



Capacity Building Program

Debriefing & Mutual Support

Sample D/MS Blueprint

What will I learn in this program?

At TEND, we believe that investing in a structured Debriefing & Mutual Support (D/MS) program is one of the most meaningful steps an organization can take to protect the well-being of their staff.

Research shows that social support is one of the most important protective factors against the harmful effects of working in a trauma-exposed environment (Bride et al., 2024).



This program will give you a strong foundation for building a D/MS program customized to the unique needs of your staff.

You bring deep expertise in your work, your team, and the people you serve. This program provides the tools and frameworks necessary to translate that expertise into an actionable blueprint. Throughout the program, participants are introduced to a range of evidence-informed tools, resources, and strategies that can be adapted to fit the unique needs of your team and workplace.

Bride, B. E., Sprang, G., Hendricks, A., Walsh, C.R., Mathieu, F., Hangartner, K., Ross, L.A., Fisher, P., Miller, B.C. (2024). Principles for secondary traumatic stress-responsive practice: An expert consensus approach. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 16(8), 1301-1308. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001575>

We already have a debriefing and mutual support protocol in place. **Should I still take this program?**



Yes. This program can help you evaluate and strengthen your existing approach.

Many organizations find it useful for identifying gaps, updating outdated practices, and aligning their current debriefing processes with more recent evidence and best practices.

Sample D/MS Blueprint



ACUTE One-time exposure to an unexpected, high-impact event	RECURRENT Successive encounters with the complex demands inherent to the work	CUMULATIVE The long-term, compounding impact of the work over the course of a career
A staff member being seriously injured at work	Conducting a series of high-risk suicide assessments	Insufficient time for processing or recovery between appointments
Violence between clients	Supporting clients through recurring relapses, crises, or victimization	Repeatedly witnessing people harmed by poverty, racism, homelessness, or systemic inequities
Providing emergency response to overdose / naloxone	Hearing traumatic childhood histories repeatedly across caseloads	Accumulated emotional residue from unresolved endings
High-conflict custody incidents	Witnessing repeated loss, grief, deterioration, or family breakdown	Continual suppression or regulation of one's own emotional responses
Hate-motivated attitudes affecting clients or staff	Ongoing exposure to intimidation, hostility, or unpredictable behaviour	Chronic inability to provide ideal care due to waitlists or policy constraints
Public health emergencies (COVID)	Repeatedly discharging vulnerable clients due to resource limitations	Prolonged understaffing and excessive workload
		Chronic activation of stress response systems
		Feeling responsible for others beyond sustainable limits

Identify the “ARC” of distressing events in your workplace

The "ARC" framework (Acute - Recurrent - Cumulative) helps you recognize the full range of distressing events in your workplace including the less visible forms of occupational stress that often go unnoticed. These are the challenges of the work that are often normalized as “part of the job” yet have significant impact on staff wellbeing.

Many workplaces have robust protocols for acute events yet devote fewer resources to recurrent and cumulative stressors. In this program, you will identify areas where support systems are strong, uneven, or absent, allowing you to assess whether current support strategies match the realities of your unique workplace.

Assess the D/MS environment

Implementing a successful D/MS program requires workplace conditions that support psychological safety.

As part of developing your blueprint, you will review 11 key organizational and leadership factors that can influence the effectiveness of your support program.

From here, you can begin to identify existing strengths that will support early implementation, while highlighting areas that will require more intentional planning.

Qualities of Leadership
The values, traits, and priorities of senior leadership influence and shape the environment of your workplace, and can impact which D/MS practices are accepted and encouraged.

Organizational Health Literacy
The degree to which senior leadership understand the unique nature of trauma-exposed work and have knowledge about the potential impacts, risks, and outcomes of trauma exposure.

Awareness of the "ARC" of Distressing Events
The degree to which senior leadership acknowledge the range of potentially distressing situations and traumatic events. Leadership that focuses primarily on addressing acute or critical incidents, without awareness or willingness to also address the impact of more recurrent or cumulative impacts, may indicate a low level.

Recognition & Acknowledgement
The degree to which senior leadership acknowledges that trauma and trauma exposure are present within their own organization and are currently impacting staff well-being.

Commitment
The degree to which senior leadership is committed to addressing occupational hazards and actively strives to reduce risk and promote well-being.

Checklist items (checked/unchecked):

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Basics of psychological trauma
- Is a trauma-informed lens within their respective
- and Work
- Identify the unique challenges of high-stress,
- to talk about the rewards and challenges of
- Secondary traumatic stress and understand
- place of compassion and how it differs from
- strain
- All staff and leaders have received training on burnout and can identify workplace practices that contribute to burnout
- All staff and leaders have received training on moral distress and can identify morally distressing situations in their work

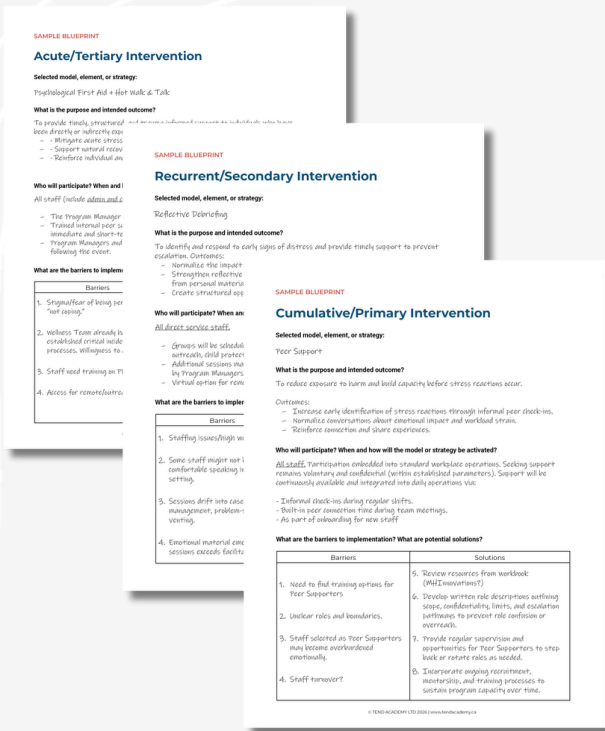
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Build your quick start guide

To help participants ensure that the full “ARC” of distressing events is being addressed, we identify three levels of intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Using the information gathered throughout the program as well as additional resources included in your workbook, you will select the D/MS model or practices best suited to each level of intervention.

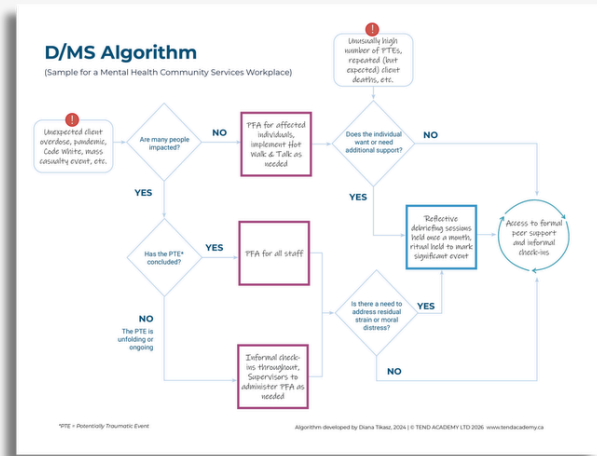
This quick start guide is intended to provide a realistic starting point for implementation. It distills the key concepts into a practical summary you can share with your team.



Complete your D/MS algorithm

Finally, participants will complete the D/MS algorithm, a tool designed to help teams map the flow of their program including activation pathways and key decision points.

As a planning and implementation tool, the algorithm can be shared with others to visualize how the D/MS program will function in practice.



Problem-solve implementation barriers

Implementation often raises new questions once participants begin translating concepts into day-to-day practice.

The program includes a dedicated Q&A session where participants can ask additional questions and troubleshoot challenges as they begin applying the material within their own organizational context.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should enroll in this program?

This program is designed for people working in high-pressure workplaces who want to help their teams better understand and navigate difficult experiences. The content of this program will be most valuable to those in a leadership, supervisory, or policy development role who are responsible for shaping workplace culture and staff well-being. Many past participants have found the program most valuable when attending alongside a colleague from their own organization.

Will I learn how to facilitate D/MS practices?

While facilitation is not the primary focus of this program, participants will have access to tools and resources to support the development of these skills. This includes scripts, guided audio recordings, templates, and video resources designed to help translate D/MS concepts into real-world practice.

Do you teach a specific debriefing model in this program?

No. Throughout this course, you will be exposed to a variety of commonly used D/MS frameworks. We will examine the research surrounding which approaches are helpful, which may be less effective, and which may inadvertently cause harm.


Rather than focusing on one specific model, in this program you will learn the underlying principles and rationale behind different approaches. With this foundation, you will be well-equipped to critically evaluate existing practices and make informed decisions about what best fits the needs, culture, and realities of your workplace.

How long does implementation usually take?

Implementation timelines vary depending on organizational size, culture, leadership support, existing practices, and resources. Some organizations can begin integrating small practices within a few months, while broader culture change can take a minimum of three to five years (Koury et al., 2022).

For organizations requiring additional support, TEND offers consultation sessions to help teams navigate implementation barriers and challenges. Reach out to our team to learn more.

Koury, S., Green, S., & Way, I. (2022). *Trauma-informed organizational change manual*. University at Buffalo School of Social Work.

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