Making Connections, Making a Difference

Making Connections 2024

The National Transit Workforce Conference

November 11 – 13. 2024 · Baltimore. MD

TWC Transit Workforce Center

Mental Health, Well-Being, and Resilience for Transit Workers: Current Research, Practical Applications, and Best Practice Guidelines for Workforce Development

Making Connections 2024 TWC

Speakers

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Report 245:
Mental Health, Wellness, and Resilience for Transit System Workers

Making Connections
The National Transit Workforce Conference
Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Research Objectives

The objective of Report 245 was to develop a comprehensive guidebook and interactive products that would assist transit agencies and other stakeholders in exploring or implementing approaches to identify and mitigate the factors that cause negative impacts on mental health, wellness, and resilience for transit system workers.

The research will addressed the contributing factors to a transit employee's mental health by:

- Documenting the stressors experienced by transit system workers during pre-and peri-pandemic times;
- Documenting the impacts of those stressors at the individual and organizational levels;
- Documenting any differences seen by race, ethnicity, gender, age, and occupation;
- Identifying protective factors and actions that would help proactively develop, promote, and sustain a culture that supports the mental health, well-being, and resilience of transit workers (methods, models, and programs);
- Evaluating the impacts of existing programs, policies, and practices, including labor-management relations and work organization, to address mental health issues;
- Documenting the role of supervisory support in helping employees to manage exposure to stressors; and
- Recommending best practices for transit systems to support the mental health of transit employees (including programs, outreach, education, and bargaining).

Research Stats

Review of Literature and Previous Research

80 References

Interviews of Agency and Union Staff

65+ Participants

4 Large Agencies
4 Medium Agencies
2 Small Agencies
2 Sets of Union Reps

National Survey of Frontline Workers

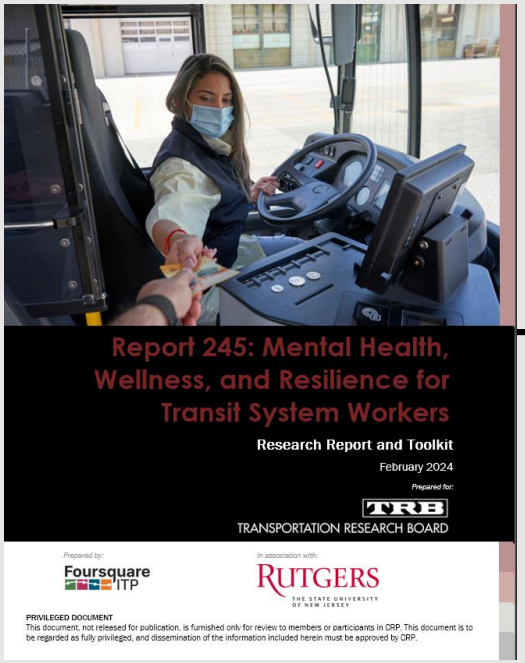
1,000+ Responses

Frontline Worker Focus Groups

2 Rounds

14 Participants
from 10 Agencies

Final Product



Section 1:
Research Report

Section 2:
Resources & Toolkit

Section 1:

RESEARCH REPORT

Section 1: Research Report – Key Findings

Physical Stressors

- Assaults and confrontations
- Extended periods of sitting/inactivity
- Lack of exercise
- Lack of bathroom access

Work Stressors

- PTSD
- Work schedules
- Work-life balance
- Loneliness and isolation
- Fear of contracting COVID-19

Management and Policy Stressors

- Frequency and quality of communication from managers/leadership
- Lack of support in the field and following incidents
- Inadequate training
- Trust and privacy

External Stressors

- Child and family care
- Access to healthcare
- Financial stressors (e.g., lack of affordable housing)
- Toll of COVID-19

Section 1: Research Report – Key Findings

- Survey Results from frontline workers

Understaffing is a major cause of stress	Exposure to drugs and substances	Verbal and physical assaults	Elevated anxiety and depression
Mix of awareness of employer resources	Challenges utilization employer resources (lack of time, missed work/pay, privacy concerns)	Moderate satisfaction of resources	Preferences for 1-on-1 services

