PREVENTING AND MANAGING EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

SEPTEMBER 2020
These materials were prepared as part of the Rapid Response Network, a joint initiative between the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) and Social Finance, Inc. to support jurisdictions in fast-paced research and decision making driven by COVID-19.

The network aims to facilitate connections among jurisdictions facing similar challenges, and to supplement that shared experience with support from external experts—in order to deliver fast, customized, digestible research and analysis that strengthens local capacity.

We recognize that the pace of these responses means that they are likely to be both incomplete and imperfect. If you have suggestions for improvement or questions about these materials, we would love to hear from you. Please email Jake Segal (jsegal@socialfinance.org) or Nic Miragliuolo (nmiragliuolo@socialfinance.org).

With gratitude for the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and invaluable in-kind support from GLG, which supports the RRN through access to their expert network.
Executive Summary (slide 4)

Preventing Burnout: An overview (slides 5-10):
- Defining burnout and the associated challenges
- Strategies to prevent burnout

Supporting employees with children (slides 11-15):
- Associated challenges for working parents
- Reducing burnout for employees with children

Adapting to new work arrangements (slides 16-17)

Next steps (slides 18-20)

More resources (slide 21)

Sources (slide 22)

Appendix (slide 23)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summarized from research literature and expert interviews

Preventing burnout

- Use assessments and screenings to understand the root causes
- Address factors that increase work-related stress: workload, control, reward, community fairness, and values
- Prevention is cheaper and more effective than treatment
- A continuous improvement process, not a one-time intervention

Added challenges for employees with school-aged children

- Employees with children face increase in domestic work, difficulty in finding childcare, and increased mental load
- Cost-effective strategies include empathetic communication, support groups, flexible hours, and adjusted performance reviews
- High-impact, higher-cost strategies include childcare support and increasing PTO

Adjusting to remote / flexible work arrangements

- Embracing a flexible work schedule requires clear expectations that explicitly address problems, communication hours, and principles
- Employers can provide additional remote-work support such as reimbursements for WFH expenses and organized social activities
### FACTORS THAT CAUSE JOB BURNOUT

“*If you take a beautiful plant and put it in a lousy pot with no soil, no water, and no sun no matter how good that plant was to start it’s not going to thrive*”

– Dr. Christine Maslach

#### Job-Person Fit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload: Match between job demands and having the resources needed to meet those demands</th>
<th><strong>Unsustainable Workload:</strong> Frontline workers must contend with the increased health risk, challenging in-person work environment, and increased vulnerability of their clientele</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control: How much autonomy a person has in their work to figure how to complete their work</td>
<td><strong>Choice and Control:</strong> Workers may feel a loss of control as they must adjust to new schedules, new work environments, and other disruptions in their personal lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward: Typically regarded as salary, benefits, and other perks. But research has shown that social rewards are just as valuable</td>
<td><strong>Recognition and Reward:</strong> There may be a decrease in informal positive feedback due to remote work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community: Does a person have good relationships at work with their colleagues, boss, and clients?</td>
<td><strong>Supportive Work Community:</strong> Due to remote work, employees might feel isolated without regular daily contact with coworkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness: Are organizational policies and practices administered fairly or must employees navigate gender, racial, or other forms of inequity?</td>
<td><strong>Fairness, Respect, &amp; Social Justice:</strong> Employees may be feeling differential impacts of the COVID crisis on their lives, yet workplace policies may not have adjusted meet these employees’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values: Does the work have meaning for the employee; often turns out to be one of the most important values</td>
<td><strong>Clear Values and Meaningful Work:</strong> Will have significant variance based on job category. Some workers may find their work more meaningful during COVID, some less so</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All footnotes herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References
THREE DIMENSIONS OF BURNOUT

The Masalach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measures burnout across three dimensions yielding different burnout profiles.1

“Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic stressors on the job” – Dr. Christine Masalach

Exhaustion

Individual stress brought on by overwork. Workers with high negative scores for exhaustion only are overextended.

Cynicism

Negative response to work. Workers with high negative scores for cynicism only are disengaged.

Professional Inefficacy

Negative self-evaluation. Workers with high negative scores for inefficacy only are ineffective.

Workers with high negative scores on all three dimensions are identified as experiencing burnout.

