EVIDENCE-BASED RESOURCE GUIDE SERIES

Guide Overview:
Addressing Burnout in the Behavioral Health Workforce through Organizational Strategies

This overview provides a summary of the Evidence-Based Resource Guide titled, Addressing Burnout in the Behavioral Health Workforce through Organizational Strategies (SAMHSA Publication No. PEP22-06-02-005). The complete guide is available on the SAMHSA Store: https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA Digital Download/ PEP22-06-02-005.pdf.

An estimated 50 percent of behavioral health providers report feeling overburdened due to high levels of stress, low salaries, perceived lack of career advancement opportunities, and increased caseloads.[1, 2]
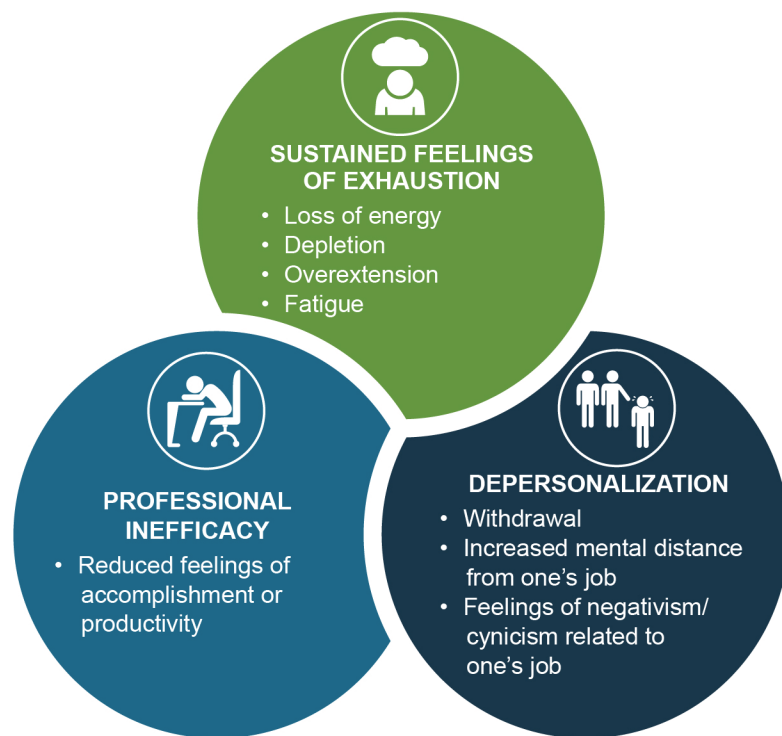
The World Health Organization defines burnout as an occupational phenomenon "conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."[3] Burnout is typically characterized by three dimensions (see graphic).

The guide focuses on organization-level interventions to prevent and reduce burnout among behavioral health staff, as evidence indicates that organization-level interventions are more effective at reducing burnout and related outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, intent to leave, perceived supervisor support) than individual-level interventions. The guide includes both the evidence of the impact of the interventions and strategies to support implementation. The guide is intended for behavioral health providers, staff, administrators, and organizational decision- and policy-makers to support the implementation of strategies to address burnout among behavioral health staff.

A systematic review of the literature identified five organization-level interventions with a statistically significant impact on burnout. While each multicomponent intervention was unique to the specific organization, the following program commonalities contributed to their success:

- Team-based: All used a team-based approach to identify the factors contributing to burnout, and then to develop and implement strategies to address these factors.

The Three Dimensions of Burnout

SUSTAINED FEELINGS OF EXHAUSTION
- Loss of energy
- Depletion
- Overextension
- Fatigue

PROFESSIONAL INEFFICACY
- Reduced feelings of accomplishment or productivity

DEPERSONALIZATION
- Withdrawal
- Increased mental distance from one's job
- Feelings of negativism/cynicism related to one's job

Sources: Morse, G., Salyers, M. P., Rollins, A. L., Monroe-DeVita, M., & Pfahler, C. (2012). Burnout in mental health services: A review of the problem and its remediation. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health, 39*(5), 341-352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-011-0352-1

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Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry, 15*(2), 103-111. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311

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- Data driven: These interventions began with a needs assessment or a similar process for collecting input from employees on work conditions and factors affecting well-being. A multidisciplinary team then reviewed the data and developed recommendations for interventions.

- Organization specific: Each intervention varied due to organizational characteristics and the unique concerns of employees.

- Well supported: Organizations implemented these interventions over a period of at least 12 months and institutionalized the interventions to sustain positive outcomes related to reducing employee burnout.

The guide provides guidance for how to implement organization-level strategies to address burnout, including guidance on planning, implementation and sustainability. It includes specific considerations across the six organizational factors of workload; control; reward, promotion and career development; community; fairness; and values. The guide includes three real-life case examples of programs that organizations have implemented to reduce burnout, including CopeColumbia at the Columbia University Irving Medical Center; the Clinician Health and Well-Being Program at University of California Davis Health; and need-based initiatives from Mental Health America of Northern Kentucky and Southwest Ohio.

Organization-Level Processes to Address Burnout

Build a Planning and Implementation Taskforce

Conduct a Needs Assessment
- ❑ Determine organization's drivers of burnout
- ❑ Gather diverse input
- ❑ Understand contextual factors

Identify Resources and Strategies
- ❑ Identify implementation resources
- ❑ Ensure organizational and leadership support
- ❑ Select relevant implementation strategies from factors below to address burnout in your organization
- ❑ Identify a relevant implementation framework or model

Plan for Sustainability

This guide uniquely contributes to available resources by focusing on organization-level interventions to address burnout among behavioral health staff. While many interventions target the individual-level, such as through mindfulness or stress management interventions, this guide focuses on organization-level interventions that are more likely to impact the workplace climate and culture to create a better workplace. While the guide is focused on behavioral health workers, burnout may affect all health workers; many of the strategies discussed may extend to other healthcare staff and organizations.

[1] Kelly, R. J., & Hearld, L. R. (2020). Burnout and leadership style in behavioral health care: A literature review. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research, 47*(4), 581-600. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-019-09679-z

[2] Green, A. E., Albanese, B. J., Shapiro, N. M., & Aarons, G. A. (2014). The roles of individual and organizational factors in burnout among community-based mental health service providers. *Psychological Services, 11*(1), 41-49. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035299

[3] World Health Organization. (2019). *Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International classification of diseases.* World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases