supervision during COVID-19, we were about 3 weeks into dealing with the pandemic. It is hard to believe that we have now been operating in this new normal for 4 months! In addition to the challenges supervisors were facing back in mid-March related to managing a remote workforce for the first time and helping front-line staff adjust to new practices, supervisors now have the additional challenge of ensuring that they are creating safe spaces for conversations about racial injustice. A lot to consider!

All of the information we have shared over the last few months related to COVID-19 and Racial Trauma is available on the [TICN website](#), so please reference those resources if you missed any of our previous special edition messages. We will dedicate this space to sharing new resources to build on those already on the site.

The folks over at [ACEs Connection](#) have been hosting a weekly afternoon discussion series since the beginning of the pandemic covering a variety of topics (all of which are archived on their site). On June 23rd, the topic was [Building Workforce Resilience](#). You can check out a video of the web event here: [A Better Normal](#). Karen Johnson (formerly of the National Council for Behavioral Health) of Trauma-Informed Lens Consulting, and Pam Black of Trauma-Sensitive Education, LLC shared their new **Resilient Workforce Framework**. The framework uses a tiered approach to consider resources and supports for staff at varying levels of concern and need that fall into 3 categories: Connection, Regulation and Cognition. The framework assumes that everyone is doing their best, and that we can maintain a healthy, engaged and satisfied workforce by matching supports to individual staff members level of need.

Very much in line with messages we have been promoting in terms of considering the different impacts that the pandemic might be having on different people. Not everyone you supervise has been affected in the same ways, so while it is important to provide universal supports related to self-care and well-being to everyone, it is also important to consider how best to support members of the workforce whose life or work context may be adding additional layers of stress during this universally challenging time.

The ACEs Connection presentation got us thinking about the **Organizational Health Model** shared with FCPS and County Health, Housing and Human Services senior leadership back in 2016 in Dr.

Patricia Fisher's Taking the Lead workshop for leaders in high stress, trauma-exposed workplaces.

12 Factor Model



The wisdom shared by Dr. Fisher in that training experience seems more relevant than ever right now. Her **Organizational Health Model** is built around the understanding that individual wellness is essential to team wellness, which is essential to organizational health. The culture of our organizations is heavily influenced by the actions of managers and supervisors. Dr. Fisher outlined these **Resiliency Predictors** that many might find helpful to consider right now.

Supervision (safe, accessible, skilled, regular)

Supportive Working Environments (acknowledge stress and create safe spaces to talk about it)

Training & Professional History (experience)

Rewards of the Work (people feel valued, focus on the rewards of the work, and feel commitment to the mission)

Personal Support (partner, family, friends, colleagues)

Current Life Context (health, stable relationships, financial stability)

We know that the effects of stress are mitigated when we are optimistic and committed to our work. As supervisors, how can you help maintain optimism and give meaning to difficult work? Do you know what the people you supervise find meaningful? How are you contributing to the **Resiliency Predictors** outlined above?



Addressing social inequity and structural racism is a priority of Fairfax County's [One Fairfax](#) initiative. One Fairfax staff in the County Executive's Office have been busy sharing resources with leaders from across the county to help them navigate conversations about race and equity that many employees may want to have in light of recent events.

Thanks to the One Fairfax team for developing and sharing this guidance!

Your Role as a Manager

Recent incidents regarding police use of force have led to the acknowledgement that some employees may want to discuss current events at work. As a manager in a diverse workforce, your role is to support employees to deal with and address the issues of the day.

Each of us is in a position to make change! Managers are encouraged to recognize this moment – to think and act differently – so that all people can live in an equitable society.

Check in with staff regularly. Do not be silent.

Notice patterns and experiences that affect many employees. Talk with your HR Manager about how to address them.

There may be things you cannot help with. Please share resources, like the EAP (see below), if your employees need more help than you can provide.

What You Can Do

Recognize It

People bring their whole selves to work. This affects how they feel, and can affect how they behave. Reactions vary based on experience: some staff experience racism and/or see racism in the workplace; for others, this is the first time they have confronted structural racism.

Some people might be suffering from trauma (this can look different, but a person may be disengaged, anxious, dismissive, or unsettled; see more [here](#)). If you see signs of trauma, ask what support they need and provide the number for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Any member of the community can contact Cigna's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) support line by calling [866-912-1687](tel:866-912-1687). The line is staffed 24 hours a day, every day, for consultation with a behavioral health clinician. These trained professionals are available to speak with people about how to cope with loss, anxiety, stress, fear or other issues related to recent events.

Do a self-check so that you can reflect on how you are showing up to work.

Build Relationships Over Time. Build genuine working relationships based on

trust and confidentiality. Having regular conversations makes checking in now natural.

Utilize the Ouch/Oops Method - Say “ouch” if someone says something that hurts — provide the space to own your feelings. Say “oops” and genuinely apologize for the ways your intention did not match your impact. Follow up your apology with some research. The person you hurt might not feel like explaining why in that moment, but that does not mean you should not find a better way to phrase things.

How to Discuss What is Happening Now

Prepare

Figure out what people need beforehand – ask them what would be helpful. What does the team need to feel supported?

This is a useful [framework](#) for discussion – the what, the gut, the so what, and the now what.

If you work in an agency or program with multiple shifts, the check-in should be consistent across shifts. It may be more of an open-door policy if time does not allow for a meeting.

During the Conversation

Create a space for open and honest dialogue – make it a judgement-free zone.

Listen to understand, not to respond or correct.

Not everyone is experiencing this the same way. It is OK not to be OK.

Embrace the pause and awkwardness – wait for people to respond.

Do not say you are “color blind” – that means that you do not see people for who they are. Using those words shows disregard and disrespect for a person’s racial identity.

Additional Resources

From Poll Everywhere:

[How to foster authentic connection between remote employees](#)

[8 tips to effectively manage a remote team](#)

From Apolitical:

Fascinating article from a few months ago that we keep coming back to. Written by someone working in local government in the UK, but certainly relevant for those considering their management styles and processes as they relate to workplace culture right now.

[The Pandemic is Make it or Break it Time for the Public Sector](#)

We are continuing to explore options to offer additional support during this

time. If you would like to request support for your team, or if you have ideas about how you or your team can support others, please let us know!

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