

# Staff Wellness and Morale

Native American Child and Family  
Conference

March 2024



Head Start Regional TTA Network

These materials were developed for OHS/Region XI Training and Technical Assistance Network under Contract No. 140D0420C0086 by ICF.

# Meet Your Presenter



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Region XI Mental Health Specialist



Head Start Regional TTA Network

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# Shared Agreements

1. Confidentiality
2. Mutual respect
3. Assume positive intent
4. Cell phones off/vibrate
5. Limit side conversations
6. What else?



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# Session Objectives

- Acknowledge the connection between wellness and staff morale
- Recognize how stress and burnout impact staff turnover
- Explore leadership and organizational practices that support a culture of belonging
- Discuss how developing a program-wide staff wellness plan supports well-being



# Why Staff Wellness?

- Stress is at an all-time high
- The mental health and well-being of staff has a ripple effect on children and families
- Ensuring staff feel supported is critical to growing a sustainable workforce



# Why Wellness Matters

*Staff wellness*, also called well-being, refers to staff's mental and physical health and how it shapes their engagement, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life.



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# Why Wellness Matters

Well-being is more than the absence of illness or stress, or even feeling content; it is about teachers flourishing more holistically.



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# Why Wellness Matters

Early childhood teachers can play a large role in supporting children experiencing trauma and adversity.



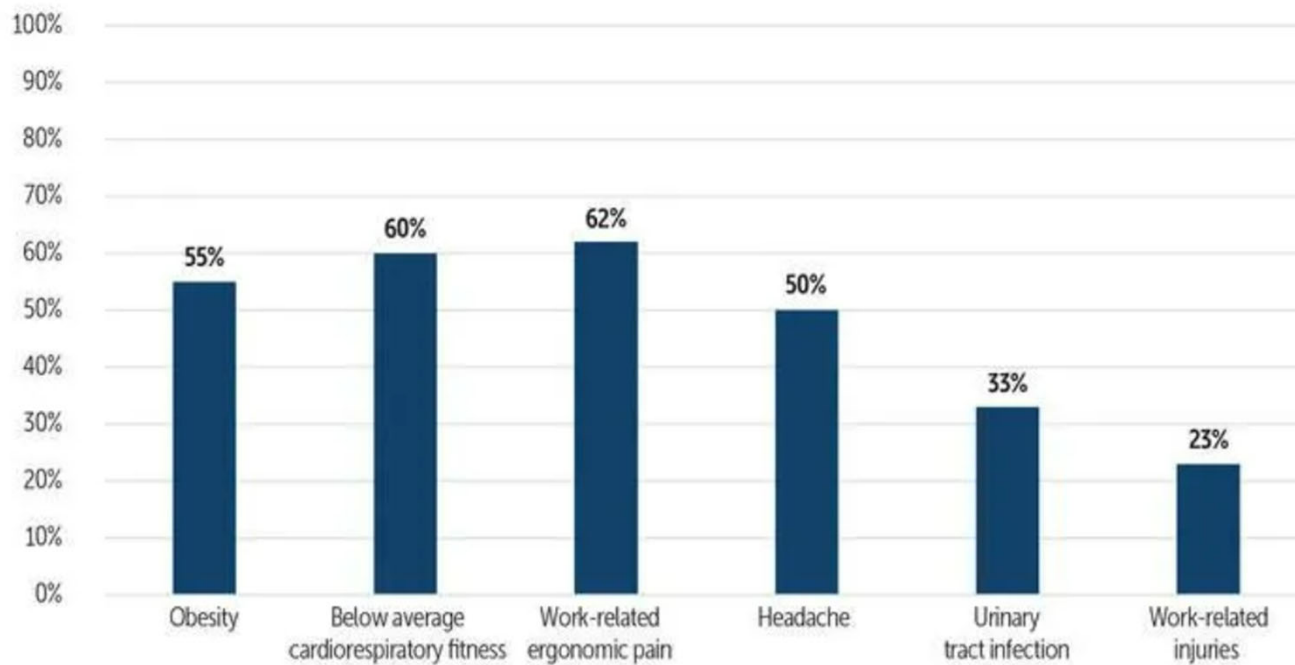
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# Physical Impacts on Staff

