Environmental Changes to Boost Client Success

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Presenters

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2018 Learning Community: Coaching for Success

• The Learning Community component of the IIEESS project, a technical assistance contract of the Office of Family Assistance, has the following goals:

  • Provide TANF programs with training on client-centered coaching strategies;
  • Offer peer-to-peer exchange opportunities and on-going technical assistance provided by teams of client-centered coaching and program implementation experts; and
  • Provide one-on-one assistance and support to integrate client-centered coaching strategies into existing TANF program models for improved employment outcomes.
## Learning Community Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACF Region</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<td>Region 2</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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<td>Region 3</td>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
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<td>Region 3</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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<td>Region 8</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
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Purpose

• Increased understanding of how the stresses of living in poverty impact the skills needed for moving out of poverty.

• Share simple changes to your office environment that can reduce stress and support goal achievement.

• Learn one or two strategies you want to try in your office.
AGENDA

• Welcome & Introductions
• Environmental change: what is it and why is it helpful?
• Examples from the field:
  ◦ First impressions matter (slide 21)
  ◦ Convey high expectations (slide 23)
  ◦ Focus on the customer (slide 25)

• Q&A
Environment plays a huge role in who we become

If we grow up experiencing life as predictable and filled with many opportunities, we become experienced at:

- making plans
- looking for the best choices.....
- weighing our options....
- investing in ourselves for the future.....
Environment plays a huge role in who we become

If we grow up experiencing life as a series of crises, where new problems wait for us around every corner, we become experienced at:

- reacting....
- focusing on battling our immediate problems....
- trying to follow what people say we have to do to get what we need....
- never planning too far ahead.......
Current life experiences also strongly affect how we think and behave

- Science shows that current life stresses also affect brain functioning for all of us—regardless of childhood experience;

- Brain wiring gets swamped by stress and the quality of memory, impulse control, and decision-making are all compromised.

Where did I put that computer password?

How am I going to pay all these bills?

Why did I just eat that whole container of ice cream?
Universal Design

We need to design programs and services to work for all - even though not everyone has extreme stress and/or trauma.
Where would a stroller go?
Trauma-Informed

**Definition:** An approach in which the provider is sensitive to the widespread impact of trauma regardless of specific knowledge of an individuals’ past experiences.
Create a Safe Environment

• Play soft music, use noise machines; train staff to use lower voice.
• Arrange waiting room seating so visitors are facing out and not directly across from one another.
• Softer lighting can reduce stress.
• Plants promote peace, tranquility, enhances self esteem.
Avoid Re-traumatizing Clients
Executive Function: the ability to focus on and solve problems, control impulses, and hold and switch between multiple pieces of information

Executive Function-Informed: The use of tools and approaches to enhance executive functioning skills
Help! Where am I? (insert better example of poor signage)
Look at the clutter in my office!
First Impressions Matter

• Use signage to make office welcoming including removing signs that start with “No” or “Do Not” and contain jargon or abbreviations.

• Make office more inviting by cleaning and repainting, blue, green, and purple are calming; light colors create the feeling of space

• Check the space each day – eliminate clutter

• Rearrange furniture to reduce congestion
How do these flyers make you feel?
Convey High Expectations

• Hang motivational artwork which includes diverse people

• Consider whether security officer must wear uniforms and if metal detectors are necessary

• Landscape paintings are associated with increased positive affect and comfort, but don’t hang too much on wall.
Saturate the office with achievement

Welcome to my new home!

Ayanna
EMPath participant
Focus on the Customer

• Train front counter staff in customer service. Greet each client with a friendly “hello, how may I help you?”

• Add drop boxes and special lines for quick transactions.

• Some clients respond better if seated corner to corner rather than across from staff
How does this make the client feel?

I'm quitting my job to save my mental health. I'm probably going to struggle financially for a little while, but my sanity is worth it.
No need to wait in line to drop off papers
Activity: Make it easier for clients to succeed!