

Helping the Helpers: A City Staff Centered Approach in Addressing Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)



The Social Butterflies

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INTRODUCTION

Project Purpose & Description

The project was an exploration of STS to ensure the community of 90813 is served by Long Beach City staff. The project included research of existing literature, insights from subject matter expertise through interviews, and analysis of findings to inform the development of a practical toolkit. This included analysis of research on STS to identify symptoms, risk factors, and impact on service providers. Additionally, the research examined organizational and administrative support methods in managing STS. Social Butterflies connected with five subject matter experts at the macro, mezzo, and micro level to identify potential models that OHSP could implement for Long Beach City staff. Thus, the proposed project was designed to provide Long Beach City staff with the knowledge of managing their STS to provide accurate care to unhoused individuals.

Social Problem & Focus Population

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) refers to the emotional toll experienced by professionals who are regularly exposed to the trauma of others through storytelling, images, and experiences. This project focused on the City staff in Long Beach, with a particular focus on service providers such as social workers, nurses, and frontline personnel who frequently encounter client's traumatic narratives.

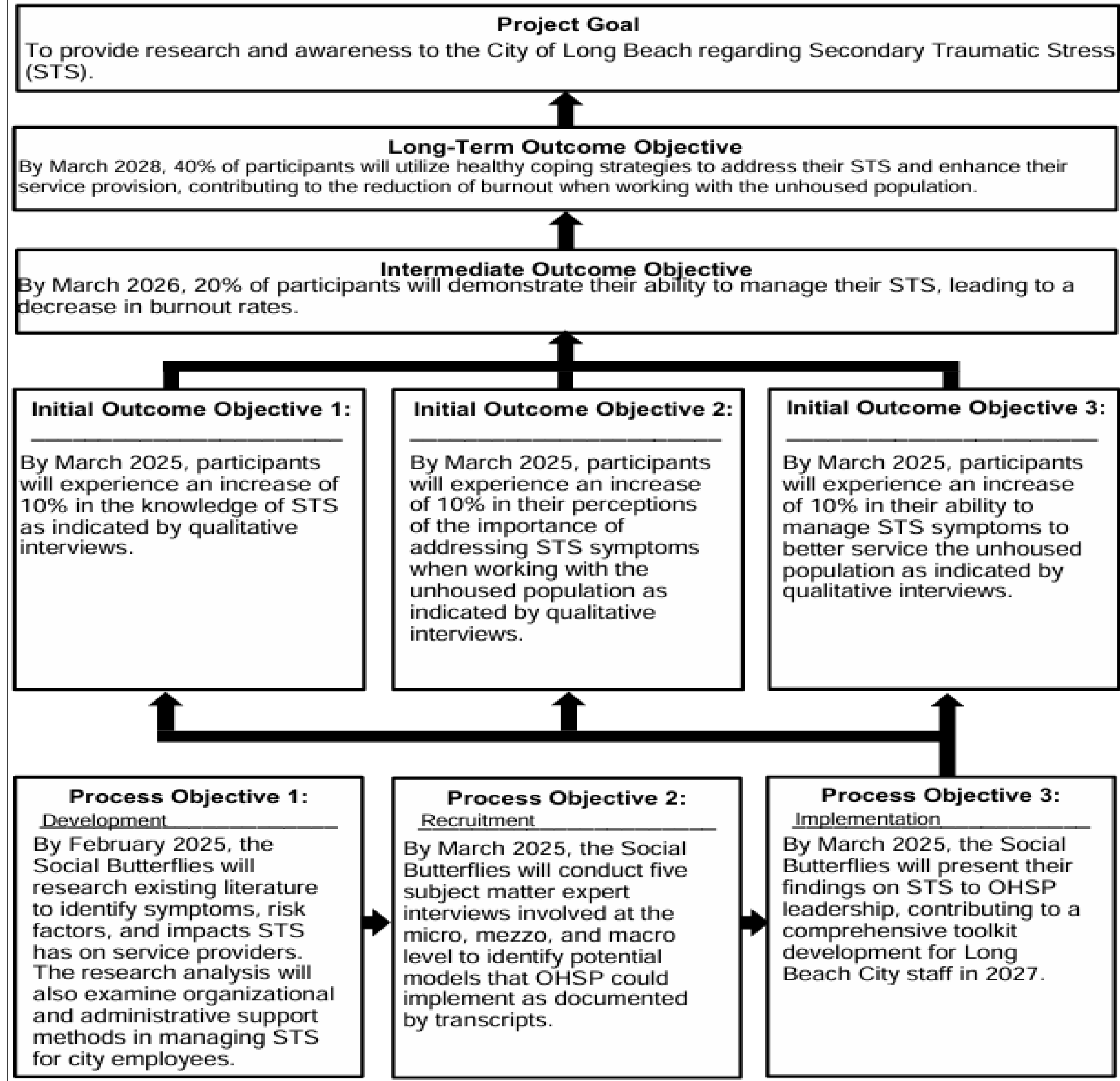
Scope of Social Problem

- The community in the 90813-zip code faced the compounded challenges of a substantial unhoused population and a widespread mistrust of service providers. This led to the apprehension to accept support services.
