

Lorryen Chavez  
California State University Long Beach  
1250 Bellflower Blvd  
Long Beach, CA, 90840

Introduction:

Transition from graduating from social work to full time social workers is a big pivot. As there will be demanding roles within various agencies, there will challenges to face. Entering the field can be a rewarding experience, but the reality of workplace stressors can often go unaddressed, leading to vulnerability but early burnout. The career within experiences burnout due to the various tasks and services rendered, political and community demands, client advocacy, or administration. (Ratcliff, 2024). This thesis is designed to prepare new MSW graduates with workplace wellness strategies and resources to support them as they enter the workforce. It will help to reduce burnout and improve tension in the field and enhance the quality of the individual and their clients.

Purpose of Thesis:

The purpose of the curriculum is to address workplace wellness strategies and resources that would support health for entry-level masters of social worker graduates when entering the workforce.

Target Population:

Supporting entry-level social workers

Potential Funder and Host Agency

Entry-Level Social Workers and future social workers



Figure 1: Quote by Audre Lorde on self-care and preservation

Description of Proposed Training:

The curriculum in the development of using a four-module curriculum for entry-level social workers to understand and recognize burnout and its symptoms, learn and practice mindfulness and self-care techniques in agency settings as applicable, There was a total of four group sessions. This curriculum was developed to provide and explore emotional awareness and coping strategies to manage workplace stress and create a supportive environment from various experiences and building resilience. Using evidence-based strategies and practicing it were provided with tools and resources to maintain well-being throughout their careers.

Goals and Objectives of the Thesis Project:

To address workplace burnout among entry-level social workers and using the curriculum to focus on workplace wellness strategies. It is designed to support mental, physical, emotional, and professional well-being of social workers.

The following includes:

- Increasing their awareness and understanding of workplace burnout.
- Providing practical mindfulness strategies and wellness tools.
- Creating a supportive environment for discussing burnout and building resilience.
- Promoting self-care and a healthy work-life balance within the agency setting.

Description of Analysis:

Identifying the challenges of burnout among the social work profession through the literature review which includes the following such as workplace stress, generational dynamics, cultural barriers, and staff challenges. Exploring current research from wellness, burnout, and self-care to express the structure and content of the curriculum. Using the curriculum that involves a pre and posttest assessment to explore and measure a participant’s knowledge and self-awareness before and after the modules. The curriculum will be used as an evaluation through participant engagement and feedback after each module, comparing of pre and post-test responses to gauge learning outcomes and changes in burnout through awareness and coping strategies. Lastly, using strong feedback from group discussions and final reflections to refine the curriculum and assess its impact on self-care and burnout prevention strategies.

Summary of Outcomes/Findings

Through an extensive review, the curriculum and modules provide awareness by helping future social workers and graduates with tools to foster self-awareness, emotional resilience and self-care practices. Using the four-module structure, it introduced and delivered that a social workers’ well-being is significant not only professional, but mentality and physically as well.

Summary of Budget:

While the project did not require a budget, some of the following materials included Microsoft teams for pre-recorded or live sessions, pdf copies of the modules, a laptop, and internet access which can be accessible from the library or outside resources as needed.

Potential Impact of Proposed Project:

Burnout continues to be on the rise for many in the workforce. Symptoms can be challenging to see until someone speaks up or it is too late. Recognizing burnout in the social work community can be very complex. Individuals continue to work very hard to support their clients each day. Practicing wellness for oneself can make a difference. Understanding and looking into the symptoms of burnout is crucial as a reminder that their care comes first. Taking the step to practicing self-care allows the individual to take back control of not only their physical health but their mental health as well. Suppose one fails to take care of oneself. In that case, it progresses to extensive negativity, which also can interfere with one’s personal life, and they won’t be fully present for themselves, their workload, and their clients.

References:

Ratcliff, M. (2024). Social Workers, Burnout, and Self-Care: A Public Health Issue. *Delaware Journal of Public Health*, 10(1), 26–29. <https://doi.org/10.32481/djph.2024.03.05>

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