

OCYF

Trauma Team

Supporting the Child Welfare Workforce: **Techniques for Regulation in the Face of Trauma**

Child welfare professionals often encounter trauma—both directly and vicariously—through their work with children and families. Repeated exposure to child abuse, neglect, and family crisis can take a toll on even the most resilient workforce, leading to compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress.

The Importance of Regulation

Regulation refers to the ability to manage emotions, stress, and physiological responses in challenging situations. For child welfare workers, strong self-regulation skills are essential for maintaining professionalism, making sound decisions, and sustaining a long-term career in this demanding field.

Techniques for Regulation

Practice these techniques to support regulation:



Healthy Boundaries

Set healthy boundaries around your work. When possible, disconnect from work communications during personal time and engage in activities that recharge you.



Grounding Techniques

Use your senses to ground yourself in the present. Notice five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste. This simple exercise can help reduce overwhelming feelings during stressful moments.



Scheduled Breaks

Intentionally schedule short breaks throughout your day. Even a five-minute walk or stretching session can provide your mind and body an opportunity to reset.



Reflective Supervision

Seek out or advocate for reflective supervision—a process that allows staff to discuss their emotional responses to their work, gain perspective, and develop coping strategies in a safe, supportive environment.