Figure 1. Infant–Toddler Teachers' Physical Well-Being

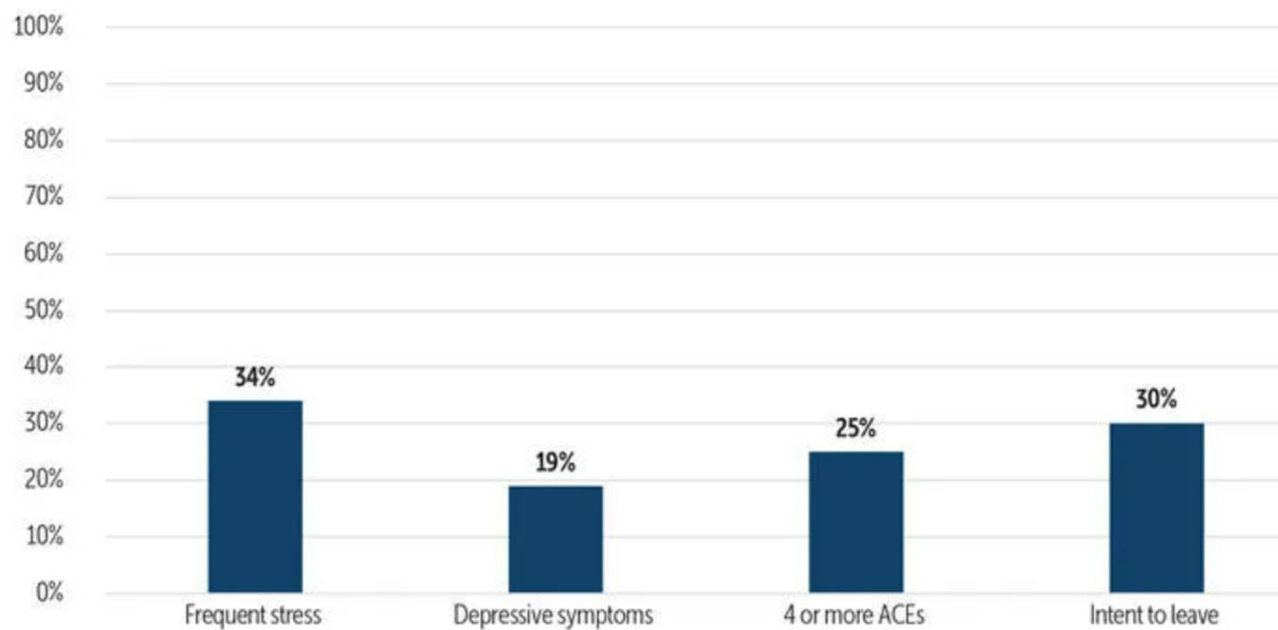


Source: Kwon, Ford, Salvatore, et al., 2020



# Psychological Impacts on Staff

Figure 2. Infant–Toddler Teachers' Psychological and Professional Well-Being



Note: ACEs = adverse childhood experiences. Source: Kwon, Ford, Salvatore, et al., 2020



# Additional Contributors to Stress



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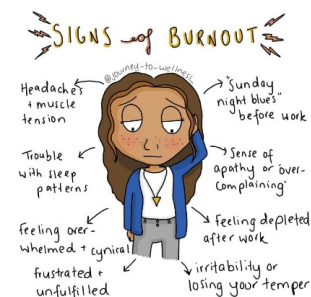
# Let's Not Forget About Burnout...

Burnout is a syndrome that results from chronic workplace stress.

