



Subject: STS Policy

- I. **PURPOSE:** Marathon County DSS acknowledges that the work we do in the human services area can result in STS. While perhaps more prevalent in those that work directly with children and families at risk, STS can be and is present in many of our employees throughout the agency. STS is a natural consequence of doing the kind of work we do, and the agency supports staff in identifying, responding to, and building resiliency to mitigate STS symptoms. Agency and individual efforts to address STSS strengthen employees and provide a needed balance in our lives, which ultimately helps us to serve our customers at the highest level.
- II. **APPLICABILITY:** ALL AGENCY PERSONNEL
- III. **DEFINITIONS:** None
- IV. **POLICIES:**
 - A. **STS Policy:** Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is “the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.” Figley, 1995.
 - B. **Agency Philosophy:** Employees are encouraged to seek balance in their work days. All employees must take a scheduled midday break and should avail themselves to a 15 minute break in the morning and afternoon. Employees are encouraged to leave their desk and engage in some type of activity that refreshes them during their break times. Employees are encouraged to proactively take their accrued time off to gain a good balance in their work and personal lives. Lastly, employees are encouraged to identify and utilize individual strategies that help them to build resiliency in their work, such as exercise, good nutrition, proper sleep, etc. The agency supports the FISH philosophy as a way for employees to have fun at work, a crucial need to address STS.
 - C. **Resiliency Building Strategies:** The agency has identified various strategies, primarily based on employee feedback, which will support employees in building resiliency. Some of the strategies will be implemented on an agency wide basis. Other strategies will be implemented on a unit basis, recognizing the differences in the levels and types of STS that exist.
 - D. **Agency Strategies:**
 1. **Debriefing and Support** – Employees who self-identify or present as being affected by STS will be offered support from peers and their supervisor on an ongoing basis. In our work, there are times where egregious incidents occur within the families that we serve. Employees, who have been affected by a significant event, have resources available to them such as EAP, private counseling, and an Incident Response Meeting with the County’s Critical Incident Stress Team. When a supervisor determines that an employee has been significantly affected by a single or series of significant incidents, the employee may be required to participate in a specific supportive service to assist them in remedying the situation.
 2. **Agency STS Team** – The STS Team will be responsible for leading the effort of continued education of STS to the agency and recommending strategies for resiliency.