



Promoting Employee Empowerment and Autonomy in the Workplace

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Why Employee Empowerment and Autonomy in the Workplace Matters

Healthy work environments provide employees with opportunities to make choices, inform decision-making, and solve problems. Staff who feel that they have an influence in the decisions affecting their work and have control over how they do their work are less likely to experience burnout.

Pathways Employee Empowerment and Autonomy

There are several pathways organizations can follow to promote empowerment and autonomy among staff. Those paths include providing flexibility over when and where work happens, putting trust in staff to complete their work, building capacity to support employee empowerment, and ensuring that staff feel valued for the contributions they make.

The best practices included in this guide are recommended by leading national workplace initiatives. Most are already implemented by many agency leaders across northwest Michigan in an effort to support employee empowerment and autonomy in their organization. Use this resource to identify actionable steps your organization can take to promote a work environment that focuses on empowerment and autonomy among staff.

Employee Empowerment and Autonomy Best Practices

Consider implementing one or more of these strategies within your own organization to promote employee empowerment and autonomy.

Ask for Staff Input and Engagement

- Talk to employees about what they would like autonomy and empowerment to look like in the workplace
- Talk to employees about which parts of their job need more flexibility
- Engage staff from all levels and worksites in improvement efforts
- Identify and address where employees feel overly monitored and unable to make informed decisions on their own

Offer Flexibility in Work Roles Where Possible

- Identify which job parts can be more flexible, given existing funding and certification requirements.
- Allow staff to create a flexible work schedule that does not require the same start and stop time each day
- Implement a discretionary time off policy, which can allow staff to feel that there is more flexibility in how and with they can use their paid time off
- Create a shared understanding about employee responsibilities and job timelines so flexibility is compatible with requirements
- Gather employee feedback on organizational changes to ensure transitions happen smoothly

Practice Vulnerability as a Leader

- Accept that mistakes are a natural by-product of providing employees with increased opportunities for autonomy. Create a work environment that encourages learning and values employees who innovate and continuously improve.
- Provide staff with opportunities to resolve issues independently to help them build confidence in their role
- Incorporate the support for employee empowerment in leader/supervisor performance reviews

Offer Professional and Skill Development Opportunities

- Offer special project opportunities to those who want a challenge or are looking to gain experience
- Offer professional development opportunities that include leadership and critical decision making training components
- Restructure your employee compensation structure into salary bands that are reviewed and adjusted annually. This model allows employees to advance within the organization based on their professional growth and goals