OVC’s Vicarious Trauma Toolkit: A Blueprint for Responding to Vicarious Trauma and Promoting Resilience

District of Columbia Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
August 20, 2021
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
WebEx Orientation

- Mute
- Chat Features
- Raising Hand
- Question Follow-Up
- Technical Assistance/Help
Welcome

- Victoria Shelton
- Kathleen Demro
Monday’s Webinar-
A Quick Recap

• Definitions and spectrum of responses to vicarious trauma
• ABCs of VT focused strategies
• Personal and Professional Risk Factors
• Core elements of resiliency and factors that support resiliency
Vicarious Trauma

Change in Worldview

Spectrum of Affective and Behavioral Responses

Negative
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Burnout
- PTSD
- Unhealthy Behaviors
- Compassion Fatigue

Neutral
- Resilient, Healthy Workers

Positive
- Vicarious Resilience
- Post-Traumatic Growth
- Vicarious Transformation
- Compassion Satisfaction

Vicarious Transformation

Compassion Satisfaction
## Learning Objectives

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<tr>
<th>Describe</th>
<th>Describe two organizational strategies that help mitigate the impact of vicarious trauma.</th>
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<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Discuss two ways agency leadership can support staff by anticipating and responding to staff members’ response to work-related trauma.</td>
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<td>Identify</td>
<td>Identify two resources to support implementation of vicarious trauma-informed approaches.</td>
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Organizational Effects of Vicarious Trauma

- Loss in Productivity
- Staff Turnover
- Poor Organizational Health
Organizational Effects of Vicarious Trauma

Lost productivity stems from—

- Low staff morale.
- Blocked lines of communication.
- Lack of collaboration and cohesion.
Organizational Effects of Vicarious Trauma

Staff turnover can lead to

- Additional stress on staff
- Limited time and resources
Organizational Effects of Vicarious Trauma

Poor organizational health is caused by the erosion of—

- Concentration.
- Focus.
- Decisionmaking.
- Motivation.
- Performance
External Factors
Poll time—What are some ways that your agency/organization currently responds to work-related trauma exposure?
A Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

1. Recognizes that vicarious trauma is an occupational challenge and has potential negative consequences

2. Proactively addresses this impact through policies, procedures, practices, and programs
The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

- Launched in 2017
- Pilot sites and multidisciplinary collaboration
- Provides a process to support increased organizational VT responses
- Developed for a range of first responder disciplines
Concept of the VTT

- What we pay attention to, grows...

- Pro-active use of organizational strategies provides a path to become vicarious trauma-informed
Five Organizational Strategies (Pillars) of Healthy, Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organizations
Leadership and Mission

- Integrate strategies into values, operations, and practices.
- Maintain a clear vision that supports the mission.
- Promote and model respectful communication.
Leadership and Mission

“We work with individual staff to determine what works best for them, as it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Our staff tells us what is helpful to them, a waste of time, appreciated, what makes them uncomfortable. Then we work out an individual stress reduction plan for that staff. With leadership respecting the needs of our staff, we have maintained a surprisingly low rate of staff turnover.”
Pillars of Healthy, Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organizations

Management and Supervision

- Foster supportive relationships.
- Promote policies and procedures that lessen negative impact.
- Seek out and support staff.
- Conduct performance evaluations that discuss vicarious trauma.
Management and Supervision

- Create a safe space for addressing vicarious trauma
- Use a standard protocol to debrief after a high-stress incident.
Employee Empowerment and Work Environment

- Foster teamwork.
- Encourage feedback and collaboration.
- Create formal and informal opportunities for connection.
- Diversify job tasks.
Employee Empowerment and Work Environment

- Peer support or peer to peer coaching
- Opportunities for substantive consensual decision-making
Pillars of Healthy, Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organizations

Training and Professional Development

- Promote continuing education, professional development, and networking opportunities.
- Provide thorough orientation and ongoing learning opportunities.
- Enable access to learning resources.
"Regular, ongoing training improves staff confidence in their job duties while decreasing their feelings of vulnerability to the effects of the work."
—Therapist/Trainer, Victim Services

• Actively promote learning new techniques and approaches to support self-care and resilience, such as Low Impact Debriefing (www.tendacademy.ca)
• Models’ trauma-informed practices around the use of images and videos
Staff Health and Wellness

- Devote time and resources to promoting staff well-being.
- Encourage and provide health and wellness activities.
- Incorporate wellness into policies and practices.
Strategies That Support a Healthy, Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Staff Health and Wellness

- Flexibility in work schedules
- Mental health days
- Support healthy boundaries between work and home
After the general overview of the organizational strategies, have you identified some additional ways that your agency.organization might promote and support resiliency of your team/s?
The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

BLUEPRINT FOR A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

Where Do We Begin?

Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Much like building a house, an organizational response to vicarious trauma requires vision, commitment, and a methodical approach that starts with laying a foundation and then builds up from there. This blueprint, informed by research and lessons learned from the field, was created as a step-by-step guide to assist organizations in becoming more vicarious trauma-informed. It provides guidance on using the Vicarious Trauma—Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG) to assess your organization's current capacity as a vicarious trauma-informed organization, and offers suggestions on how to use the free, online repository of policies, research, and websites in the Compendium of Resources, including the New Tools for the Field, created specifically for the VTT.
Step 1: Lay the foundation for success.