Employees who are experiencing burnout are2:

• 63% more likely to take a sick day
• 23% more likely to visit the emergency room
• 50% as likely to discuss performance goals with their manager
• 2.6 times more likely to leave current employer
• 13% less confident in their performance

All footnotes herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References.
FRAMEWORK FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

European model for psychosocial health risks in the workplace

Risk Assessment
Using data collected from surveys and interviews, the assessment should identify the workplace’s psychosocial risks and then assess the harm caused by these risks.

Development of Action Plan
Action plans should include what risk is being targeted, how, who is responsible, who else needs to be involved, timing, resources needed, expected benefits, how to measure benefits, and an evaluation plan.

Audit of existing practices

Evaluation of Action Plan
Part of a process of continuous improvement, the evaluation should track both the process of implementation and the outcomes of implementation. The evaluation is meant to determine how to improve future action plans.

Risk Reduction
Implementation of action plan that is monitored, measured, and evaluated to see if and where corrective action might be needed.

Co-creation: This framework requires the active participation of both management and employees.

“Best practice in relation to psychosocial risk management essentially reflects best practice in terms of organizational management, learning and development, social responsibility and the promotion of quality of life”
TRADITIONAL STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BURNOUT

Utilize the design principles of ergonomics: creating custom-designed solutions that match the relationship between individuals and their work environment

### Types of Interventions

#### Primary Prevention:
* Reducing work-related stress through changes in the way work is organized including:

- Workplace re-engineering: assessing what the workplace is like for the workforce, and re-designing it to allow the workforce to be more efficient by reducing waste and removing barriers to success
- Implementing and improving communications systems

#### Secondary Prevention:
* Development of individual skills in stress management through training including:

- Wellness programs, including trainings on relaxation and time-management
- Knowledge building and trainings on the causes and impacts of work-related stress

#### Tertiary Prevention:
* Development of rehabilitation and “return-to-work” systems

- “Return-to-work”: Programs designed to address the impact of work-related injury, including stress, and are designed to support the employee as they return to their job
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Third party work-based programs that offer screenings, short-term counseling, and follow-up services to assist emotional well-being challenges

All footnotes herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References
**PREVENTING BURNOUT: CASE STUDIES**

Successful jurisdictions identified challenges, created customized action plans, and evaluated the impact of those plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>City of St. Paul</strong></td>
<td>• High suicide rate among staff</td>
<td>• Issues an RFP for tools that would increase employee engagement and partnered with MeQuilibrium</td>
<td>• Still too early to measure outcomes; usage rates of EAP and MeQuilibrium are key metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High utilization of stress-related services provided by health plan</td>
<td>• ½ day Mental Health First Aid training for supervisors to increase EAP usage</td>
<td>• It’s OK to spend first year focused on educating workforce on mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Needed a deeper analysis of the root causes of employee stress</td>
<td>• Improved communications on mental health by hosting a community dialogue event and through the Healthy Saint Paul Newsletter</td>
<td>• Focused on co-morbidities as individuals already engaged with health system should also have their mental health assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hennepin County</strong></td>
<td>• Rate of depression in workforce 2% higher than in comparable government jurisdictions</td>
<td>• Based on high rates of online usage of the county’s mental health screening tool, the county added a web-based interface for their EAP program</td>
<td>• ROI of $81 to $1 compared to the disability insurance industry standard of $27 to $1 for similar preventative case management programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Increasing rate of disability claims and requests for workplace accommodations</td>
<td>• Worked with Behavioral Medical Interventions and NAMI to develop a training program for supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Benefits program had poor “return-to-work” programming and EAP had low usage rates</td>
<td>• Created a return-to-work program through their disability benefits vendor using on-site case managers</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Themes**

- Jurisdictions used key metrics to identify workplace mental health challenges
- Current tools had low usage rates
- Reduced barriers to using current tools by increasing communications frequency and added in-person support and online access to those tools
- Partnered with experts to develop trainings for supervisors
- Assessment and education are crucial during early implementation
- Focus on high risk individuals
- Significant benefit to the employer

All footnotes herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References
SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH CHILDREN
## SUPPORT NEEDS TO ADDRESS PARENT-EMPLOYEE CHALLENGES