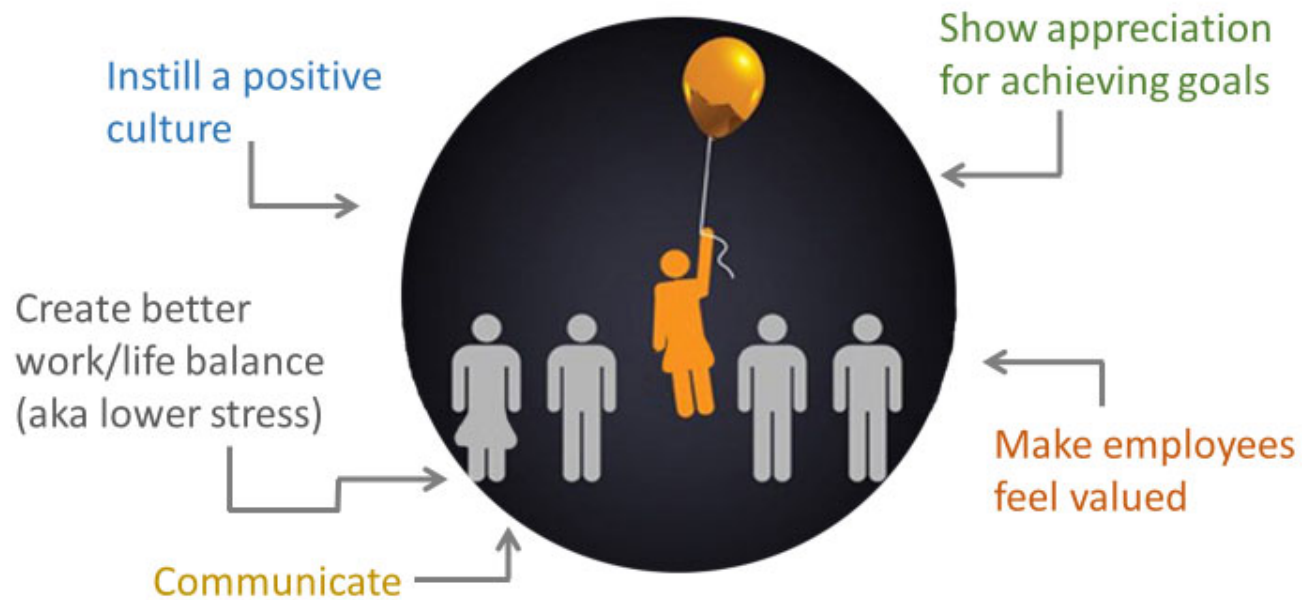
Three dimensions characterize it:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one's job, feelings of negativism, or cynicism related to one's job
- reduced professional efficacy

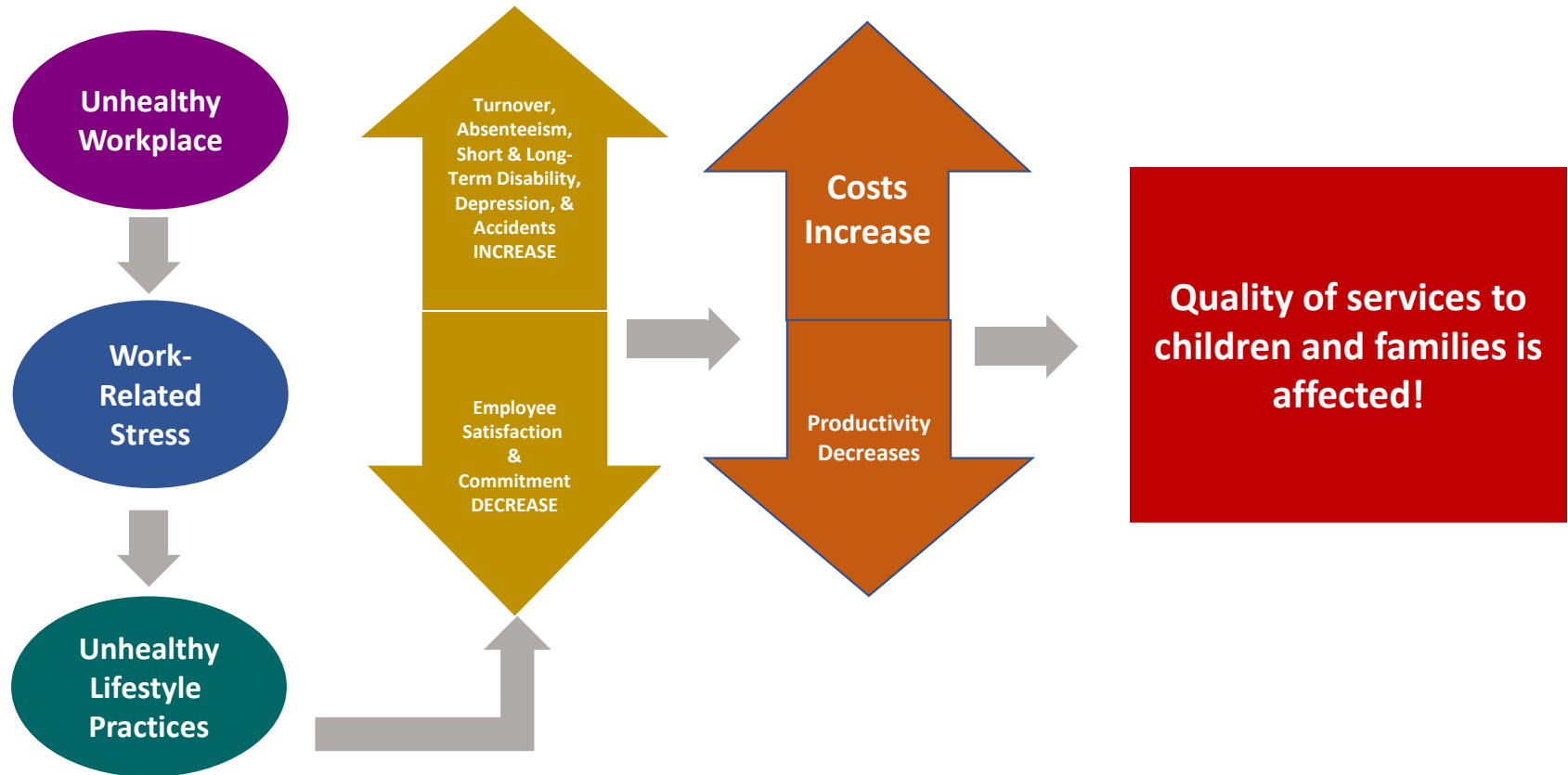
Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.



