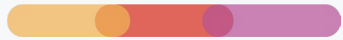




# Tips and Tools for Creating a Supportive Work Environment for Sexual and Reproductive Health Staff



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2024WARD: Building Brighter Futures for Today's Youth Leaders  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program Grantee Conference






# Disclaimer



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# Objectives



- 1) Describe strengths and opportunities for improvement as identified through an agency self-assessment tool related to building a supportive work environment
  - 2) Conduct staff stay interviews to help staff connect with the more personal dimensions of their team members' professional lives
  - 3) Continue the supportive work environment work plan they start during the session
  - 4) Utilize an energy board tool with their teams to help them better understand tasks that energize them and tasks that drain them, which they can consider replicating with their teams and the youth they serve
- 

# Why people leave? Let's reframe!

20% of health care workers quit their jobs during the pandemic. Some reasons being:

- Burnout or fatigue
- Heavy caseload
- Complex clients
- Lack of recognition

Burnout or fatigue is a vicious cycle



Opportunity to reframe - look at why people stay!



# Why people stay!

- **Purpose:** Organization mission
- **Impact:** Make a difference
- **Autonomy:** Flexible environment
- **Mastery:** Full scope of nursing license
- **Recognition:** Positive client feedback



## Quote

*“Employees likely to stay reported being equipped with what was needed to successfully do the job, manage stress, and navigate work-life challenges... It is critical for organizations to find a balance between work and well-being.”*

Matt Fenton, Neel Gandhi, and Taylor Lauricella, McKinsey, 2022

# Toolkit



## Strategies for Creating a Supportive Work Environment for Sexual and Reproductive Health Staff Toolkit

Toolkit/Guide

Staff Retention and Wellness

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program

Title X Family Planning Program

Save



Share



**Last Reviewed:** 2024-02

**Source:** RHNTC

**Practice**





# Self Assessment

## Supportive Work Environment Agency Self-Assessment



One strategy to improve staff retention—a challenge for many sexual and reproductive health agencies—is to cultivate a connected and supportive work environment. This assessment tool can help agencies identify where they are already using supportive work environment strategies, as well as opportunities for improvement.

Working together with staff of diverse roles and responsibilities, respond to each assessment item in the table below by marking the circle that best describes your agency. Then reflect on your responses and identify priorities for developing organizational capacity. If you aren't sure where to begin, start by addressing items your team has marked "Does not describe us." Review the [Strategies for Creating a Supportive Work Environment for Sexual and Reproductive Health Staff Toolkit](#) to identify resources and tools supporting each domain. See also the [Work Plan for Building a Supportive Workplace Environment](#). Consider making improvements in one or two areas to start. As you roll out supportive work environment strategies across your agency, revisit this assessment periodically to track progress and identify next steps.

### CONNECT

Our agency...	Describes us well	Almost there	Just getting started	Does not describe us
Promotes a sense of connection and belonging among staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilitates opportunities for supportive and reflective conversations with staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotes staff connections at the start and end of each work day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creates space for mental and emotional transitions from home to work, and then from work to home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employs strategies to help staff feel psychologically, emotionally, physically, and culturally safe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employs strategies to build compassion resilience in the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Staff Stay Interviews

## Staff Stay Interviews Job Aid



This tool is designed to help management staff in sexual and reproductive health agencies facilitate supportive and reflective conversations with team members through the use of **stay interviews**. A stay interview is a tool that can help us connect with the more personal dimensions of team members' professional lives: their missions, aspirations, and aspects of the work they find energizing. Stay interviews are often facilitated by a supervisor or team lead, but team members can also interview each other as a way to build interpersonal connections and a shared team vision.

The following stay interview script is based on Appreciative Inquiry: a change management methodology that promotes allocating attention to our positive experiences with the goal of learning to create more of them. The question sequence is designed to support team members to:

- Reconnect with their own purpose.
- Recollect positive experiences.
- Envision a future where this type of positive experience happens more often.
- Translate the positive future vision into well-defined action steps.

Each interview will require approximately 15 minutes; block out 30 minutes for some cushion and to give yourself time to document key points. Modify the language to make it your own while retaining the basic structure.

We suggest sharing your stay interview plan with team members to help quell any concerns about the intention of these conversations. You can share your plan through email, or via any communication channel that best fits your agency. The draft email below serves as a starting place. Again, modify the language to best fit your communication style.

### Stay Interview Announcement Draft Email

"Good morning/afternoon/evening, \_\_\_\_\_"

This year, I'll be holding stay interviews with our team members. This means I'll be scheduling brief one-on-one conversations with each of you throughout the year. Because our work carries both challenges and successes, these conversations will allow me to learn more about you—and your ideas and vision for our team/agency. I hope these informal conversations can help us build an organization that nurtures our individual and collective goals.

