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Impacts on Utah DSP Retention: Burnout & Well-Being

Introduction

Across sectors, high levels of job stress and burnout have been shown to be associated with turnover and intent to leave. Research with direct support professionals (DSPs), working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), has illustrated how job stress, which can lead to burnout is associated with intent to leave (Gray-Stanley & Muramatsu, 2011).

Purpose

1) Describe self-care and burnout among Utah DSPs
2) Report employee's desires for employer support

Sample

Online surveys (N = 132) were collected from DSPs employed in Utah.

Measures

- Self-Care Practices Scale (SCPS); Lee, Miller, & Bride, 2020.
- Professional Quality of Life: Compassions Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL); Stamm, 2009-2012

Results

On average, DSPs are engaging in a range of personal and professional self-care.
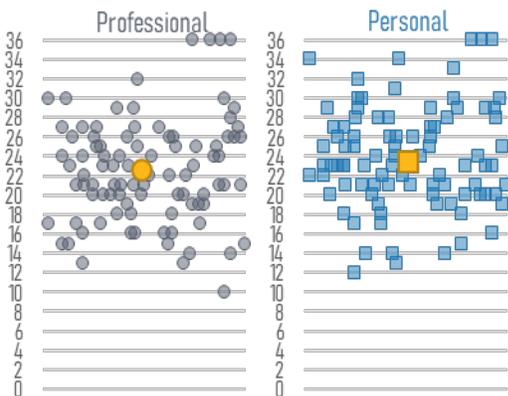

This chart shows the distribution of professional (on the left) and personal (on the right) self-care scores as measured by the Self-Care Practices Scale (Lee et al, 20200). Both distributions are spread across the mid and high ends of the scales. This suggests that DSPs are engaging in some self-care both professionally and personally. Professional self-care activities specified on the Self Care Practices Scale include things like taking breaks and being able to say no to specific tasks. Example personal self-care items include laughing, sleeping, and spending quality time with loved ones. Two yellow circles on the chart shows similar average scores between the two subscales: professional = 22.5, personal = 23.8.

**About one third of employers provided self-care support.**
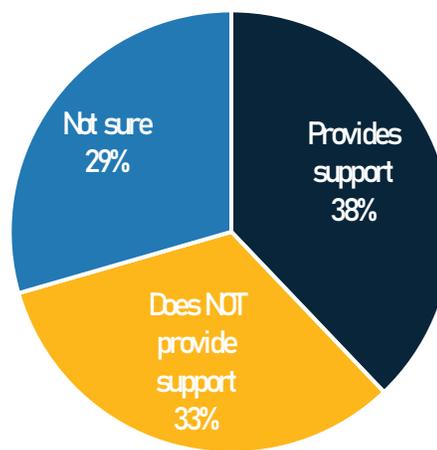
This pie chart shows that while 38% of employers provide self-care support to their employees, 33% do not provide support. The final 29% of the sample indicated they were "not sure" whether their employer provided self-care support.

More than 50% of DSPs in Utah report experiencing burnout
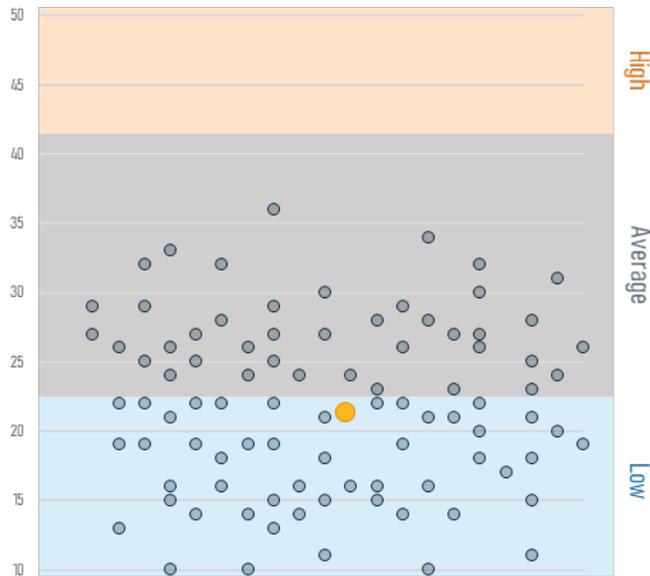
This chart shows the distribution of burnout scores are approximately evenly distributed between the low range, from 10 to 22 points, and the average range, from 23 to 42 points. No scores are above 36, a full 6 points below the high range. A large yellow dot shows the average burnout score, 21.8, is on the cusp of the average range.

Employer support for employee's mental health improves professional & personal self-care, and reduces burnout.
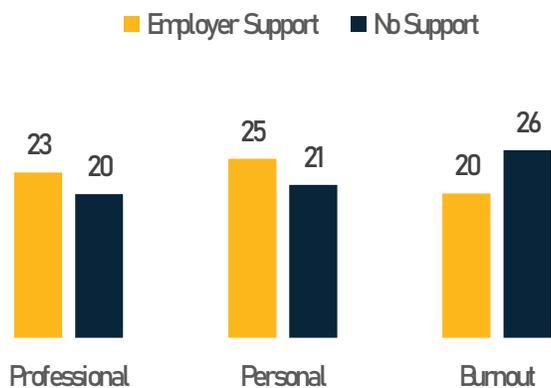
This chart shows that employees who report their employers provide self-care support have higher professional and personal self-care scores than those who do not receive employer support. Additionally, burnout scores are lower, in the low range, rather than in the average range, for DSPs whose employers provide mental health support.

Employee Suggestions

Employees provided multiple actionable suggestions that highlight the support employers are providing, or could provide. Responses to "What things their employer does, or you would like them to do, to support staff?" were categorized into two overarching themes with 6 subthemes each. Subthemes are listed in descending order of how often they were mentioned. The first word in each bullet point notes the general theme, and is paired with a direct quote from survey respondents that illustrates the concept

Interpersonal
- Communication "Staff check ins"
- Activities/Events "My employer does various wellness events through the year."
- Appreciation "Take the time to say thank you and that I am appreciated."
- Self-Care/Supportive "Fosters environment with support for self-care and supportive work culture"
- Flexibility "Suggest time off or move dsp into a different house with different clients"
- Work-life Balance "Actively promote a healthy work-life balance"

Concrete
- Benefits "Insurance" and "Retirement"
- Time off "Need more paid days off"
- Money "A higher salary" and "Give more hours"
- Education "I would love to have something offered outside of CEUs"
- Therapy "They offer a few sessions of therapy for free"
- Staffing "I wish they would hire more people to support the increase of clients we work with."

Conclusions

Taken together, these results suggest that employer's support of DSP's mental health has an impact on DSP's burnout and engagement in self-care practices. Employers may consider how they can implement some of the interpersonal and concrete policies and practices suggested here into their organizations. Given that only about one third of employees reported that their employers provide these types of support, future research may target what barriers there are for employers, as well as an creative solutions some employers may have found to support their employee's mental health.

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