# Leadership Makes a Difference



# Without Action In An Unhealthy Workplace...



# No Action Leads to Staff Turnover



**Staff Retention** refers to the **ability** of an organization to **retain** its employees.



**Staff Turnover** refers to the percentage of employees who **leave** an organization and are **replaced** by new employees.

# Causes of Staff Turnover

1.

THE JOB IS NOT WHAT THEY EXPECTED



2. MISMATCH BETWEEN THE JOB AND PERSON



3.

TOO LITTLE COACHING AND FEEDBACK

4.



TOO FEW GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

5.

FEELING DEVALUED/  
UNRECOGNIZED



6.

DISLIKING STRESS AND  
WORK/LIFE IMBALANCE



7.

LOSS OF CONFIDENCE  
IN SENIOR LEADERS





# How Creating an Environment of Belonging Helps

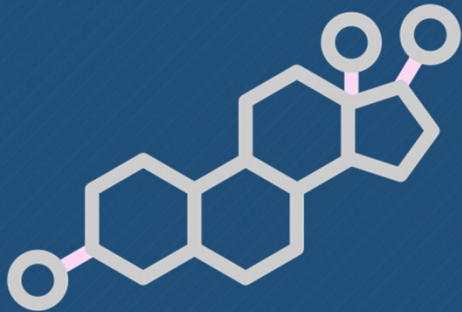


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# How Does Belonging Work?

When we experience a sense of belonging, our body activates happy hormones that promote happiness, pleasure, and even love



**Trust and  
collaboration  
increase**



When educators feel a sense of trust, connection, and collaboration they are better at supporting young children's development



# Building Belonging

## Ideas to Help Staff Get to Know Each Other

- What's your superpower? What's your kryptonite?
- Check in Rounds
- Weather Check-In Chart

## Belonging Rituals



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# Gallup Report: 12 Elements of Engagement

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.



# Gallup Report: 12 Elements of Engagement

7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my organization makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.



# Environmental Wellness

## Environmental Wellness

Your environments can support or prohibit maximum wellness. In this activity, look through your “lenses” at spaces and places you spend a lot of time — at work, at home, and wherever you play, sleep, eat, gather with friends, worship, etc. — and list what you see, hear, smell, touch, and feel.

### Use Your Wellness Lenses

<b>An environment where I spend a good amount of time:</b>	
Sights	I see:
<i>Wellness improvements or enhancements:</i>	
Sounds	I hear:
<i>Wellness improvements or enhancements:</i>	
Smells	I smell:
<i>Wellness improvements or enhancements:</i>	
Touch/Feel	I can touch and feel (e.g., surfaces, temperature, etc.):
<i>Wellness improvements or enhancements:</i>	
Other aspects	List other important qualities of this space:
<i>Wellness improvements or enhancements:</i>	



# Creating a Staff Wellness Plan



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# Mental Health, Wellness, & Health Education



## 1302.93 Staff health and wellness

(b) A program must make mental health and wellness information available to staff regarding health issues that may affect their job performance and must provide regularly scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health, wellness, and health education.



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# Creating a Staff Wellness Action Plan

- Allows your program to be intentional and thoughtful about creating a workplace that values staff wellness, mental health, and physical health
- Can be a useful tool for planning or for prioritizing goals and strategizing how to implement initiatives
- Helps you focus on the well-being of your team as per [ACF-IM-HS-21-05 Supporting the Wellness of All Staff](#)



## Creating a Staff Wellness Action Plan (SWAP)

A Staff Wellness Action Plan (SWAP) allows your program to be intentional and thoughtful about creating a workplace that values staff wellness, mental health, and physical health.

