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Subject: **TICN Special Edition *Trauma-Informed Supervision During COVID-19***

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created disruption to all of our lives and routines, and many of us are feeling this the most when it comes to adjusting to new ways of working. Much of our workforce has transitioned to working from home full-time, often with no previous experience doing so or much time to prepare. To make this even more challenging, in many cases, the workforce is adjusting to this change at the same time as their supervisors and other agency leadership. Despite these challenges, we have a great opportunity to learn to work together in new ways, and to reveal the creativity and adaptability of our workforce as we demonstrate that we can still fulfill our mission, and can do so in ways we had probably not even imaged a month ago. There are lots of great ideas out there right now for how to approach telework, and we shared many of those last week. Now we want to turn our attention to supervisors. Hundreds of supervisors in Fairfax County have attended the TICN's Trauma-Informed Supervisor Training over the last 4 years. Application of the best practices promoted in that training deserve some special consideration during this time.

Telework Tips for Supervisors

[A Guide for Supervisors Who Need Support While Dealing with Disruptions to Employment of Their Team Members](#)

[Tips for Managing Telecommuters Due to Coronavirus COVID-19](#)

[A Guide to Managing Your Newly Remote Workers](#)

[Tips for Setting up a Remote Working Environment](#)



Tips from the TICN

If you have attended the Trauma-Informed Supervisor Training offered by the TICN, you know that we recommend that folks check-in on their self-care on a regular basis. **Now is probably not a bad time to revisit your own self-assessment, and to encourage your team to do so as well.** Previous conversations you have had with staff about their self-care practices may need to be revisited as strategies that many folks may have relied on might not be accessible to them right now. https://mnliteracy.org/sites/default/files/self-care_assesment.pdf

Encourage your team to devote time previously dedicated to commuting to focusing on self-care. We have a unique opportunity right now to explore online resources that are

widely available for FREE. Whether folks have been wanting to explore yoga, mindfulness, meditation, fitness programs or online classes, there seem to be more opportunities to do so everyday. **Consider creating opportunities for people to come together for some virtual self-care opportunities.**

It is time for us to get creative! How do we continue to connect with our teams when we are isolated at home? In these unique circumstances, we want to make sure we are replicating the opportunities we have for connection when we are at the office while we are at home. If you typically check-in with staff at the beginning of each day at the office, continue this with a quick morning e-mail or instant message. If you typically organize team lunches or other social events to celebrate birthdays or special events consider continuing the practice remotely during this time. Without the incidental contact that we have all day long in the office to communicate and stay up to date on our collective work, **we should consider increasing the frequency of team meetings, supervision, and other face-to-face contacts right now.** Whenever possible, take advantage of webcams.

Don't assume that your expectations are clear. With folks working modified schedules and requiring flexibility due to the demands of childcare, everyone needs to know what meetings and calls are essential, what times they should be checking e-mail, and deadlines for deliverables. During this time, many of us may be sending e-mails or working outside of our typical working hours. Make sure your team knows that just because you may be working later in the evening, this does not mean that you expect them to be available to respond in real time. Stay in touch with other supervisors in your organization who manage folks doing similar work to ensure consistency and equity in expectations whenever possible.

Focus on the mission. What needs to be accomplished to maintain essential services? What projects need to keep momentum despite the pause button being pressed on so much? **You will not have the same level of control and hands on oversight of your team during this time, and even your most reliable staff might not produce as much as usual.** We know from brain science that when humans feel that their survival is threatened (something many folks may be feeling right now!) that their cognitive and physical energy is diverted. As everyone adjusts to new routines and manages risks to their health and safety, we need to be realistic about how much can be accomplished. Something we definitely CAN do during this time is to practice flexibility, compassion, and understanding. **We can absolutely come out of this with an improved culture of self-care.**



Supervisors can support their teams during this time by offering concrete suggestions for people who may be struggling with self-care. There is a lot of content available right now related to maintaining well-being during this crisis, but when folks are overwhelmed, it can

be hard to know where to begin. We know that self-care is definitely not a one-size-fits-all thing, but there are definitely some activities that will have broad appeal and utility for many. Here are some things you can consider sharing:

Stay Grounded

[Quick Grounding Techniques](#)

[Free Coloring Pages](#)

[Deep Breathing Animations](#) (be sure to check out the whole thread)

Tune into the Beauty of the World from Home

[Explore.com](#) has tons of live feeds, from the [Sheep Barn at Farm Sanctuary](#) and the [Gathering Room](#) at [Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary](#) to the [Smith River in California's Jedidiah Smith Redwoods State Park](#).

Take a virtual garden tour on YouTube, from the [New York Botanical Garden](#) to [Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden](#) in Richmond, VA.

[NPR Music is compiling a list of live audio and video streams from across the globe](#), categorized by date and genre, with links out to streaming platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Google's Arts & Culture Collection provides [virtual tours of hundreds of museums around the world](#).

Take a [beautiful virtual hike](#) set to ambient music. Search YouTube for [relaxing nature videos](#).

Maintain Hope & Optimism

[The Good News Network](#) shares inspiring and uplifting news from around the world.

[Creativity, Kindness, and Canals Offer Hope Amid Outbreak](#) from the BBC

[Best Comedy Podcasts to Binge During Coronavirus Quarantine](#) from New York Magazine

[Stories Offering Hope During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) from ABC, including stories of recovery

Special Considerations for Direct Service Providers

Folks who are accustomed to working with our most vulnerable community members know that bearing witness to the everyday struggles clients have related to things like poverty, access to food and child-care, and access to health care and transportation, can take a toll. During this unique time, many individuals and families in our community who do not typically worry about these issues are facing them for the first time, members of our workforce included. As we experience this collective community trauma together, we will need to provide extra support to staff working in roles that result in constant exposure to clients who are experiencing elevated levels of stress as a result of the pandemic. The tools that direct service staff typically use to manage their exposure to these difficult situations may prove inadequate with the stress the crisis is bringing to their personal lives.

What can supervisors do to help?

*Acknowledge that this is not business as usual, and that there are layers to navigating this crisis that may challenge even the most seasoned front line workers. No one has been trained to handle this.

* Provide opportunities for folks to process what they are seeing and hearing, and how they are feeling as a result. Normalize feelings and encourage sharing. Everyone needs an outlet.

* Listen. Keep your finger on the pulse of how folks are managing. Everyone handles stress differently, and set points for how much we can tolerate are set in place by early adulthood. We can not just learn to handle more without an impact to our health and well being. Consider the totality of what people are facing between their work and personal lives right now, and make staffing decisions that will support coming out of this with a workforce that is as happy and healthy as possible.

We are currently exploring a variety of options to offer additional support during this time. If you would like to request support for your team, or if you have ideas about how you or your team can support others, please let us know!

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