Moving Towards Organizational Best Practice

# Operations: Structure and Accountability

Street intervention work is highly fluid and dynamic; it involves working outside of the office, during non-traditional hours and in a variety of community-based settings. The research findings indicate that street intervention workers both want and need a consistent support structure via regular individual check-ins and regular team meetings. While these recommendations may seem simplistic, the dynamic nature of the work in addition to crisis management responsibilities of violence reduction work make it possible for regular support systems to falter or be instituted inconsistently.

Regular individual check-ins and team meetings allow for information sharing, team strategizing, and staff care. They can keep a team connected during difficult times and promote team cohesion. Creating a routinized staff support structure provides an opportunity for administrative staff or other program staff to connect with street intervention program workers. For example, if development director wanted to vet a grant opportunity with street intervention staff, presenting this opportunity at a regularly scheduled team meeting is an easy way to gain their feedback.

The research findings also highlight that in street intervention work there are too few opportunities to celebrate accomplishments. Perhaps a program participant got their GED, a staff member received a promotion, a community event was successfully coordinated, etc. Street intervention teams are quickly mobilized in times of tragedy without an opportunity to similarly gather to reflect on the positive events that occur in their work as well. The easiest way to incorporate a recognitive of positive events and accomplishments is to integrate this recognition into individual check-ins and team meetings. “Shout-outs”, “Lifting up” team members, and other forms of individual recognition within team meetings were discussed by outreach workers.

Staff support structures also generate an accountability mechanism to ensure that staff are engaged, have a sense of clarity with tasks assigned, and have access to supervisor support and organizational resources to complete these tasks. Supervisors can assess for their workers’ wellness, points where they may be struggling, and opportunities to develop their skills through these check-ins. In the absence of structure, it is possible that workers can feel unsupported by their organization, uncared for, or even ‘outed’ by their leadership. These sentiments are associated with the moral crises that can occur in violence reduction work (see worksheet on Moral Crises).

*I'm working with friends who get it, who gets battles of working and maintaining in a positive outlook and also that can offer perspective. So, I think this is important as well… We have a wellness coach here within the organization we have also like I say, employee retreats, we have partnership retreats. We have, uh, opportunities to engage in different things that may be relaxed.*

*So, we have supervisors that check in on us. We do a lot of one-on-ones with them. We have a lot of like debriefing or processing with other coworkers. There's always that one, you know, or two coworkers that I can call at any time and just kind of like share, vent, just be myself with*

# Food for Thought

* + Does each staff have a designated supervisor that they regularly check-in with?
    - How are these check-ins structured? Is a supervisor assessing for performance, wellness, growth opportunities, areas where support is needed?
  + Does each program have a regular team meeting?
    - How are these check-ins structured? Is there a space provided to discuss challenges, struggles, celebrating accomplishments, strategizing for future work, professional development and growth opportunities?