

# **RESILIENCY: BUILDING AND RETAINING A RESILIENT STAFF**

**by  
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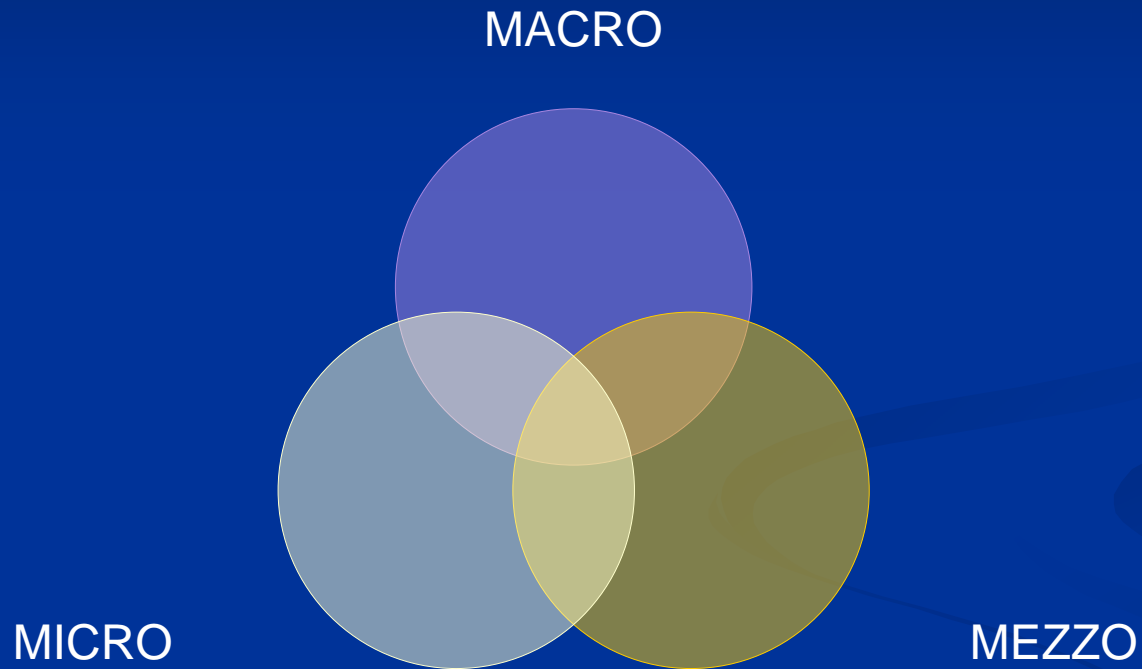
**California Social Work Education Center**

**Workplace Management and Child Welfare Policy, Planning,  
and Administration Curriculum Module**

# CONTEXT

- “Burnout”
- Resiliency Theory
- Learning Organizations
- Caregiving Organizations

# Levels of Intervention



# Micro Level

- Current trends
  - Workplace concerns regarding retention of staff
  - Caseworkers anticipate “burnout”
  - Research focused on “burnout,” “compassion fatigue,” and “STS” (secondary traumatic stress)
  - Recent move to examine “resiliency” factors that provide buffer and lead to adaptive coping

# Micro Level (cont'd)

- Intervention strategies at this level focus on what the individual practitioner can do to promote “resiliency”
  - Traditional approach
    - Good nutrition
    - Physical exercise
    - Psychological coping techniques

# Traditional Stress Management

- Nutrition

- Balanced diet – new “food pyramid”
- Include Vitamin B
- Limit intake of sweets and alcohol

# Traditional Stress Management (cont'd)

- Physical exercise
  - Pick an activity that you can do on a regular basis
    - Walking
    - Jogging
    - Swimming
  - Some respond well to group activities or sports
    - Agency baseball teams, bowling teams

# Traditional Stress Management (cont'd)

- Psychological techniques
  - Deep breathing
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Guided imagery
  - Self hypnosis
  - Meditation
  - Yoga

# Mezzo Level

- Mezzo level is the work unit
- Research in the past and present find the role of the supervisor to be crucial to recruitment and retention of staff
- How is the role of supervisor seen within the context of learning/caregiving organizations?

# Mezzo Level (cont'd)

- Intervention strategies at this level include:
  - Supervision/Unit leadership is critical – training provided
  - Team building – motivating and supporting staff
  - Social support network
    - Understanding small group dynamics
    - Mentorship – formal or informal
  - Opportunity for additional training or education

# Macro Level

- Recent research in human service organizations
  - Learning Organization
  - Caregiving Organization

# Macro Level (cont'd)

- Interventions at this level
  - Systemic approach to providing a “safe” environment for all levels of staff
  - Encouraging creativity and a degree of “risk” for providing services in an innovative manner (provided the risk does not endanger clients)

# Macro Level (cont'd)

- “Failures” are seen as opportunities for increasing knowledge and not necessarily as opportunities for discipline/negative response
- Administrative levels must support and model these changes
  - Capacity to demonstrate empathy and compassion for staff and the challenges that they face in delivering services

# Summary Points

- Building resiliency involves all levels
  - Agency, supervisor, and staff can provide various ways in which each level supports and encourages each other
- Uniqueness of human service agencies in providing “help” to clients both voluntary and involuntary
  - The need to acknowledge that services are only as good as the staff and agency are “healthy.” Toxic environments are contraindicated for building resiliency

# Summary Points (cont'd)

- Environment that encourages learning, creativity, and innovation
- Environment that supports “safety” for staff in both physical and psychological arenas
- Resiliency thrives in environments that provide opportunity for growth and development
- Resiliency provides motivation to continue challenging work