- "There are many professional resources available to the community but when we're out in the field and try to offer our help, they refuse it...they simply don't want it. It's like they think we are causing more trouble than good. We aren't a threat to them; we genuinely want them to get help."- Officer M., Firefighter
- As indicated in the 2024 Homeless Count, there were 3,376 individuals who experienced homelessness and 72.7% of those individuals were unsheltered in the City of Long Beach.
- "I want the city to open more shelters or hotels for the unhoused, especially now that the governor made it illegal for people to sleep on the street. There's so many unhoused people that I see on my way to work and all-over Long Beach. It shouldn't have to be like this." - Male Resident

Alignment to Specialization

This project aligns with the Child and Family Welfare specialization by addressing the impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress in service providers who support vulnerable children and families. Understanding and mitigating STS is essential to providing effective and compassionate care within child and family welfare systems.

PROJECT OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES



METHODS

- Research was analyzed through scholarly literature, systematically reviewing articles and extracting key findings to inform our understanding and support our analysis.
 - 5 subject matter experts were interviewed:
 - Dr. Brian Miller, Creator of the CE-CERT Model
 - Françoise Mathieu, M.Ed., CCC. RP. Executive Director, TEND
 - Dr. Tiffany Dawson, Certified CE-CERT Trainer
 - Kathleen Porter - Therapist, Educator, and Child Welfare Trainer
 - Kryssie Booth, Program Director and Susan Tanaka, Assistant Program Director of TIP of Long Beach
- Interview Structure
- All interviews were conducted separately, lasting between 30-60 minutes
 - Verbal consent to record and/or transcribe
- Analysis
- Transcribed notes and recording

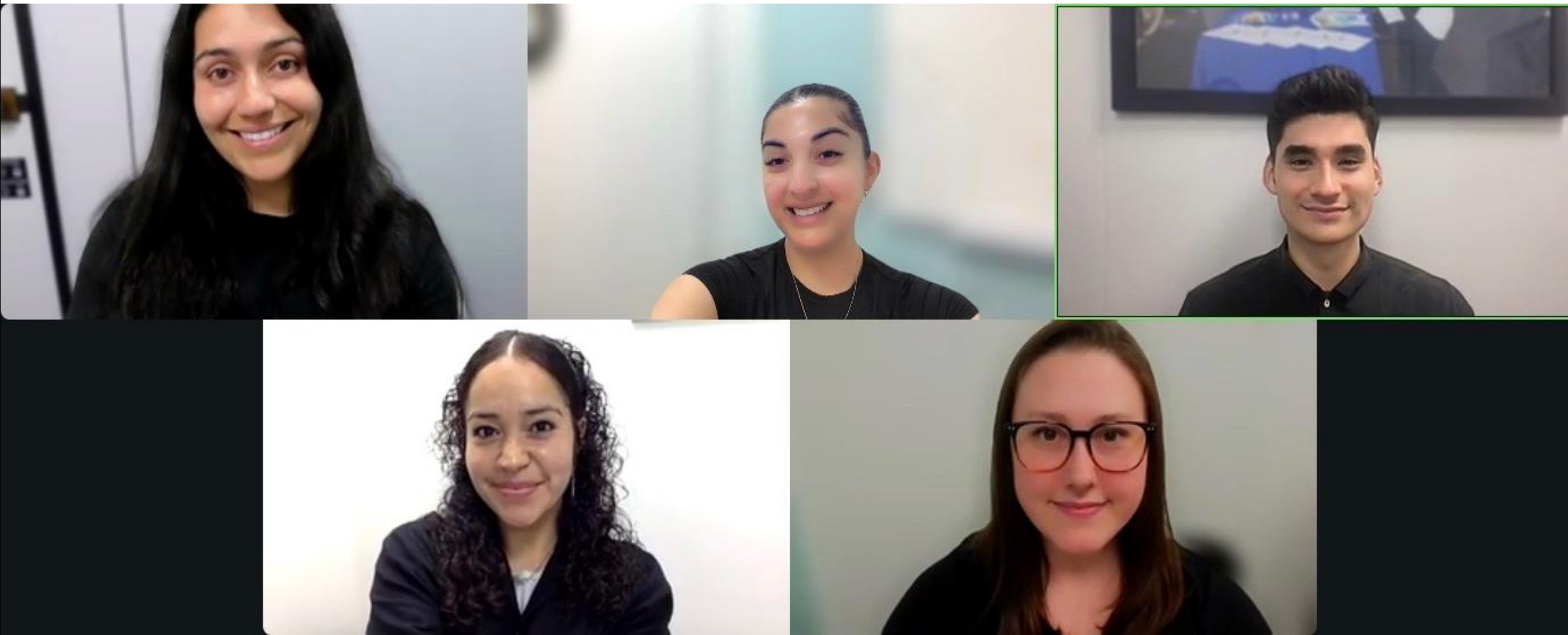
RESULTS



SCAN ME

Evaluation Results (Qualitative)