Parents can face more stress and be less productive due to caregiving roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in domestic work</strong></td>
<td>• Less time for work and leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A BCG study found that parents spend approximately <strong>50% more time on education and household work</strong> now than prior COVID-19(^6)</td>
<td>• Decreased productivity due to less sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Of this increased time, <strong>women spend ~30% more</strong> time on domestic work than men(^6)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finding Child Care</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19 regulations make it difficult to find care(^6,7):</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Daycare/schools are remote or at reduced capacity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Children are often unable to attend daycare/school in-person if they experience any COVID-19 symptoms, leading to an <strong>unpredictable childcare schedule</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Load</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The average stress level for parents during COVID-19 is <strong>~12% higher</strong> than non-parents due to these stressors(^6,8):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal and children’s health</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Children’s education (distance learning, education quality)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personal performance at work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unpredictable routines</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Basic needs (access to food, housing, etc.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WITH CHILDREN (1/2)

Low-resource solutions to prevent and manage burnout

1. **Empathetic and transparent communication**[^6,^7,^9]
   - To reduce feeling of isolation and anxiety around employer support, job loss, and performance challenges

2. **Create Parent Affinity Groups**[^5,^10,^11]
   - Parents can learn from and gain support from those facing similar challenges

3. **Adjust working hours**[^6,^7,^11]
   - With children at home, parents need to perform caretaker responsibilities during the traditional 9-5 workday

1. **Proactively reach out** to parent employees to understand and acknowledge the challenges
2. **Establish that this is a community responsibility, not an individual’s**

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**Cushman and Wakefield[^9]**
- Weekly check-ins from supervisors
- Communication from leadership to connect and share solutions
- Impact: improved sense of community, reduced anxiety

**Clackamas County[^5]**
- Monthly caregiver support groups
- 6-week program: *Tools for Caregivers*
- Educational offerings on how to cope, care for one’s own needs, etc.
- Impact: Stronger caregiver skills, reduced absenteeism

**Skyscanner**
- Instituted a company-wide 3-hour break in the afternoon
- Impact: allows employees to take care of their children without worrying about work performance

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[^6]: Parents can learn from and gain support from those facing similar challenges
[^7]: With children at home, parents need to perform caretaker responsibilities during the traditional 9-5 workday
[^8]: Proactively reach out to parent employees to understand and acknowledge the challenges
[^9]: Establish that this is a community responsibility, not an individual’s

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STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WITH CHILDREN (2/2)
High-impact, high-resource solutions to prevent and manage burnout

Support Child Care6,7,10,11

1. Provide reimbursements/subsidies for childcare expenses
2. Organize study pods with a group of employee children ($10-15 per child per hour7)
3. Utilize vacant office space to provide daycare/school for employee’s children

Change employee performance reviews6

1. Establish a plan that factors the impact of childcare into talent evaluations and track impact
   - Notation of impact
   - Adjustment of annual goals
   - Longer term performance trends and future potential
   - Employee protection against retaliation

Increase PTO5,6,11

1. Formal PTO programs: fully paid, partially paid, or unpaid leave with benefits
2. Unexpected childcare PTO for when parents cannot find backup childcare
3. Respite care: encourage time off for self/family care and help employees find cost-effective solutions

United Health System10
- Onsite daycare facilities for employee children aged 0-12
- $35-65 per child, per day
- Impact: reduced childcare hours for parents and essential employees could return to work in-person

Home Depot9
- 10 days subsidized backup care
- 2 weeks paid leave (COVID related, including for childcare)
- Impact: reduced mental load, increased time for rest, improved morale

All footnotes herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References
# CASE STUDY: CAREGIVER PROGRAM IN CLACKAMAS COUNTY, OR

County caregiver program supports employees balance work and caregiving

- **Employer:** Clackamas County, Oregon
- **Number of employees:** 2,100
- **Problem:** Increase in employees retiring early or reducing work hours to care for aging parents; county wanted to support employees balance work and caregiving

## Implementation

- **Interagency agreement was built to create DHS-SSD Agency on Aging Program Population**
- **Services at no cost to employees:**
  - 6 sessions to improve personal advocacy
  - Monthly support groups
  - Individualized information and referral services
  - 6-week educational program: *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*
  - Library of resources
- **Helps employees find cost-effective respite care**

## Outcomes

- **Reduction in employee absences**
- **Improved caregiving abilities,** such as stronger skills to solve challenging caregiving issues
- Participation of caregiving services was slow initially, but increased by 50% within two years

## Notes:

(A) EAP: Employee Assistance Program  
(B) FMLA: Family and Medical Leave Act  
(C) EEOC: US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