Section 1: Research Report – Recommended Responses

Improve the physical safety of the workplace	Adjust benefits and policies to provide more support for good mental health and a better work-life balance	Improve and diversify communication and marketing efforts of resources	Evaluate quality and effectiveness of EAPs/UAPs
• Physical barriers • Enforce existing policies	• Change practices around scheduling/work assignments • Increase flexibility of time-off	• Use a variety of formats for marketing • Offer a mix of times/locations for accessing services • Build awareness through constant reminders (e.g., discuss regularly)	• Align services with employee needs • Involve employees in selection / feedback on services • Develop monitoring process to improve offerings

Section 1: Research Report – Recommended Responses

Address privacy concerns	Strengthen and enforce policies to protect frontline workers	Provide more support in the field and ongoing support after incidents	Provide peer support and mentoring
• Consider 1-on-1 services • Employ mental health professionals • Off-site or separated services	• Clearly outline and enforce policies • Passenger code of conducts	• Offer specialized staff trained in incident response • Ongoing support is also needed following incidents	• Develop formal programs

Section 1: Research Report – Recommended Responses

Strengthen relationships among frontline workers and between frontline workers	Provide more training to empower employees for adverse conditions	Empathy training for managers	Build trust
• Provide opportunities for socializing and connecting	• De-escalation training • Incident response	• Increase understanding and support for frontline workers	• Reduce stigmas • Collaborate to find solutions

Section 2:

RESOURCES & TOOLKIT

Section 2: Case Studies

MARTA
Using technology to connect employees with support

VTA/ATU Local 265
Increased access to mental health services, trained professionals, and other benefits

MARTA
Incentives for wellness program participation

IndyGo
On-site health clinic services

IndyGo
Creative marketing

VTA/ATU 265
Critical Incident Support Teams

Metro Transit
Red Kite Project Resiliency Training

TriMet
Lactation van for nursing operators

VTA/ATU 265
Training and mentorship for retention and advancement

MTA Operator
Restroom Workgroup

TWU Local 100
Union Assistance Program

Section 2: Toolkit

Program evaluation framework

- Provides guidance on using a **capability maturity matrix** for program evaluation.

Evaluating and Improving EAPs and UAPs

- Provides a **worksheet** to guide the evaluation and improvement of EAPs and UAPs.

Establishing a Wellness Program

- Lays out **example wellness programs** and **steps** to establish a program.

Support Mental Health in the Workplace

- Offers a **checklist** for leadership and senior managers to ensure a supportive workplace

How to Make the Case for Increased Benefits to Support Mental Health and Wellness

- Provides **example messages**, **related statistics**, and **guidance** on building a message.

Improving Communications and Marketing of Resources

- Presents **recommendations** for the improvement of internal marketing. Includes a **worksheet** with key considerations.

Building Trust Between Parties

- Offers a **three-step process** and **worksheet** for building trust among frontline workers, management, and union leadership

Section 2: Toolkit

Increasing Training Offerings

- Offers **guidance** on creating empathy trainings, leadership ride-alongs, and intervention training.

Providing Support During and Post-Incidents

- Provides **guidance** on creating critical response teams. Includes a **drill** to prepare teams for interventions.

Modernizing Operational Policies for a Healthy Workforce

- Lays out **policy suggestions** and **implementation guidelines** for the modernization of operational policies.

Fostering Community Among Frontline Transit Workers

- Provides **example activities and programs** to foster community.

Developing and Implementing Mentor and Peer Programs

- Provides **guidance** for the development of a mentorship program and lays out **types of programs** available.

Self-Advocacy Tools

- Provides **strategies and tips** for understanding worker rights, dialogue with managers, partnering with HR, and peer advocacy.

THANK YOU!

