

Common Causes of Stress in Homeless Services

Job function challenges

- Unrealistic, unclear expectations
- Too much to do and too little time to do it
- Lack of new challenges, too routine
- Lack of input about how to do your job
- Difficulty juggling work, family, other responsibilities

Job security

- Performance evaluation, salary, benefits
- Reorganization of positions, financial cutbacks, layoffs
- Change in job responsibilities or classification

Relations with supervisors and co-workers

- Poor communication or conflicts among staff
- Inadequate support from supervisor or co-workers
- Favoritism, differential treatment, or insensitivity
- Loss of staff or staff turnover

Expectations of how things "should" be

- Clients will want to make changes that you want them to make
- Patients will be grateful
- The agencies we work in will function as a supportive community of helpers
- Workers from other organizations will be cooperative since everybody basically is trying to reach the same goals
- People who work in social services will be above the petty jealousies and gossip that occur in non-service-oriented organizations
- You will be appreciated by your supervisors and co-workers
- You will be given sufficient guidance, training, and structure to do your job
- Your work will be satisfying most of the time

The risk of caring

- Cost of being empathic, caring, understanding (note that root meaning of word *care* is "to lament, grieve with")
- Reality of secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue