

How IBH Practices Can Best Support New Social Workers:

Leila Jonsson, MSW, SWC (DU GSSW Alum)

- **Cultivate an Understanding of the Social Work Profession**
 - It's important to recognize the differences between social work and other disciplines on your team (e.g., ethical standards, philosophies, practice norms, etc.). Demonstrating that your agency has a solid understanding of the social work role will help facilitate better communication and foster comfort for your new social worker.
- **Nurture an Innovative Practice**
 - In order to stay inspired, innovative, and motivated, new social workers should be given the opportunity to engage in additional educational/training/professional development opportunities re: up-to-date research, evidence-based practices, activities that build awareness, resource deliverables, social work strategies, etc.
- **Provide Clinical Supervision (in both Individual and Group Settings)**
 - New social workers require this in order to feel supported and should receive one of the above options 4 times a month/once per week.
 - Providing this service will highlight that the agency values and prioritizes professional development.
- **Provide Genuine Recognition**
 - Ensure your new social worker's efforts and unique insights are valued.
 - Historically, the discipline and its contributions have often been overlooked, particularly in the healthcare space.
 - It is important to provide social workers with the recognition they deserve. Why? When we collaborate with other disciplines, patients benefit from a wider range of support and gain access to more resources. Additionally, we have a unique perspective re: how individuals fit into/are affected by systems, etc.
- **Expectation Transparency, Fear of Burnout & Competitive Compensation**
 - It is critical to be honest about caseload and workload expectations during the interview process. The last thing you want is for your new social worker to feel they were misled in any way.
 - Be honest about work expectations, caseloads, working outside of agency hours, etc.
 - Additionally, the fear of burnout is very real in the social work space. Your agency will get more applicants/interest if you prioritize competitive wages and generous PTO/sick time, as this ties directly into self-care and is definitely a determining factor when new social workers are comparing offers/considering agencies.
 - Keep the above in mind for retention as well.

- **Prioritize the Self-Care Concept/Practices**
 - The concept of self-care and its importance are drilled into social work student's brains during grad school. It is imperative to keep in mind that they are taught that they CANNOT provide proper care to their patients if they haven't first tended to their own care.
 - Examples:
 - Ensure social workers are taking lunch breaks.
 - Encourage breaks being taken outside.
 - Encourage PTO, mental health days, work from home/admin days if appropriate, healthy boundaries, check-in discussions, conversations with supervisors about workload and bandwidth, etc.
- **The Person-Centered Approach**
 - Ensure your agency fosters this approach as it enables social workers to meet patients where they are in a given situation. This then allows us to validate what's happening in a patient's life and will assist us in more effective problem-solving. New social workers will be looking for this kind of work environment.
 - By helping colleagues better understand the challenges patients may be facing (e.g., access to care), social workers lay important groundwork for the interdisciplinary team. This gives treatment teams the insight to create better fitted treatment plans, effectively address barriers, ensure patients get the care they need, etc.