



8 Risks to Your Organization When Leaders Are Inadequately Equipped

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Organizational health requires leadership development as a strategic priority - and getting it wrong can cost valuable time, resources, and reputation

Child and family serving organizations fill gaps in essential services and work alongside some of the most significant needs that families experience. And there's no question that the quality of the workforce is one of the most significant factors on the quality of care an organization can provide.

One of the most critical factors in supporting the workforce is the competence and skill of its leaders at every level, from frontline supervisors to mid-level managers and directors.

When a frontline or mid-level manager is overwhelmed or ill-equipped, it introduces specific risks which impact client care and can affect the entire organization. Wise leaders will look at these risks and take action to mitigate them.

Let's look at ten common risks that result from lack of leadership development:

- 1. Decreased Employee Morale and Engagement.** New or under resourced managers may fail to motivate and support their team members. This can lead to low morale, reduced job satisfaction, and disengagement among employees.
- 2. High Turnover Rates.** Of course, managers aren't the only reason for turnover (working conditions and pay are also key factors), but good employees often leave due to their relationship with their managers rather than the organization itself. A manager lacking essential skills can drive talented employees away, resulting in high turnover rates and increased recruitment costs.

3. Reduced Productivity. With multiple contract and payor demands there's a lot of pressure to focus on productivity. When managers struggle to delegate tasks, provide clear instructions, or prioritize work it impacts overall team performance.

4. Increased Stress and Burnout. Employees may experience excessive stress, as they deal with unclear expectations, micromanagement, or inconsistent support. Lack of clarity, misunderstandings, and inadequate feedback can lead to confusion and errors which cost valuable time and resources.

5. Toxic Organizational Culture. A manager's actions, relationships and conversations shape the tone and culture of the team. Ineffective leadership can create a negative work environment, affecting team performance.

6. Legal and Compliance Risks. Unskilled managers may mishandle sensitive issues such as performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, or workplace conflicts. This can expose the organization to legal risks that cost the organization in time and money.

7. Poor Decision-Making. Managers lacking critical thinking and problem-solving skills may make less than optimal decisions, impacting team outcomes and creating performance barriers

8. Damage to Reputation. A solid reputation built on years of positive experiences can be overshadowed by a single event. Employees' experiences with their managers directly influence how the organization is perceived - and negative experiences can be difficult to recover from, especially when trust is broken.

Promoting our best workers into roles of supervisor and manager, yet leaving them unsupported to develop newly required skills, we set them and the organization up for failure.

When an organization is already existing in a state of heightened trauma exposure, as many youth and family serving programs do, these risks become even more tenuous and sensitive.

To mitigate these risks, organizations can take steps to ensure managers at every level possess the necessary skills to lead effectively.

- *Make leadership development a budget priority.* A good rule is to allocate at least 5% of your total salary costs for training - and make sure that leadership development is a priority in your training plans and calendar.
- *Be proactive.* Don't wait until there's an open position or emergency to build your leadership bench. Identify your emerging leaders and get them ready for what's ahead.
- *Make smart investment choices.* Don't waste time and resources on programs that don't align with your values. Your leaders need more than the latest management book or another one-and-done seminar. Select a program that will help your new and rising leaders experience a transformation in the way they execute their role and that will have a lasting effect.

Taking action to develop your current and future supervisors, managers, and directors is one of the most strategic investments you can make to ensure your organization is a strong and stable support for the children and families you serve.



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