

Small changes to your organizational practices and norms could create big impacts! Are you looking for ways to encourage better communication and transparency for your team? We have 8 ideas you can start with right now!

Below are some ideas sourced from our [What Works: Insights for Thriving Anti-Violence Organizations Project](#). Anti-violence staff shared various strategies and ideas that are currently practiced and implemented at their organization that create big impacts.

1. Peer Support

At the request from staff, multiple agencies started peer support programs.

Many interviewees found connection time with peers and support separate from supervision. At one organization, staff are encouraged to meet with their partner twice per quarter, while at another agency therapists meet twice a week to talk about their cases, vicarious trauma, and agency-wide issues. Peer support can happen informally, too. One advocate shared that after a tough session, she asked her coworkers for help to process vicarious trauma; one colleague volunteered and brought snacks! Asking, “do you need anything?” can go a long way.

2. Coworker Connections

Many advocates emphasized how important it is to socialize with colleagues and intentionally spend time not talking about work, getting to know them on a human level.

One advocate shared “no matter how busy we are, a significant amount of time is spent checking-in and doing icebreakers.” Other advocates shared that because of intentional frequent meetings “relationships with colleagues are stronger because that time is set aside.” Be mindful of your more introverted coworkers when making connection plans, and consider alternatives that create space for low-pressure or asynchronous engagement.

3. Community Care

One director emphasized the importance of nurturing relationships with other organizations in the community.

Each week, even if she doesn’t need another agency’s services, she calls them to check-in on how things are going. In addition, when they have new staff, they introduce them to community partners. These practices foster strong relationships that are more than transactional, which makes a difference in their small community.



Welcome Card

One advocate shared how nice it was to receive a card from her future team before arriving at her first day of work “It was like being invited to a party, being so welcomed.” Consider trying this for your next new hire!

4. Sharing is Caring

One director believes that as soon as she knows information, she needs to thoughtfully share it with staff, leaning into the belief that “people who are impacted the most should be told first.”

When there were funding cuts at her agency, she met with staff to discuss what changes they could make that would impact staff the least. These meetings took place on a Friday after staff had finished meeting with clients so they could be off for a few days to react to the news—staff reported this was helpful. She shared “transparency is one of the most helpful things to weather storms.” At other organizations, directors reported explaining the reason behind decision-making or sharing potential options and considerations with staff before arriving at a final decision. As one executive director described, they have a culture of “let’s just talk about this.”

5. Leave Work at Work

While the nature of anti-violence work can sometimes make it difficult not to think about when we’re off the clock, we can implement some practices to make it easier.

For example, one advocate recalled their director instructing, “when you’re out of work, shut your work stuff off,” encouraging strict boundary-setting. At another agency, when folks are out of the office, they can request to be left off email threads, so their inbox won’t be overwhelming when they return. Instead, the messages can be saved somewhere for them to catch up on when they are ready.

6. Prioritize Supervisory Relationship

A common theme among the organizations we interviewed was their dedication to supervisory relationships; this often consists of formal weekly check-ins with staff, and making themselves available by phone or messaging platforms as needed.

It can also look like genuine offers for support, honestly answering tough questions, and giving constructive feedback. One supervisor tells her advocates, “You don’t have to come to me with a complete thought or a nice thought; you can come at me with any way you feel, and we can figure it out together.” One supervisor also emphasized the importance of staff taking the lead in how much support they need, which includes setting up the agenda for check-ins.



Letters of Appreciation

At a staff meeting, one leader had each person write their name at the top of a piece of paper and pass it around the room, having each person write down that person’s strengths or something they appreciate about them. You could have the writer read them out loud, then keep the lists somewhere visible for the whole team!

7. Authentic Communication

Creating space for people to communicate authentically can go a long way in fostering a supportive environment.

One advocate shared how valuable it is that they “get to show up however we are in any given moment.” In practice this might look like saying, “I’m leaving my video off today because I just can’t deal with it,” or “I just need to vent about this thing for a few minutes.” In addition, a director emphasized that supervisors need to learn about and adapt to their team’s preferred communication styles.

8. Break Down Silos

Support and communication shouldn’t be limited by hierarchy or departments.

Multiple advocates explained the value of being able to connect directly with colleagues, leadership, or even board members—not just their direct supervisor. At one agency, when facing a challenge, the CEO and board created open spaces for discussion and offered multiple options for staff to process and respond together. At one agency, the CEO models accessible communication by sharing their personal phone number and connecting with staff in-office regularly. Cross-functional communication helps prevent isolation between departments and strengthens trust across all levels of the organization.

What are 3 small actions, based on these ideas, that you can implement at your organization?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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