High-Reliability Organizations: Inspiration for Fostering Cultures of Safety

Presented by

PRAESIDIUM
In partnership with FADICA

1

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding refers to **measures** and **interventions** that protect people from abuse, harm, exploitation, or violence.

Safeguarding reflects a commitment to **best practices** that **prevent abuse**, **reduce risk,** and **keep all persons**—especially children and vulnerable adults—**safe**.

Safeguarding also promotes action that **assures justice** and **supports healing** for victims and survivors of abuse.

You may be more familiar with terms like safe environment, risk management, or abuse prevention —all important aspects of safeguarding.

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2

Organizational safeguarding includes having a written safeguarding policy, Code of Conduct, and supporting guidance in place as part of "best practices."

A written safeguarding policy should guide you in answering the question: **What do we need to do to keep people safe at our organization?**

Guidance and program expectations should be shared with **all stakeholders**, including staff, volunteers, Board members, program participants, and beneficiaries of service.

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3

ABOUT

PRAESIDIUM

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Our mission is to help organizations prevent the sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults and to preserve trust in respected organizations.

Praesidium is a **leading innovator** of scientifically-based solutions designed to transform the way organizations approach the prevention of sexual abuse.
For **over 30 years**, Praesidium's expertise, consulting, and tailored solutions have helped foster **safer environments** for children, vulnerable adults, staff, volunteers, and all stakeholders involved.

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Parallels exist between incidents of sexual abuse and occupational injuries on the job – **both generally occur infrequently but often with devastating consequences** to not only the immediately injured but also to coworkers, families, and the entire organization.

Consider similarities between consumer protection or safeguarding and industries or organizations that **seek to prevent adverse outcomes that are of low probability but of high impact** when they do happen:

- aviation traffic control
- aircraft carriers
- nuclear power plants
- utility grid management
- warehouses
- healthcare

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There's been emerging research into characteristics of high-reliability organizations and strategies for anticipating and remaining resilient when managing unexpected disruptions.

In a committed organization, everyone understands the danger and commits to eliminating it – commitment means understanding the rationale for the practices and reliable adherence to those practices even when they may be inconvenient or require additional effort from stakeholders.

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High Reliability Organizations (HROs):

Organizations that operate in **complex**, **high-hazard domains** for **extended periods without serious accidents or catastrophic failures**.

Principles of high reliability go beyond standardization - high reliability is better described as a **condition of persistent mindfulness** within an organization.

HROs **cultivate resilience by relentlessly prioritizing safety** over other performance pressures.

HROs work to create an environment in which potential problems are **anticipated**, **detected** early, and virtually always **responded to early** enough to prevent catastrophic consequences.

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HRO Key Features

acknowledgment of the high-risk nature of an organization's activities and the determination to achieve consistently safe operations

a blame-free environment where individuals are able to report errors or near misses without fear of reprimand or punishment

encouragement of collaboration across teams and disciplines to seek solutions to safety problems

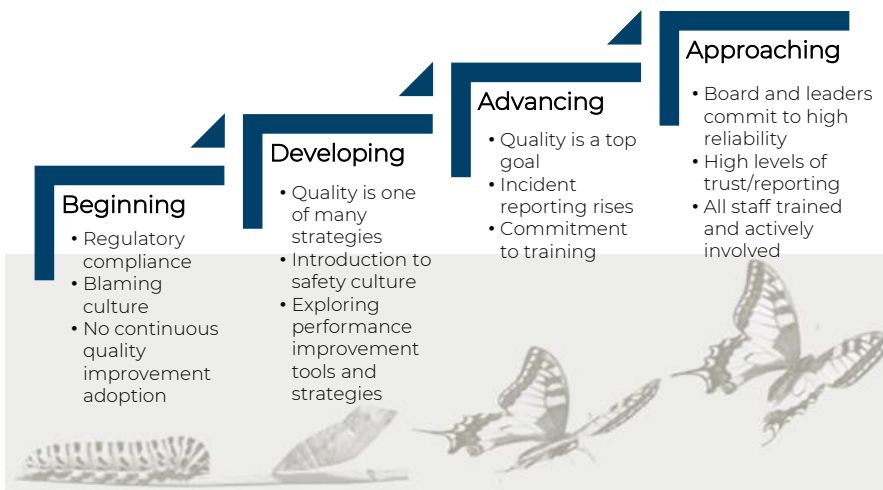organizational commitment of resources to address safety concerns

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HRO Principles & Organizational Culture

Preoccupation with Failure	Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations	Sensitivity to Operations	Commitment to Resilience	Deference to Expertise
· Everyone focused on errors and near-misses, learning from them, figuring out how to prevent reoccurrence · Finding and fixing problems is everyone's responsibility · Every failure is a robust opportunity for learning and growth	· Constantly asking the "why" question and inviting others to express opinions · Leverage new thinking to get the right answer · Search beyond surface level explanation for root cause to identify appropriate solutions	· Closing loopholes in processes where there is potential for harm · Maintaining situational awareness of what is going on in the organization as a whole · Do not assume that the continuous outcomes will be the same as planned, assumed, or hoped for	· Concept that things will go wrong that we can't predict – mistakes will be made and we will get in trouble · BUT we will quickly identify issues and have structures and processes in place to respond and minimize harm · Errors won't disable us · React appropriately even under unanticipated conditions	· Those closest to the frontline are the experts so empowering them to make decisions when a critical issue arises results in quicker mitigation of harm · Leaders listen to experts (hands-on knowledge of the operation at the point of failure) regardless of seniority · Leaders manage by anticipation and prediction rather than reaction, and make real-time adjustments

