

Small shifts to your organizational practices and norms could create big impacts! Are you looking for ways to change your meetings?

We have 7 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 real strategies currently in practice; approaches that, while often simple, make a significant difference in staff experience and sustainability.

1. Meeting Flexibility

Supportive organizations had a wide range of meeting schedules. Some met once a month and were comfortable canceling or hosting virtually, depending on capacity. Others met multiple times a month in various combinations, including all-staff, teams or departments, and staff and executive leadership. Staff expressed appreciation for multiple meetings because they led to collaboration and alignment, and provided more opportunities for individual team members to have their voices heard.

Another organization described having two meetings a week: one for case consultations and client work, and the other for organizational updates, planning, and strategizing. This allowed both kinds of work to happen in the midst of a week. They also planned biweekly self-care meetings for their organization.

The key to meeting flexibility is to prioritize the team's needs regarding attendance, purpose, and frequency.

2. Taking Time to Connect

Advocates uplifted the importance of taking time to connect as humans, not just coworkers.

One organization uses icebreakers to open its bi-weekly meetings, and only the second half is for updates and check-ins; as they put it, “being together as people makes a big difference.”

Another organization reported using meeting time to share personal stories and photos to build connections among colleagues.

While not collected during the interviews, we wanted to share that RAFT opens all our team meetings by sharing gratitudes!



**Have a meeting where
nothing is planned!**

**Maybe the only plan is to
connect and engage—or wait
and see what conversation
emerges once everyone is
together. You could also plan
“walking meetings” where you
can walk, talk, and be outside!**

3. Building in Support

An advocate described how their meetings are designed to support staff, with opportunities to request support on the agenda; they create plans to honor capacity from the start, rather than waiting until a crisis.

While supervisors shared various frequencies of checking in with their team, many reported utilizing 1:1 time to support their staff. As one shared, they aim to “build up the understanding so they can ‘bother’ her as supervisor. Advocates don’t have to figure it out alone.”

This looks like checking in on capacity and support needs early when making requests. Creating support plans from the start is a form of prevention for your team!

4. Showing Appreciation

One advocate described how their organization created a culture of appreciation within their meetings.

Previously, they lacked a mechanism to highlight “wins” or recognize colleagues. They launched an initiative to publicly celebrate each other during monthly staff meetings; they even added this recognition to external newsletters and documented successes in publications. As a result, staff reported feeling more valued and appreciated at work.

5. Connecting with Leadership

Multiple organizations use meetings to connect with leadership.

One CEO meets monthly with staff, usually with a catered lunch, and gives everyone an extended break from regular workday duties. Another Executive Director prepares the agenda, while an advocate plays to her strengths by facilitating connection-building icebreakers; all staff are encouraged to bring agenda items and issues to this meeting.

6. Continuous Improvement

Some organizations have found success by implementing structured formats that move feedback beyond annual reviews. For instance, one organization uses a formalized digital system in which all employees, including part-time staff, can contribute to a live "issues" list to highlight areas for growth and operational challenges. By reviewing these items during weekly departmental meetings, the organization has fostered a culture of transparency in which staff feel empowered to raise concerns.

Similarly, another leader uses a standardized form during biweekly supervision meetings, with a dedicated space for staff to provide feedback to their supervisors. By integrating these consistent check-ins and debriefs, the organization ensures that feedback is a continuous, year-round conversation, effectively eliminating surprises during the formal annual review process.

7. Breaking Down Silos

Meetings can be used to develop connections and trust among departments that don't often cross paths. At one agency, the Elder Abuse department reported feeling siloed because other departments and colleagues didn't understand their work. When their CEO publicly recognized them, staff became curious about their work, and they were ultimately invited to present at the all-staff meeting to educate their colleagues. Consider having a "department highlight" regularly for your organization!

At another agency, two advocacy teams began working more closely together. Through more meetings and time spent connecting, they identified unnecessary overlap in their work, allowing them to serve clients more efficiently and creating clear boundaries and scopes for both teams.

Another leader described a meeting between the direct service and prevention departments that gave all staff a chance to share, even if it wasn't new information. It created an opportunity to learn from one another, while better understanding each other's struggles and achievements, ultimately breaking down silos and building trust within departments.

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

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What stands out across these organizations isn't one big solution—it's a pattern of small, intentional choices. These actions may seem simple on their own, but transforming meetings into spaces of mutual support creates a cumulative effect over time. By shifting the dynamics of daily and weekly gatherings, organizations build cultures where advocates feel empowered to care for themselves and the communities they serve.

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