If you have any questions about what to expect from these stay interviews, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I'm looking forward to meeting with you all.

Sincerely,

[Your name]"

To learn more about  
**Appreciative Inquiry**,  
check out this other  
[RHNTC tool](#)



# Work Plan for Building a Supportive Workplace Environment

## Work Plan for Building a Supportive Workplace Environment





This tool provides a space for management staff working in sexual and reproductive health services agencies to plan and document approaches to building a supportive and responsive workplace environment. These strategies can be used in conjunction with other systems-level improvements (e.g., salary, benefits) to strengthen staff retention.

- The first table below offers a menu of **low- or no-cost options**. These are a starting point, not a rigid prescription. Choose strategies that you would like to try this year, depending on your organization's size, staffing, and resources. Begin by implementing one strategy and assessing its impacts by checking in with staff.
- Use the blank table that follows to document your plan. Feel free to add to or improve upon any of the suggested strategies.

STRATEGY	IN THE NEXT 7–14 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 30–60 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 3–12 MONTHS
 <p><b>CONNECT</b> Promote a sense of connection and belonging</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Say thank you. Include details of a particular action or behavior that you value. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct appreciative “stay” interviews with each staff member. <input type="checkbox"/> Invite staff to interview 1-2 coworkers using the stay interview script.	<input type="checkbox"/> Institute a daily or weekly “check-in/check-out” routine. <input type="checkbox"/> Re-introduce staff members who might share personal interests. <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge any challenges of recent years. Ask each staff member how these changes impacted them personally. Listen without trying to fix.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a mentoring or buddy program for every staff member. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask staff to suggest changes that would make the workplace more welcoming.
 <p><b>SUPPORT</b> Address the emotional toll of reproductive health work</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly signal to staff that their health, safety, and well-being are a top priority for you and for the organization. Take immediate action to address threats to the physical or emotional safety of your team members. <input type="checkbox"/> Institute mandatory breaks (goal = 15 min x 2/day; may need to start with shorter time periods). <input type="checkbox"/> Use the pain scale or similar rubric to check in with staff each day: “How are you doing? What can I do today to help today?”	<input type="checkbox"/> Rotate roles or tasks, taking turns in the highest stress roles. <input type="checkbox"/> Find/convert a space that can be a designated quiet room. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask staff, “If we could do one thing to make this work less stressful—or at least help you manage the stress—what would that be?”	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner with other organizations and/or non-profits to offer a new benefit to employees to help decrease personal stress (e.g., childcare; elder care respite care; employee assistance program [EAP]). <input type="checkbox"/> Contact the Psychology and/or Social Work departments of the nearest university or community college and volunteer your organization as a practicum site for an advanced-degree student project on caregiver support.

## Work Plan for Building a Supportive Workplace Environment



STRATEGY	IN THE NEXT 7–14 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 30–60 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 3–12 MONTHS
 <p><b>DEVELOP</b> Provide opportunities for professional development and networking</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Invite a local provider to give a “lunch and learn.” <input type="checkbox"/> Ask staff to suggest topics on which they would like more training. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask staff to write on a notecard the best advice a coworker has ever given them that they would like to pass along, and then have them drop it in a box. Once a week, draw one note from the box and share/discuss in the staff huddle.	<input type="checkbox"/> Invite staff members to become the team’s subject matter experts on relevant topics. Take turns sharing knowledge and expertise. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage professional association participation. <input type="checkbox"/> Work through a free nursing CEU module as a team and discuss appropriate practice modifications to stay current.	<input type="checkbox"/> Send one person to a professional development conference and ask them to share their learnings with the team when they return. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with other local health care organizations to convene a one-day nursing conference featuring local speakers. Invite local business sponsors to defray costs. <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with local institutions (e.g., high schools, nursing schools, community colleges) to develop the needed talent pipeline.
 <p><b>ENGAGE</b> Involve staff in job and care delivery design changes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Invite senior staff to watch the webinar recording associated with this job aid; discuss each person’s insights. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct the <b>Energy Board</b> activity with the team.	<input type="checkbox"/> Using the notes posted on the Energy Board, host a task swap once per week: “Gina is drained by restocking the supply carts. Is anyone energized by this who would like to trade a task with Gina?” Start slow. <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate a <b>daily or weekly “huddle.”</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a “peak experience” response from the stay interviews that reflects multiple people’s shared experiences, and do a 15-minute brainstorming session. Ask: “How might we as a team create the conditions for these kinds of experiences to happen more often?”	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage staff in a “client discovery” exercise. Ask clients what they value most about your organization and services. Discuss ways to invest more in the aspects clients value, and less in those they don’t. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with staff on care model redesigns that will allow current staff to work more effectively. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who does each task?</li> <li>When?</li> <li>How? Where?</li> <li>Why?</li> </ul> <input type="checkbox"/> Anything not required by law can be changed.