Step 2: Assess current organizational capacity for addressing vicarious trauma.

Step 3: Determine priorities and develop an action plan.

Step 4: Explore the VTT for resources to implement your action plan.

Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization
Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

Getting Buy in and Getting Organized

• Obtain commitment to establish an organizational response.

• Designate an individual or team to coordinate and guide the effort.

• Encourage open communication with staff.
Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

Obtain commitment to establish an organizational response.

Tasks
- Gather leaders.
- Discuss “why” you should have an organizational response.
- Evaluate the benefits of using the VTT as your approach.
- Show the video and see what your peers are saying.

VTT Tools
- Making the Business Case
- Talking Points: Using the VTT to Address Vicarious Trauma
- Victim Services Video Testimonial
Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Step 1: Lay the foundation for success.

Step 2: Assess current organizational capacity for addressing vicarious trauma.

Step 3: Determine priorities and develop an action plan.

Step 4: Explore the VTT for resources to implement your action plan.
Step 2: Assess current organizational capacity for addressing vicarious trauma

Introducing the VT-ORG

• Create a realistic timeline to maintain momentum
• Conduct the VT-ORG Assessment
• Determine current capacity as a VT informed organization
• Prepare a report of the VT-ORG findings and consider sharing with staff along with information about next steps.
Poll time
To maintain the health and wellness of their staff, vicarious trauma-informed organizations recognize links between health/wellness and staff satisfaction and productivity; devote time and resources to promoting staff well-being; encourage and provide health and wellness activities; and incorporate wellness into policies and practices.

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<th>In answering the following questions, consider the past 6 months in your organization.</th>
<th>1 = Never</th>
<th>2 = Rarely</th>
<th>3 = Sometimes</th>
<th>4 = Often</th>
<th>5 = Always</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<td>1. During the hiring and orientation of new staff, supervisors demonstrate their understanding of the risk for vicarious trauma and the importance of both individual and organizational strategies to address it by—</td>
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<td>a. asking final job applicants to articulate their own coping strategies;</td>
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<td>b. making final applicants aware of the organization’s strategies to reduce the negative impact of the work.</td>
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<td>2. My organization offers services that support individual staff members (e.g., employee assistance program, chaplain services, mental health providers).</td>
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<td>3. My organization provides opportunities for peers to support one another.</td>
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<td>4. My organization conducts exit interviews that include questions related to vicarious trauma and the organization’s response.</td>
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<td>5. Differentiation between work and non-work hours is recognized and respected.</td>
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Step 3: Determine Priorities and Develop your action plan

Using the results to inform next steps

- Identify gaps and strengths
- Determine action plan priorities
- Create action plan
- Share action plan with staff
- Evaluate
Step 4: Explore the VTT for Resources to Support Planning and Implementation

Introducing the Compendium of Resources

• Check out the 4-minute video on OVC TTAC’s VTT webpage for tips and tricks on using filters to find resources via type, strategy, discipline, topic, and CDC code that will work for your agency.

• Guideline “tip sheets” for human resources, supervisors, family members, peer to peer support.
LOW IMPACT DEBRIEFING:
Four steps to protect yourself from being slimed, and to help minimize the risk of traumatizing your colleagues, friends and family.

SELF AWARENESS
Be aware of the stories you tell and the level of detail you provide when telling a story. Are all the details really necessary? Can you give an abbreviated version?

FAIR WARNING
Allow your listener to prepare, and brace themselves by starting with "I would like to debrief something with you, is this a good time?" or "I heard something really hard today, could I talk to you about it?"

CONSENT
Ask for permission by saying something like: "I would like to debrief something with you, is this a good time?" or "I heard something really hard today, could I talk to you about it?"

LIMITED DISCLOSURE
Decide how much to share, starting with the least traumatic information, and gradually progressing as needed. You may end up not needing to share the most graphic details.

www.tendacademy.ca/resources
Let us help—
customized technical assistance

• Agency specific technical assistance
  • Riverside Superior Court

• VT Community of Practice Model
  • Illinois VTT Cohort

• OVC’s Vicarious Trauma Response Initiative Project
  • Supporting Cross agency collaboration:
    Washington DC is a community implementation site that includes the Network for Victim Recovery of DC, DC Metropolitan Police Department, DC Forensic Nurse Examiners, DC Rape Crisis Center, Department of Forensic Sciences

TTA available at no cost!
Self-guided using VTT and other resources:
Acknowledging the Positive

• What we pay attention to, grows.

• Bringing conscious attention to the existence of vicarious transformation and vicarious resilience helps strengthen it.
Webinar Evaluation Code

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A Blueprint for Responding to
Vicarious Trauma and Promoting
Resilience

Scan the QR code with your
phone to open the survey
or you can click the link available
in the chat box.
Thank you!

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