

# How to Support Your Support Staff

## Tips for Administrators on Preventing and Responding to Secondary Traumatic Stress

School personnel can experience Secondary Traumatic Stress when they interact with children and families who have experienced trauma. Secondary Traumatic Stress can negatively impact work performance, physical and emotional well-being, and the ability to provide support to students who need it most.



### **RISK FACTORS:** Secondary Traumatic Stress is more likely if staff are ...

#### Perfectionists

Staff who feel worthless if they can't "fix the problem" may struggle when supporting students and families who have experienced trauma.

#### Hard Workers

Those who are regularly the first ones in, last ones out, and always on the go in between may be more likely to experience STS.

#### Trauma Staff

Frequency of exposure does not always make it easier to deal with. Sometimes the staff who see trauma the most often are the ones most likely to struggle with STS.

#### Survivors

Old memories, feelings, and thoughts can be unwanted visitors if a staff member had a traumatic experience of their own in their past.



### **PREVENTION:** Reduce the likelihood of Secondary Traumatic Stress through ...

#### Modeling

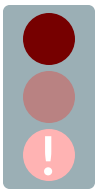
Set a tone of support in your building by modeling emotional support and healthy conflict resolution with staff and students.

#### Self-Care

Emphasize the importance of taking time to relax and recharge. Encourage staff to take care of themselves so that they can take better care of their students.

#### Training

Provide trauma-informed training to school staff so they are better prepared to interact with students and families who have experienced trauma.



### **RESPONSE:** Help support your staff by encouraging ...

#### Boundaries

Help staff establish a healthy work/life balance. Don't encourage late nights and early mornings. Do what you can to help separate work and home.

#### Reframing

Reinforce what the goals are for your staff. *"It is not your job to do for others, but to empower them to do for themselves"*.

#### Self-Care

Encourage wellness initiatives for your staff at work and at home. Help staff build strong supervisory and peer-relationships with their coworkers. Emphasize that getting support from a counselor or therapist is a sign of health, not weakness.