# Work Plan for Building a Supportive Workplace Environment



## Work Plan Template

Using the blank work plan template below, map out strategies you plan on trying out with your team(s).



STRATEGY	IN THE NEXT 7-14 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 30-60 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 3-12 MONTHS
 <p><b>CONNECT</b> Promote a sense of connection and belonging</p>			
 <p><b>SUPPORT</b> Address the emotional toll of reproductive health work</p>			



STRATEGY	IN THE NEXT 7-14 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 30-60 DAYS	IN THE NEXT 3-12 MONTHS
 <p><b>DEVELOP</b> Provide opportunities for professional development and networking</p>			
 <p><b>ENGAGE</b> Involve staff in job and care delivery design changes</p>			

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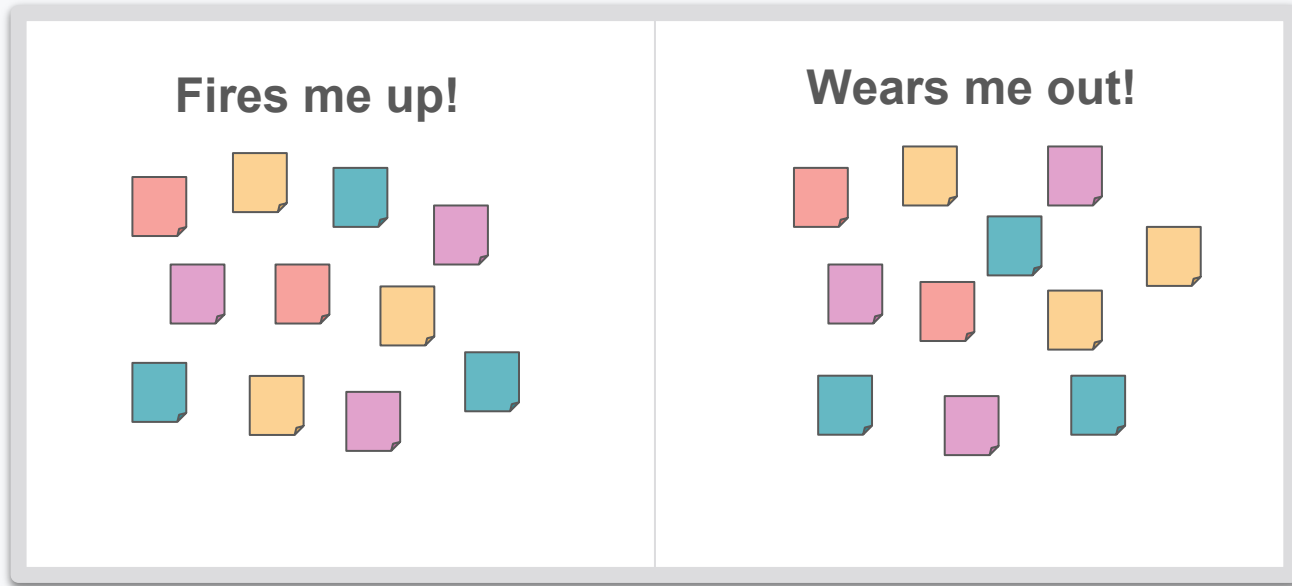
# Exercise

1. Using the *Work Plan for Building a Supportive Workplace Environment*, skim the suggested tactics in the filled-in copy.
2. Identify any tactics you think might work at your organization.
3. Discuss the tactics you identified with others at your table.
4. Share any additional tactics you've used at your organizations.
5. On the blank template, write at least one “support” action you can commit to for each time period.



# Tool: Energy Board

- Take 4-5 minutes to fill out ask many of the things that fire you up and wear you out
- Pair and Share!



# Resources and References



[Strategies for Creating a Supportive Work Environment for Sexual and Reproductive Health Staff Toolkit](#)

[Building a Supportive Environment for Staff Retention in Family Planning Settings Webinar](#)

[Staff Certificate of Recognition](#)

[Staff Satisfaction Survey](#)

**Q&A** |

What questions do  
you have for us?

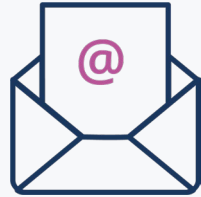




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# THANK YOU!

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