Themes	OSHP City Staff Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of STS frameworks and methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• " Your insights of STS will enhance our strategic planning and shape the development of our future tool kit."• "Your research analysis will have a meaningful impact on the resources and materials we are developing for staff."
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perspectives on STS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "These subject matter interviewees were intentionally selected and involve specialized methodologies that we could implement in the City of Long Beach"• "Thank you for shedding light on a topic that is too often overlooked."
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills developed through STS research, interviews, and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "The modalities you shared will assist our city staff who work with unhoused individuals."• "These STS skills will greatly enhance our engagements with the community."



RESOURCES

Bride, B. E., Sprang, G., Hendricks, A., Walsh, C. R., Mathieu, F., Hangartner, K., Ross, L. A., Fisher, P., & Miller, B. C. (2023); Edwards, C. P., & Miller, M. K. (2019); Harker, R., Pidgeon, A. M., Klaassen, F., & King, S. (2016); Hensel, J. M., Ruiz, C., Finney, C., & Dewa, C. S. (2015); Rauvola, R.S., Vega, D.M. & Lavigne, K.N. (2019); Shell, E. M., Teodorescu, D., & Williams, L. D. (2021); Sprang, G., Ford, J. D., Kerig, P. K., & Bride, B. (2019)

CONCLUSION

Analysis of Study Findings

- STS label varies from agency to agency (vicarious trauma, burn out, and empathy strain)
- Hesitation for organizations to talk about STS
- Minimal policy implementation in organizations due to funding constraints and overall hesitation by upper management
- Consensus among SME's that training does improve retention, morale, well-being, and long term saves organizations money
- Prioritizing STS & how many resources you put into employee well-being is key
- Variation in support & emphasis on STS is highly regarded among staff
- There is no universal model/curriculum that an organization can use due to the diverse nature of different departments

Limitations & Improvements

Limitations	Description of Limitation	Improvements
Limitations on Self Report Data	Participants may alter their responses to appear more favorable or socially acceptable	Surveys can be designed to ensure full anonymity, encouraging honest responses and utilizing longitudinal data to assess the consistency of self-report data.
STS & the overlap with other Conditions	Researchers, practitioners, and health care providers sometimes confuse or overlap concepts (compassion fatigue, empathy-based stress, burnout, etc.)	Encourage future studies to clarify distinctions between STS and similar concepts.
Cultural and Contextual Differences	STS research is under studied in regard to how STS affects individuals with different cultural backgrounds.	Include a more diverse sample in future studies and provide psychoeducation to help individuals recognize the experiences they may be facing.

Recommendations & Implications

Practice

- The Social Butterflies recommend that the city of Long Beach disseminate the surveys to all city staff to get an accurate assessment of STS from various city staff.
- The Social Butterflies recommend that the city of Long Beach implement a review for city staff during their annual evaluations regarding how they are being impacted by STS/how they are managing it.

Policy

- Social Butterflies recommends that the City of Long Beach implement a policy that mandates STS training be completed by all city staff on an annual basis, with unlimited access to the toolkit that OHSP will be developing. By completing training, city staff can gain critical knowledge and tools that aid in addressing STS more effectively.

Research

- Further research should be done on how STS may impact staff from different cultures to identify additional ways in which STS symptoms can emerge. By identifying this, OHSP staff can introduce tools that are tailored to address these symptoms with cultural considerations.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

City of Long Beach – The Office of Homeless Strategy and Partnerships (OHSP)

OHSP leads Long Beach's coordinated response to homelessness through strategic planning, policy development, and community collaboration. Their mission is to create sustainable solutions that prevent and reduce homelessness, fostering a resilient and equitable community for all.

Name of Collaborator	Contributions
Savana Doudar, Homeless Strategy and Partnerships Specialist, Savana.Doudar@longbeach.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Research Topics• Link group with SME• Attend Bi-Weekly Meetings
Alvin Teng, Homeless Strategy and Partnerships Specialist, Alvin.Teng@longbeach.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Research Topics• Link group with SME• Attend Bi-Weekly Meetings

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