### Why create a SWAP?

If your program is just beginning to incorporate staff wellness activities, the SWAP can be a useful tool for planning. If your program already has a staff wellness plan, you may find the SWAP a useful tool for prioritizing goals and strategizing how to implement initiatives. Unexpected events, such as a public health emergency or another type of event that adds strain to the local community, are also appropriate times for revising your program's staff wellness plan — looking with fresh eyes and establishing new goals that place wellness at the forefront.

A great resource to help you focus on the well-being of your team is [ACF-IM-HS-21-05 Supporting the Wellness of All Staff in the Head Start Workforce](#). This Information Memoranda includes staff wellness requirements and many suggestions for activities to improve your program's efforts.

The [SWAP template](#) has four sections. Each section is outlined below. You can also create your own version of this SWAP to best meet the needs of your program.



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# Supporting the Wellness of All Staff

Staff who are happier, healthier, less stressed, and experience less depression are able to engage in higher-quality interactions with children.

Research indicates Head Start staff who experience frequent stress or symptoms of depression are more likely to perceive children in their care in a less positive light.

Higher rates of depression among adults have also been linked with poorer child outcomes and less positive family-teacher relationships.

ACF-IM-HS-21-05

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
	1. Log No. ACF-IM-HS-21-05	2. Issuance Date: 09/27/2021
	3. Originating Office: Office of Head Start	
	4. Key Words: Head Start Workforce; Staff Supports; Staff Wellness; Staff Well-being; Mental Health; Physical Health; Head Start Program Performance Standards; HSPPS	

#### INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Head Start and Early Head Start Grant Recipients

**SUBJECT:** Supporting the Wellness of All Staff in the Head Start Workforce

**INFORMATION:** The Office of Head Start (OHS) recognizes the importance of every individual in the birth to 5 Head Start workforce and the essential role of program staff in the delivery of high-quality, comprehensive services to enrolled infants, toddlers, preschool-aged children, and their families. Each staff person across the Head Start workforce has the immense responsibility of performing a job that supports young children's early learning, health, mental health, and family well-being. Staff wellness is vital to child well-being. It is also a critical component in the ability to address the diverse and individualized needs of Head Start children and families.

OHS is committed to promoting and prioritizing needed supports for staff. Successfully supporting staff starts with staff wellness. As programs continue to move toward fully in-person services and address challenges brought on or worsened by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, prioritizing staff well-being is essential for all Head Start programs. This Information Memorandum (IM) describes the importance of, and requirements and recommendations for, building a culture of wellness across all Head Start programs.

The last year has brought significant challenges to the Head Start workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disparate impact on under-resourced communities, including many of those served by Head Start programs. There has also been heightened attention to racial injustice in our country, which has led to calls for major reforms to address long-standing societal inequities. These are particularly important concerns for OHS and the Head Start workforce. All staff have been impacted by COVID-19. Further, 60% of Head Start teaching staff are Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and 30% have a primary language other than English. As such, OHS is committed to a culture of wellness that includes holistic support for the entire Head Start workforce.



# Supporting the Wellness of All Staff

Some Head Start staff have the added challenge of working with children who have experienced trauma while also managing their own history of trauma.

Often, the Head Start workforce reports their own trauma-like symptoms or emotional duress due to consistently hearing about the traumatic experiences of the children and families they serve.

ACF-IM-HS-21-05

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# Program Example

## Pat Broker

Sr. Program Manager  
for HS/EHS (Head  
Start/Early Head  
Start)

Leech Lake Band of  
Ojibwe Head Start

Cass Lake, MN



# Staff Wellness Action Plan: Mind Map

Vision for Staff Wellness  
Identify Your Wellness Team  
Collect Data on Needs  
Program & Community Resources  
Goals  
Next Action Steps



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# Staff Wellness Goals

## SMARTIE Objectives and Outcomes

*Reminder: SMARTIE stands for Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable*

Objective	Desired Outcome

## Section 4: Putting Our Ideas into Action

Action Steps	Lead Person	Partners or Others Who Can Support This Step	Resources Needed	Timeline
<b>Progress Notes:</b>				



# Reflections

Share one action that  
you will take from this  
session!



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Please mark your calendars!

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