THE HEALING TRUST

Developing a Culture of Care

The Healing Trust

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Developing a Culture of Care

## What is a "culture of care"?

A culture of care fosters a workplace where every team member feels valued and heard. It prioritizes the needs of the people doing the work (not just the measures of productivity and performance) and builds organizational structures and programs that emphasize relationships, compassion, and belonging. A culture of care can be created through formal policies, procedures, and programs, as well as informal opportunities for connection and support.

This resource was created by gathering insights from our grant partners, our own organizational practices at The Healing Trust, and recommendations in the field. Use this list as a starting place or inspiration. It is not exhaustive and is not tailored to the unique needs of every workplace.

A culture of care...

- Pays team members fairly and in alignment with organizational values
- Provides access to affordable health care and other benefits
- Respects all identities and works to eliminate white supremacy culture in the workplace
- Provides thoughtful supervision and opportunities for connection among staff members
- Has clear expectations and boundaries, and provides avenues to repair conflict when it arises
- Provides opportunities for personalized professional and personal development
- Has a workplace conducive to physical and emotional well-being
- Works reasonable hours, with enough paid leave to support a healthy work/life balance and to meet personal and family needs
- Provides support to deal with the specific stresses of the work, such as working with a high-trauma population or as an organizer

Modified from: Sustainable Jobs for Organizers
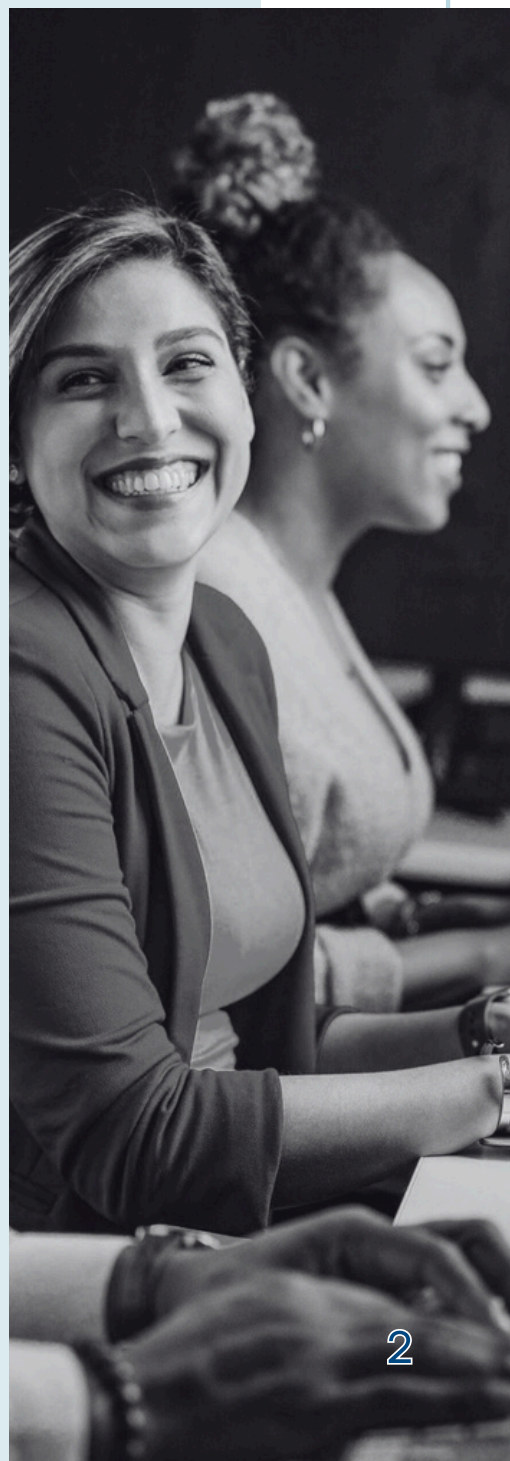
Policies, Practices, & Procedures

There are formal structures that demonstrate care for team members when crisis or uncertainty occurs, when "life happens" requiring a leave of absence, or when the work gets heavy and greater well-being support is needed. These policies, practices, procedures, and programs communicate to team members that they will be supported by the organization through the highs and lows of the work, and they set the tone for respectful behavior and fair treatment.

Support for physical & mental health	• Financial contribution to Health Savings Accounts • Healthcare coverage for mental health treatment • Paying the employee premium for insurance coverage • Provide Employee Assistance Programs • Provide comprehensive Short Term Disability coverage
Fair pay and workload	• Competitive salaries/rates that are reviewed regularly for staff and contract workers • Workload is manageable, in alignment with job description, and reviewed throughout the year with supervisor • Opportunities for bonuses are available and clearly defined
Benefits meet the needs of employees	• Parental leave for birthing and non-birthing parent, including adoptive parents • Generous bereavement policy, including pregnancy loss and loss of pet • Contribution to retirement fund

Stipends to support life beyond work	• Wellness/self-care stipend • Childcare stipend • Stipend for mental health care • Education stipend
Incorporate rest into the workflow	• 4-day work week or shorter fulltime workweek • Less office hours during summertime • Flexible working hours • Regular office closures or "pauses in operations" that align with workflow and are not tied to paid time off (ex: winter holidays, summer break, spring break) • Generous paid time off, including ability to take off for mental health needs • Hybrid schedule with work from home options • Sabbatical Policy allowing extended periods of paid rest
Develop a comprehensive employee handbook	• Handbook is reviewed and updated regularly • Staff understand the policies and procedures listed in the handbook and can refer to them when needed
Policies and Practices for Addressing Harm	• Create whistleblower protections • Establish a Restorative Practice policy to repair interpersonal harm
Operationalize Staff Wellness	• Integrate staff care responsibilities into job descriptions to clearly define expectations. • Develop a comprehensive staff wellness program
Annual culture survey	Conduct annual culture survey to gather feedback from team members about their needs, concerns, wishes, and ideas

Individual Growth, Rest, & Care

> 66 *"Love yourself enough to set boundaries. Your time and energy are precious. You get to choose how you use it.* 99
> -Anna Taylor

Each team member exists as a person outside of the workplace. Operating out of the belief that staff are as worthy of care as clients served creates a fulfilling workplace. Providing opportunities for both growth and rest demonstrates a belief that employees matter in every season of the work, and that their value isn't tied only to their productivity.

