

HSD Provider Conference

June 16, 2026

Notes from Session: Beyond Self-Care: A Three-Tiered Approach to Preventing Burnout in Homeless Services Work

Presenters: Katricia Stewart, PhD

Moderators: Teri Hsieh

Notetaker: Kinsy Hood

-Main Points from Session Overview/Presentation (high level):

- Burnout can impact all professions- especially helping professions.
 - Burnout (emotional, mental and physical exhaustion) happens from prolonged and repeated stress
- Happens because of lack of support at the structural, relational and personal levels.
 - Structural and relational support are often the areas where the support is most lacking
- Structural: the conditions organizations create (or fail to create) to prevent burnout
 - Workloads- regularly reviewed and adjusted with strong ceilings
 - Compensation that reflects the emotional and physical demands of the work (and is a living wage)
 - Staff have genuine input into decisions that affect their day to day work
 - Policies exist for time off, mental health support and recovery
 - Leadership modeling sustainable work practices rather than glorifying overwork
 - Structural Equity: Do our policies and systems protect everyone in the ways they need given their background, identities and current experience
- Relational - the quality of human connection within the organization - how staff are supervised, supported and seen
 - Supervision- is consistent and includes space for emotional processing
 - Staff feel safe
 - Teams have norms
 - Recognition
 - Manager are trained to notice early warning signs of burnout and respond proactively
 - Policies are implemented equitably and in a timely manner

- Relational Equity: Do all staff have access to the supportive, psychologically safe managerial and peer relationships that work for them? Are policies implemented fairly across staff?
- Personal- How individuals experience / respond to the demands of the work- shaped in part by what's happening at the structural and relational levels.
- Individual coping strategies and resilience are not a substitute for structural and relational strategies
- Structural and relational strategies should happen first. Without these supports the burden is put on the individual to address.
- Burn out is not inevitable- preventing it requires organizations to look honestly at the conditions they've created and the relationships they've built

-Questions/Answers (summarization):

No Q&A session for this presentation

-Main Discussion Points not captured above:

- What does your organization have in place already that is good?
- What could be improved, added or removed to better support staff and prevent burnout?
- Cost vs Impact

-Takeaways or Follow-Ups for HSD

(expectations/priorities/recommendations/etc):

- This could be a good exercise for HSD to do as a department
- Mgmt- people more removed from the work on the ground are disconnected- Mgmt should get together bi-annually to better understand what the people on the ground are feeling / what they need. Surveys are a great place to start
- People that manage programs should work regular shifts within the programs they manage to better understand what is being asked of the first line employees.