

The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

Sample Emails to Staff

Sample Email #1 [see Blueprint Task 1c: Encourage Open Communication With Staff]

Dear staff,

We know that daily exposure to victims of violence and trauma (also known as vicarious trauma) puts each of us at risk for a range of negative consequences. We are committed to doing our best to understand and address the personal and professional impact of the work we do.

We currently have some initiatives in place to address vicarious trauma, and we want to improve upon them by using the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit (VTT), an evidence-informed online collection of resources developed by Northeastern University through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.

The VTT was designed based on the premise that organizations can mitigate the negative impact of vicarious trauma by, first and foremost, accepting our duty and responsibility to do so. This requires that organizations become ***vicarious trauma-informed***—an important part of being trauma-informed.

[INSERT THE FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE READY TO ANNOUNCE THE VT-ORG.
OTHERWISE, INSERT IN TASK 2B EMAIL.]

The first step is to assess our current capacity to address vicarious trauma. Our hope is that all staff will help us identify what we are doing well and where we can improve. You will soon receive a link to a survey that I am asking all employees to complete to help determine our current strengths and our gaps. The survey is ANONYMOUS to ensure that you can be as candid as possible. Individual responses are not identifiable. The data collected will inform our next steps toward becoming a vicarious trauma-informed organization. A report of the findings will be shared with all staff.

[INSERT THE FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE USING A WORKGROUP.]

To accomplish our goals, we will be forming a workgroup to coordinate our efforts, determine priorities, and develop an action plan. More information about the workgroup will be forthcoming. [Indicate if you are looking for volunteers or will be appointing members.]

[INSERT THE FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE PROVIDING TRAINING.]

We will also hold a training session to better understand vicarious trauma, how it can affect us, and what is involved in becoming vicarious trauma-informed. You will soon receive more information about dates for the training.

We welcome your questions and suggestions. Please feel free to contact [NAME OF AGENCY CONTACT].

I look forward to working with you on this critical and collaborative endeavor.

Sincerely,

[NAME OF AGENCY LEADERSHIP]

Sample Email #2 [see Blueprint Task 2b: Conduct the VT-ORG Assessment]

Dear Staff,

We are continuing our efforts to understand and address the personal and professional impact of our work with victims of violence and trauma (“vicarious trauma”). We are committed to doing our best to address the health and well-being of staff and those we serve.

As you know, we are using the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit, an evidence-informed collection of resource developed by Northeastern University through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. The next step is to assess our capacity to address the needs of our staff as a vicarious trauma-informed organization by using the Vicarious Trauma—Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG). The VT-ORG assessment will help us determine our strengths and where we need to focus our attention to become more vicarious trauma-informed.

To complete the survey, go to [LINK] or download and complete the attached pdf file. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes and can be done during your regular work hours. Your candid, anonymous feedback is central to determining our next steps for addressing vicarious trauma. Individual responses are not identifiable. If you do not know the answer to a specific question, or it does not apply to you, put a check mark under “N/A.”

I am asking each of you to complete the survey to help us determine our next steps toward becoming a vicarious trauma-informed organization. Findings from the assessment and the priorities and action plan that follow will be provided to staff.

The deadline to complete the survey is [DATE AND TIME (suggest 2 weeks from start)].

If you have any questions, please contact [NAME OF AGENCY CONTACT].

Thank you for your commitment to this critical and collaborative endeavor.

Sincerely,

[NAME OF AGENCY LEADERSHIP]

Sample Email #3 [see Blueprint Task 2b: Conduct the VT-ORG Assessment]

Dear Staff,

Thank you for completing the VT-ORG survey evaluating our current capacity as a vicarious trauma-informed organization. We have concluded the VT-ORG assessment and are in the process of compiling and analyzing the results.

We expect it will take approximately [NUMBER (2 weeks, if possible)] weeks to provide the results to you. The Vicarious Trauma-Informed Workgroup will use the findings to determine priorities and develop an action plan to respond to the impact of vicarious trauma on our staff.

We remain committed to this effort and are grateful to each and every one of you for helping us become a more vicarious trauma-informed organization.

Sincerely ,

[NAME OF AGENCY LEADERSHIP]