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Stages of Maturity in High Reliability

Beginning
- Regulatory compliance
- Blaming culture
- No continuous quality improvement adoption

Developing
- Quality is one of many strategies
- Introduction to safety culture
- Exploring performance improvement tools and strategies

Advancing
- Quality is a top goal
- Incident reporting rises
- Commitment to training

Approaching
- Board and leaders commit to high reliability
- High levels of trust/reporting
- All staff trained and actively involved

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Continuum of Commitment

Complacency ⟩⟩⟩ Compliance ⟩⟩⟩ Commitment

Complacency

Denies an abuse incident could happen

Hopes past success will prevent future abuse or exploitation

Has few standardized procedures

High tolerance for "drift"

Safety protocols dependent on individuals

Responses tend to be punitive

Compliance

Focus on reacting to abuse rather than preventing it

Uses state and licensing regulations as standards of care

Minimizes red-flag behaviors

Treats incidents as staff failure not systems failure

Commitment

Client protection is a designated responsibility

Board is fully trained and informed

Policies clearly define appropriate boundaries and how to manage high-risk activities

Protocols focus on prevention

Training is scheduled frequently, presents relevant content, is impactful, and offered "just in time"

Seeks external validation

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Creating a Culture of Safety

Leadership is committed and vocal

Standards are clear and enforced

Everyone knows safety is part of their job

Everyone takes warning signs seriously

Everyone reports their concerns

Employee engagement is high

Quality is institutionalized
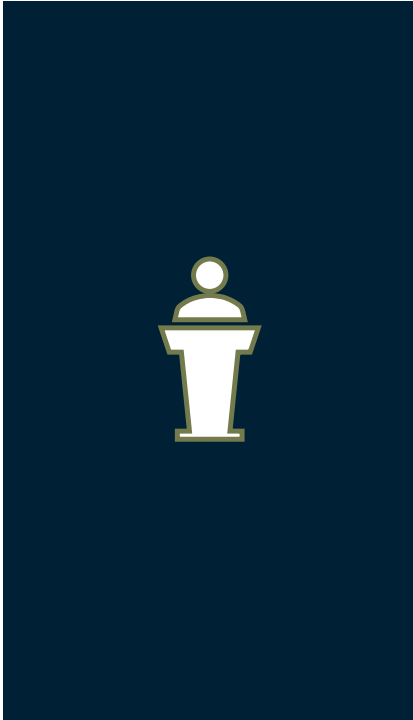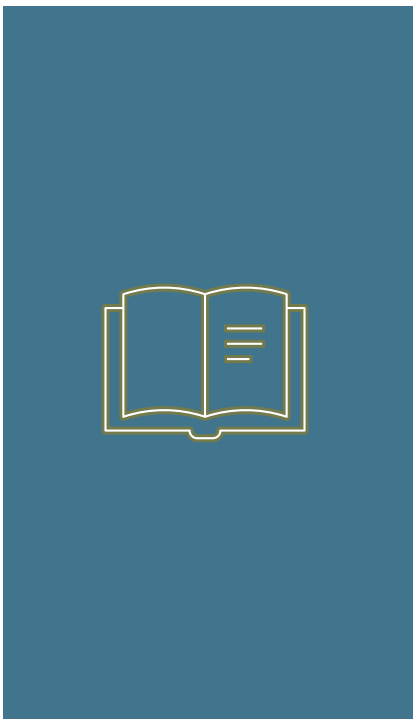
12

## Leadership is Committed and Vocal

- Engaged and genuine voice at the top

- Expresses and models importance of commitment (says and does specific things)

- Reinforces with positive and negative consequences

- Provides resources to accomplish safety goals

13

Standards Are Clear

- Standards that prevent abuse address manage:
  - Boundaries
  - High-risk activities

- Standards should be focused on behavior
  - Written, actionable, specific, realistic

- Standards are clearly communicated:
  1. Why: Rationale
  2. How: Process
  3. What: Objective

14
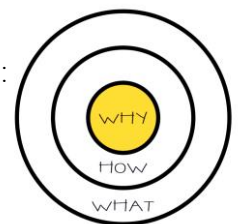
Standards Are Enforced

- Emphasis on policy adherence

- Empower supervisors to have authority to enforce and give feedback

- Use observations

- Respond promptly to drift

15

Everyone Knows Safety is a Part of Their Job

- *Who is responsible for protecting consumers?*
  - Board of Directors
  - Administrators and Executive Leadership
  - Supervisors
  - Direct care staff
  - Volunteers
  - Consumers and families