A Workplace that Prioritizes Individual Growth, Rest, & Care Provides:

Professional Growth
- Ongoing professional development tailored to employee interests and career goals
- Clear expectations and track for professional growth for all employees
- Opportunities for executive or life coaching
- Encouragement to staff to know themselves better through personality assessments, and use the results to work together more cohesively

Boundaries & Skills
- Boundaries between clients/work and self are clear, enforced, and respected
- Deep listening and communication skills are developed among all team members
- Conflict resolution skills are developed among all team members

Well-being & Rest
- Ability to attend therapy/doctor appointments during workday
- Sabbatical and/or planned extended rest throughout tenure
- Pay for team or individuals to attend self-care retreats during working hours

Belonging & Community

A culture of care supports a feeling of security and belonging in the workplace. By prioritizing relationships through opportunities for celebration, repair, and shared grief, a strong foundation is built for longevity and resilience in the work. Trust is tested through the hard moments that inevitably occur in relationships—and the work of nonprofits is the work of relationships.

A Workplace That Fosters Belonging & Community Provides...

Community & Connection
- Cultural opportunities and experiences that align with the identity of staff members
- Regular team activities that are inclusive and based on staff interest (ex: meals, team building, celebrations)
- Circle process and/or intentional connection among staff and departments
- Encouraged participation in affinity groups, peer support networks, and mentorships
- Opportunities for connection after difficult seasons of the work or when tragedy occurs (ex: grief processing after loss of coworker or client, restorative practices to repair conflict, processing and celebrating staff transitions)
- Support for staff members experiencing personal life events (ex: baby shower for an adoption, flowers when grieving, meal train after surgery)
- Rituals that are built into the culture (ex: birthday card signed by all staff, treats after a successful board meeting, day off after a fundraiser, lunch to honor new hire/departure, lighting a candle before a meeting)

Supervisory Support
- Intentional, compassionate conflict resolution/repair among staff
- Consistent check-ins with supervisor
- A supervisor that is available, responds timely, and is collaborative with reports

Workplace Culture

> ❝ *"Culture is not an initiative.*
> *Culture is the enabler of all initiatives."* ❞
> -Larry E. Senn

Workplace culture is the "personality" of the organization—it is how people interact with one another, the values practiced, the assumptions made. It is what exists even when leadership is not looking. In many ways, culture is what drives engagement, retention, and performance. Leadership models desired behaviors and sets the tone for what is expected and valued. For this reason, it is necessary for leadership to utilize time off, set realistic deadlines and boundaries, and operationalize equity and care in the workplace.

Signs of a Healthy Workplace Culture:

Time & Flexibility

- Everyone is encouraged to use their time off, and it's modeled by leadership
- Meetings are set at appropriate times in the workday
- Boundaries are enforced and respected around sending communication outside of work hours
- Time off is taken when sick rather than "pushing through"
- Staff has flexibility to work outside of the office
- Margin is incorporated into the pace of the work
- Rest is considered part of the job and is not a luxury
- Realistic deadlines are set early, collaboratively, and communicated often

Leadership Characteristics

- Transparency and trust are incorporated into all aspects of the work
- Clear communication and consistently enforced expectations from supervisors/leadership
- Feedback is accepted and regularly incorporated
- Trauma-informed leadership is practiced
- Characteristics of white supremacy culture are evaluated in the workplace and steps are taken to dismantle them
- Authenticity and healthy vulnerability are practiced

Workplace Environment

> **"** *"There's no better policy in society than pursuing the health and safety of its people."*
> -Ralph Nader **"**

The physical workplace can impact feelings of safety, focus, and bodily comfort required for creative work. A hospitable, welcoming, and accessible environment is a simple way to demonstrate care for your team. It is important to consider the unique needs of your team members and creating an environment that consistently meets those needs.

Signs of a Healthy Workplace Environment:

Safe & Welcoming Office
- Office is welcoming, comfortable, and safe for anyone who enters the space
- Emergency plans are in place and staff is trained on them
- Signage is posted making clear how to navigate the building and how to respond in an emergency

Essential Work Resources
- Everyone has the resources they need to do their job effectively (ex: office furniture, technology, transportation)
- Employee has technology and supplies for home office

Workplace Comfort & Care
- Everyone can meet their body's needs (ex: access to kitchen and clean water, bathrooms, accessibility of space, privacy when needed)
- Physical workplace supports wellness (ex: place to walk or stretch, quiet room for rest/meditation, access to natural light, plants, and outdoor space)
- Bathrooms are stocked and cleaned regularly
- Snacks are provided in the kitchen and accommodate dietary restrictions
- Heating pads, band aids, fans/heaters, headache medicine is available

Next Steps

Ready to implement a culture of care in your organization?
Contact Abby Hyman at abby.hyman@healingtrust.org to start the conversation.

About The Trust
The Healing Trust's mission is to support and partner with communities to advance racial equity and eliminate health disparities through advocacy and strategic investments.

Our geographic funding area includes Bedford, Davidson, Maury, Montgomery, and Rutherford counties of Middle Tennessee.

Learn more about The Healing Trust's Culture and Care Fund at www.healingtrust.org.

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