All sources herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References

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Similar to working parents during COVID-19, caregivers experience high levels of burnout — they experience stress, anxiety, and depression from lack of self-care/downtime, limited awareness of resources, and feelings of isolation.
ADAPTING TO NEW WORK ARRANGEMENTS
### SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES TO ADJUST

Embrace flexibility, but define clear guidelines around work expectations

#### Explicitly address the problems

- Acknowledge the issues of a remote/flexible arrangement
- Emphasize importance of downtime & developing routines

**Potential actions:**
- Host regular “town halls”
- Institute regular check-ins between supervisors and employees about WFH arrangements, mental health, capacity

#### Set clear communication hours

- Flexible hours can create an “always on” culture
- The *expectation* of being available “after hours” causes stress and anxiety

**Potential actions:**
- Define communication hours (e.g. 8am -5pm)
- Leadership must follow the policies (don’t reward communication outside hours)

#### Establish principles for communication channels

- Unclear expectations can prevent employee’s managing attention, decreasing productivity

**Potential actions:**
- *Email*: Routine requests, information sharing
- *Instant messaging*: Day-to-day notes, socializing
- *Phone, video calls*: Sensitive/complex topics
- *Texts*: Urgent only

## Remote work tools and supports

### Improve the work-from-home environment

- Offer **reimbursements** for work-from-home expenses (e.g. internet, headphones, etc.)
- Organize **social activities** to build an engaged workforce (e.g. trivia game, water cooler chats, happy hours, etc.)

All footnotes herein refer to references listed within Slide 23, References
NEXT STEPS AND RESOURCES
POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS TO PREVENT AND MANAGE BURNOUT
For consideration based on the research

1. **Assessment**: Using both qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (surveys) methods, determine what aspects of the work environment are causing employee burnout.

2. **Develop Action Plan**: Using the assessment develop a strategy to address employee burnout. This strategy should include resources needed; employee segment being targeted (i.e. working parents); and primary, secondary, and tertiary tactics.

3. **Implement and Iterate**: Roll-out action plan, and use employee and supervisor feedback to iterate and adjust the action plan.

4. **Evaluate and re-assess**: Measure outcomes and use evaluation of action plan as an opportunity for organizational learning and growth.
CONSIDER PRIORITIZING BURNOUT PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Place potential strategies in consultation with management team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Key</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manager-employee check-ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employee Assistance Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Workplace re-engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wellness Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Supervisor trainings on employee mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Childcare reimbursement or subsidies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Study pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>On-site day care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Childcare focused PTO programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Flexible Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Changes to workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Company wide-breaks</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Improved communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Affinity Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Adjust Performance Review System</td>
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</table>
# HIGH-VALUE RESOURCES ON EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Resource Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Masalach Burnout Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework (video)</td>
<td>Understanding Job Burnout - Dr. Christina Maslach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee health and the workplace (book)</td>
<td>Jeffery Pfeffer: Dying for a Paycheck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Resources</td>
<td>Center for Workplace Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Mindwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Berkeley Interdisciplinary Center for Health Workplaces</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## REFERENCES
Below resources are referenced in preceding slides by footnotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>LINK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>World Psychiatry</em> (Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter)</td>
<td>Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Gallup</em></td>
<td>Employee Burnout, Part 1: The 5 Main Causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>World Health Organization</em></td>
<td>Best Practice in Work-related Stress Management Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>American Psychiatric Association</em></td>
<td>Center for Workplace Mental Health: Case Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Boston Consulting Group (BCG)</em></td>
<td>Easing the COVID-19 Burden on Working Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>SHRM</em></td>
<td>Accommodating Working Parents During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Exhausted Parents Get Help from Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>American Psychological Association</em></td>
<td>Stress in the Time of COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Miriam Brilleman</em>, Senior Director of Human Resources at Cushman &amp; Wakefield</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Corey Heller</em>, Head of HR Business Partners and Shared Services at United Health System</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>Harvard Business Review</em> (Maura Thomas)</td>
<td>The Downside of Flex Time, Protecting Company Culture Means Having Rules for Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Virginia Tech</em></td>
<td>Killing Me Softly: Electronic Communication Monitoring and Employee and Spouse Well-Being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDITIONAL EXPERTS CONSULTED

• **Miriam Brilleman**, Senior Director of Human Resources at Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.

• **Juana Scholes**, Director of Human Resources at Aldridge Pite LLP

• **Corey Heller**, Head of HR Business Partners and Shared Services at United Health System Inc.