Supervisory Techniques to Prevent Stress Build-Up in Child Welfare Professionals

• **Vary Tasks in the Routine Work Schedule** = When working with child sexual abuse cases, Child Welfare Professionals might begin to “see” sexual abuse around every corner. It is important for Supervisors to help them vary their tasks, for example, by assigning them a general neglect case every so often to provide them with different information to obtain and help them keep a fresh perspective.

• **Make the Office Pleasant and Cheerful** = Supervisors may decorate their offices with cheerful pictures or plants to “brighten” up the office and encourage Child Welfare Professionals to do the same. Working with cases of child sexual abuse may make everything seem so drab, dark, and hopeless so making one’s workspace cheerful can help minimize such unpleasantness.

• **Develop a strong Teamwork atmosphere within the Unit** = Supervisors who demonstrate teamwork as a key ingredient for their workers will undoubtedly create a strong unit. Helping one another is the perfect way to model how to help others, including a sexual offender.

• **Create an Open and Trusting Work Environment** = When working with child sexual abuse cases, it is imperative that Supervisors trust their Child Welfare Professionals and vice versa. Without trust, it will be difficult for Child Welfare Professionals to be open with Supervisors about these cases, which can affect the decision-making process.
Supervisory Techniques to Prevent Stress Build-Up in Child Welfare Professionals (cont’d)

- **Institute New Networks of Support with Other Supervisors** =
  In doing this, Supervisors may identify for Child Welfare Professionals other Supervisory staff who might be available to them when their immediate Supervisor is unavailable as well as model for Child Welfare Professionals ways they might seek out support from other professionals. When working with cases of child sexual abuse, particularly with sexual offenders, additional support is needed to ensure the Child Welfare Professional has “covered all of the bases,” so as not to make any mistake that could cause elevated risk to the child victim and negatively affect his/her safety and well-being.

- **Streamline Paperwork** = There is a “mountain” of paperwork that must be completed; therefore, Supervisors need to identify what paperwork may be combined or eliminated and what may be completed by other staff members, such as the clerical support person, in order to ensure the timely and successful completion of the necessary paperwork.

- **Use Time Management Techniques** = Supervisors should assist Child Welfare Professionals with utilizing their time efficiently and effectively. They should identify tasks on a daily schedule, but remain flexible, as child sexual abuse cases are typically fraught with crisis after crisis. Supervisors must also expect Child Welfare Professionals to be organized instead of misusing time sorting through unimportant information. Many Child Welfare Professionals dread working with sexual offenders, so Supervisors can assist them with identifying what bothers them as well as how they might differently approach this task.
Supervisory Techniques to Prevent Stress Build-Up in Child Welfare Professionals (cont’d)

• **Take Time Off from Work** = It is very easy to get “caught-up” in all of the work involved in child sexual abuse cases and the belief that “no one else can do this but me.” However, taking time off from work is crucial in order to assist the Child Welfare Professional with rejuvenating himself/herself so s/he can work effectively and productively. This might be a difficult task for Supervisors as they rely on Child Welfare Professionals to complete this daily work, but it is imperative they encourage and allow Child Welfare Professionals to take vacation time.

• **Delegate Tasks that Others Can Do** = It is important for Supervisors to help Child Welfare Professionals identify which tasks with which others might assist. For example, a clerical support staff person may type the final abuse report to ChildLine leaving the Child Welfare Professional free to make telephone calls to the family and treatment providers.

• **Establish and Maintaining a Relationship with the Manager to Manage Effectively** = Supervisors will need to demonstrate an understanding of their relationship with their manager’s goals, work style, strengths, and areas of concern. They must convey to Child Welfare Professionals their ability to work with their manager and model this behavior for the Child Welfare Professional. They are in a position to exert influence on their manager by conveying the client information obtained by Child Welfare Professionals to exact change in programs and policy when needed in working with cases of child sexual abuse.

  (Salus, 2004).