16

Everyone Takes Warning Signs Seriously

- Don't become complacent

- Avoid the tendency to normalize warning signs

- Treat near misses and red flags as free lessons

- Lapses should be treated as failures in the system until proven otherwise

- Spotlight incidents

17

Employees Report Their Concerns

- Create a healthy climate for reporting or sharing concerns

- Reporting is equal to advocating

- Identify and break down reporting barriers

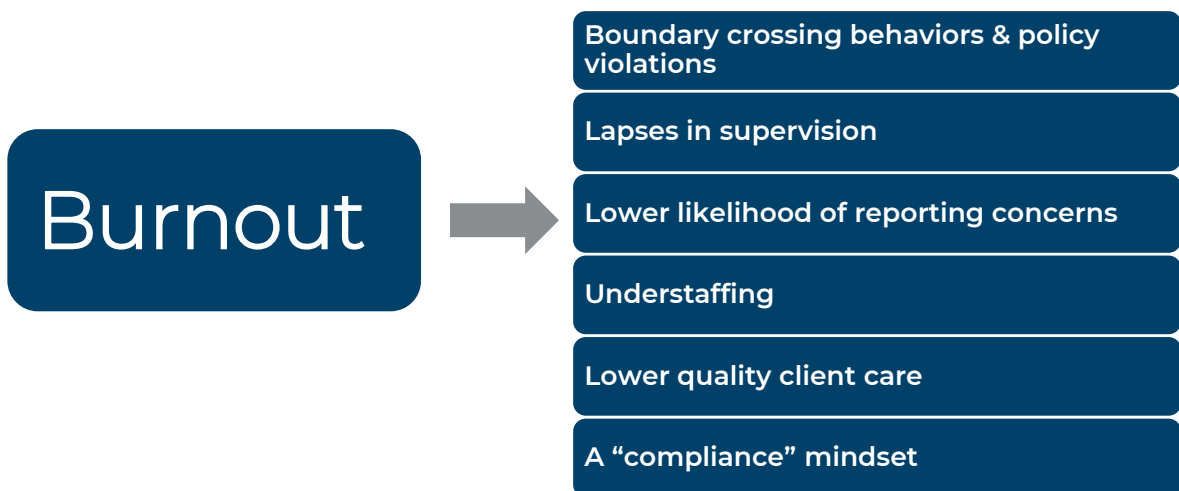- Have a measured response – neither overreactive or under reactive

18

Employee Engagement is High

The worse the morale, the less likely they will adhere to the policies and react proactively to stressful situations.

- Address sources of low morale

- Build and maintain staff morale
  - Develop a sense of mission
  - Involve staff in decision-making
  - Staff input is valued and taken seriously

19

Burnout is an abuse risk management issue

Burnout →

| Boundary crossing behaviors & policy violations |
| Lapses in supervision |
| Lower likelihood of reporting concerns |
| Understaffing |
| Lower quality client care |
| A "compliance" mindset |

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Quality is Institutionalized

- Safety is based on processes, not people
- Quality Assurance is not just a position but integrated throughout the organization
- Embrace change and ongoing improvement
- Realize you don't own the corner on good ideas so actively seek outside feedback

21

Characteristics of a Culture of Safety

Leadership is committed and vocal

Leadership shows their commitment by providing resources and by saying and doing specific things that reflect and reinforce the culture.

Standards are clear

The culture has been clearly articulated. Policies and procedures are established. Staff and volunteers know what they can or cannot do.

Standards are enforced

Policies and procedures are adhered to with both positive and negative consequences in place.

Everyone knows safety is part of their job

Safety is ingrained in daily operations and clearly expressed in training and policies.

Everyone takes warning signs seriously

Staff and volunteers know the red flags to watch for and do not hesitate to say something if they see something.

Everyone reports concerns

A clear and easy reporting process is in place, and staff/volunteers are comfortable reporting their concerns.

Employee engagement is high

Staff and volunteers echo the commitment shown by leadership, feel valued, and take to heart the organization's dedication to safety.

Quality is institutionalized

Safety practices are formalized into written operating procedures and protocols.

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A Path Forward in Abuse Prevention

Voice from the Top

Clear Standards of Protection and Behavior

Provision of Abuse Prevention Resources

Integrate Accountability Systems

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What can I find on the website?

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safeguarding.fadica.org

Checklists, Templates, and Policy Models
Find inspiration for building out your organization's written policies and best practices.

Custom Webinar Recordings
Explore the archive of recently recorded safeguarding webinars, curated with direct-service/nonprofits in mind.

Collaborative Consulting Opportunities
Schedule a discovery call with FADICA and Praesidium to help discern next steps in your safeguarding journey.

24

Consultation with Partners

- Document analysis and policy review/development
- Emergency or crisis response to incident
- Exploration of dynamics between domestic and international teams
- Article development for information sharing
- Guided conversation about daily operations & possible gaps
- Custom training opportunities (bilingual in Spanish)
- Funder referrals (various reasons)

25

STAY IN TOUCH

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26