Scan to access Report 245
www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/183206.aspx

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VTA: Evolution of Mental Health & Wellness, Strategies & Response

TWC Making Connections
November 12, 2024

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Solutions that move you

Mental Health Services & Trained Professionals

- Community Partnerships
- Additional Therapists/ Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- State Grant Support

THE 526 RESILIENCY CENTER

Bill Wilson Center

aetna℠

Solutions that move you

Enhanced Existing VTA Programs

- Apprenticeship, Mentorship Programs
- Expanded Wellbeing Team

Solutions that move you

Implemented New Initiatives

- Peer to Peer Support
- HR Division Partners
- Culture & Climate Transformation Program

Solutions that move you

Leadership Framework

- Encourages everyone at VTA to see themselves as a Leader
- Based on six dimensions, each defined by qualities, aligned with behaviors
- Embedded in our Development Programs and Performance Management

Leadership Framework

Create a Safe Environment

Actively creating an environment that values the contributions of others, encouraging active participation in open and brave conversations, and contributing to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

Qualities	Behaviors
Approachable	• Identifies the needs of the team and is ready to act as needed with compassion • Communicates openly and regularly, shares information, and fosters dialogue • Keeps an open-door policy and uses active listening to truly understand others
Brave	• Acts with the courage to express themself openly and honestly, without fear of repercussions; invites others to do the same • Addresses physical safety concerns and is willing to admit mistakes and share ideas
Emotional	• Understands and regulates their own emotions in a healthy and constructive manner • Recognizes and acknowledges the emotions of others • Offers encouragement and motivation during challenging situations
Empathetic	• Responds to others' emotions with understanding, consideration and patience • Emphasizes empathy and psychological safety in everyday interactions • Prioritizes team well-being and work-life balance, and regularly checks in with team members
Genuine	• Shares honest feedback and respectful opinions • Shows consistency between and authenticity in their words and actions • Promotes open and transparent communication
Inclusive	• Fosters a sense of belonging while embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) • Creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing themself • Honors the unique identities, experiences, and perspectives of all

Strengthening Our Response

- Critical Incident Support Team (CIST)
- Threat Assessment Team
- De-escalation Training

Solutions that move you

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Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Solutions that move you

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES, ESSENTIAL WORKERS' HEALTH:

UNION-BASED INITIATIVES TO PROTECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PUBLIC TRANSPORT WORKERS

FEBRUARY 2023

ATU Local 265 (CA) mental health programs (UAP)

- Tragic shooting of transport workers by fellow worker, San Jose, CA, 5/26/2021
- Local 265 worked closely with a local mental health center to create a:
  - Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team
  - peer support team for union members
- Lobbied for & obtained state funding to:
  - promote mental health at the agency
  - help change its work culture
  - union/mgmt committee to oversee
  - counselling for members & families
  - mental health days (time off work)
  - 4-day worker training: peer support, reducing stigma

https://labornotes.org/2021/08/make-workplace-mental-health-priority-says-union-president-who-survivedsan-jose-shooting
https://www.billwilsoncenter.org/

Health Work Campaign

The Center for Social Epidemiology

How to Address Work Stress & Create Healthier Work Environments

Solutions for Employers

Resources for Workers and Unions

HEALTHY WORK CAMPAIGN
A project of
THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

Healthy Work Strategies

Healthy Work Strategies include workplace policies, programs, contract language, regulations and laws designed to reduce sources of stress at work (work stressors), and to make work and workers healthier. Each report below is a **summary** about how to improve the organization of work to reduce work stressors, such as:

> Long work hours, bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, threats of violence, understaffing, job insecurity, lack of supervisor or coworker support, work-family conflict, job demands, lack of job control, job strain, and "effort-reward imbalance."

- Workplace research studies and programs to reduce work stressors
- Labor-Management Contracts
- Laws and Regulations
- Reducing COVID-19-related work stressors

https://www.healthywork.org/resources/healthy-work-strategies/

Mental Wellness Resources

- U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-being
- OSHA Workplace Stress: Make Work Better - Mental Health Matters
- Unions press feds for more workplace mental health protections, Axios Sept 20, 2023
- NIOSH Science Blogs - Want to Improve the Well-Being of Health Workers? The System Itself Must Change, December 19, 2023
- NIOSH Science Blog - An Urgent Call to Address Work-related Psychosocial Hazards and Improve Worker Well-being, April 10, 2024

Thank You!

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