

## Employee Resilience Program Recommendations

*This document is intended to be a high level guide for folks looking for the basics about Employee Resilience Programs to support the wellness and resilience of trust and safety teams. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).*

### Overview

Trust and safety professionals whose job it is to review content are at risk of greater, accumulated exposure to risky and harmful content than other roles. Organizations that rely on content reviewers to maintain the integrity of their services have a duty of care to protect people from the long term negative impact of vicarious trauma as a result of engaging in this crucial work to mitigate abuse online.

The worst kinds of abuse like child sexual abuse material or violent terrorist propaganda typically (and rightfully so) garner the most attention due to the immediate, graphic nature of the content. At the same time, it's important to recognize that the cumulative nature of distressing trauma means that we need to pay attention to the impact of all kinds of harmful content (e.g. racist slurs, misogynistic jokes, verbal threats), even as we prioritize mitigating the impact of the most graphic. The toll of vicarious trauma from all kinds of abusive content can range from emotional exhaustion, depression, physical ailments, suicide ideation, and more.

Over the years, organizations have developed a number of best practices to engage teams in building resilience and maintaining wellness. These practices are a direct result of dedicated advocacy by trust and safety professionals. While there is still a developing body of direct evidence-based research about trust and safety wellness and resilience practices, teams have been drawing upon, and continue to investigate, the proven practices from other professions like journalism, law enforcement, and healthcare, to inform their programs addressing vicarious trauma.

There are different entry points to mitigating the harmful effects of content review, from hiring the right people for the content reviewer role, to modifying content review tools. This document focuses on Employee Resilience Program (ERP) practices, which are the most consistently applied by organizations to ensure the care of their teams.

### Best practices from the Technology Coalition

The [Technology Coalition](#), which is an industry group comprising tech industry leaders who are represented by individuals who specialize in online child safety issues, has published an extensive [Employee Resilience Handbook for Handling Child Sexual Abuse Material](#), though the Handbook could also generally apply to handling any sort of objectionable, harmful content.

The Handbook contains a range of best practices sourced from their membership, and includes a section on building a resilience program. These best practices transcend the specific expertise area of reviewing CSAM, and can be applied to teams that engage with any harmful or abusive content.

Regardless of the available resourcing from the organization, the Technology Coalition strongly recommends that<sup>1</sup>:

1. The [ERP] should include elements (e.g., education, intervention, counseling services, and evaluation) that are administered by a professional with specialized training in trauma intervention, ideally secondary trauma if the specialty is available
2. The professional care provider should be an outside resource, not an employee of the company. This ensures confidentiality and helps remove barriers to open communication

The commitment of resources to getting professional support and guidance is fundamental to the long term success of any ERP aspiring to positively impact the wellbeing of trust and safety teams.

### Recommended ERP practices

*The recommended practices below are split into two parts: Baseline and Standard. These recommendations are not intended to be definitive structures but a broad template. It's important to acknowledge that every organization has differing levels of available and finite funding. Because of this, there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and organizations should customize their ERPs as needed based on a spectrum of features. Additionally, organizations must consider integrating culturally-specific and relevant care that is responsive to team members' complex backgrounds and identities.*

#### **Baseline | The minimum required programming to provide teams with a supportive structure that emphasizes wellness and care**

- Bi-annual education on the effects of exposure for employees (including supervisors), conducted by a professional specializing in secondary traumatic stress
- Professional assistance in developing individual safety plans
- Access to emergency counseling services as needed by employees experiencing severe response
- Availability of professional-led training to help the management team identify the signs and symptoms of secondary trauma and to outline what steps to take if a team member is exhibiting secondary trauma

#### **Standard | The standard of care that organizations, including for-profit organizations, should aspire to as a matter of responsible stewardship**

- Baseline features plus
- Mandatory monthly group counseling sessions for team
- Mandatory quarterly individual counseling sessions for team members
- Mandatory bi-annual professional-led training to help the management team identify the signs and symptoms of secondary trauma and to outline what steps to take if a team member is exhibiting secondary trauma
- Availability of on-demand, non-emergency individual counseling services
- Availability of paid mental health days separate from sick leave or vacation days
- Availability of group or individual wellness time that is separate from counseling - for example,

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [Employee Resilience Handbook for Handling Child Sexual Abuse Material](#), p. 12

explicit permission to take wellness breaks to step away from the review process during the work day

## Professional services

*Here are some services that could help you get started on building elements of an effective wellness and resilience program.*

- [The Workplace Wellness Project](https://theworkplacewellnessproject.com/) (<https://theworkplacewellnessproject.com/>)
- [Betterhelp](https://www.betterhelp.com/) (<https://www.betterhelp.com/>)
- [Ginger](https://www.ginger.com/) (<https://www.ginger.com/>)
- [Talkspace](https://www.talkspace.com/) (<https://www.talkspace.com/>)

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