

Topic idea submitted to IHI - Reference Number: TI_001314

Are you submitting the idea:

- ☐ in your personal capacity?
☒ on behalf of an organisation?

Please indicate the name of the group organisation: Children's Health System of Texas

Please select from the list below the type of stakeholders your organization represents:

Healthcare professional organisation/healthcare provider

1 Title of your idea

Please provide a short title that accurately reflects the objective(s) of your idea:

Building a System-Wide Model to Support Healthcare Workforce Distress and Strengthen Patient Safety

2 Scope

Explain the specific challenges/problems to be addressed by your idea and how these affect relevant stakeholders, taking into account what is already known and/or available in the field:

Healthcare professionals work in increasingly complex environments where moral distress, secondary trauma, and cumulative stress are common and often unaddressed in a coordinated way. These experiences contribute to burnout, workforce instability, impaired communication, and decreased psychological safety—factors that directly impact patient safety and quality of care.

Despite growing awareness, most healthcare organizations address these challenges through fragmented approaches (e.g., employee assistance programs, isolated wellness initiatives, or ad hoc ethics consultations), rather than through integrated, system-level strategies.

This idea proposes a comprehensive model that brings together multiple domains of staff support into a unified, coordinated framework. At Children's Health, this model—RISE (Resilience, Integrated Ethics, Staff Support, Engagement)—was developed to address different types of workforce distress while allowing for overlap and collaboration across programs.

The model includes three core, interconnected programs:

Resilience (addressing cumulative stress and depletion)
Integrated Ethics (addressing moral distress and ethical challenges)
Staff Support (addressing secondary trauma following patient-related events)

Together, these programs provide proactive and responsive support through one-on-one interactions, group facilitation, rounding, and education.

This approach addresses a critical gap in healthcare systems by operationalizing support for

workforce distress as part of patient safety and care delivery infrastructure, rather than as a separate or optional function.

Please indicate which IHI specific objective(s) (SO), as described in the IHI Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), your idea addresses:

["SO3: demonstrate the feasibility of people-centered, integrate health care solutions"]

Please select the keywords that are most relevant to your idea:

["Mental health"
"Paediatric"
"Prevention"]

In alignment with the IHI specific objective(s) selected above, specify the objectives of your idea:

The objective of this idea is to demonstrate the feasibility and value of a coordinated, system-level approach to supporting healthcare workforce distress.

Specifically, this model aims to:

Integrate fragmented support services into a unified framework
Provide timely, accessible support for moral distress, secondary trauma, and cumulative stress
Embed workforce support into patient safety and clinical operations
Strengthen psychological safety, communication, and team functioning
Offer a scalable and replicable model for other healthcare systems

This work focuses on developing and sustaining infrastructure that supports both individual clinicians and interdisciplinary teams, while reinforcing ethical practice and organizational culture.

3 Expected impacts to be achieved by your idea

Briefly describe the expected impacts to be achieved by your idea, ensuring that they contribute to IHI general and relevant specific objectives, as described in the IHI SRIA:

Impacts are wider long-term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments. Impacts generally occur sometime after the end of the project, e.g. successful implementation of digital solutions supporting people-centred care.

***IHI general objectives:** 1. contribute towards the creation of an EU-wide health research and innovation ecosystem that facilitates translation of scientific knowledge into innovations, notably by launching at least 30 large-scale, cross-sectoral projects, focussing on health innovations; 2. foster the development of safe, effective, people-centred and cost-effective innovations that respond to strategic unmet public health needs, by exhibiting, in at least 5 examples, the feasibility of integrating health care products or services, with demonstrated suitability for uptake by health care systems. The related projects should address the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and/or management of diseases affecting the EU population, including contribution to 'Europe's Beating Cancer Plan'; 3. drive cross-sectoral health innovation for a globally competitive European health industry and contribute to reaching the objectives of the new Industrial Strategy for Europe and the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe.*

This model has the potential to create meaningful, system-level impact across healthcare organizations.

Expected impacts include:

Improved workforce well-being and retention
Increased psychological safety and willingness to speak up
Enhanced team communication and collaboration
Reduction in downstream risks associated with clinician distress (e.g., errors, disengagement, turnover)
Strengthened alignment between workforce support and patient safety strategies

At a broader level, this approach supports the development of more resilient healthcare systems by addressing workforce distress as a core component of safe, high-quality care.

The model also provides a practical framework that can be adapted and implemented across different healthcare settings, contributing to wider system transformation.

4 Why should your idea become an IHI call topic?

Explain why collaboration through a cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary public private partnership is needed in particular:

Why does it require collaboration among several industry sectors (e.g. pharma, vaccines, biotech, medical devices, in vitro diagnostics, radiotherapy, medical imaging health ICT)?

Why does it require collaboration between private (industry) and public partners (e.g. academia, healthcare practitioners, patients, regulators)?

Addressing workforce distress in healthcare requires coordinated, cross-sector collaboration. No single discipline or function can effectively respond to the complex interplay of moral distress, secondary trauma, and cumulative stress.

This idea requires collaboration across healthcare providers, ethics programs, mental health professionals, quality and safety leaders, and system administrators to develop integrated, scalable solutions.

Public-private partnership is valuable in advancing this work by:

Supporting development of standardized frameworks and tools
Enabling shared learning across organizations and sectors

Facilitating research, evaluation, and dissemination of best practices

The involvement of multiple sectors, including healthcare systems, academic institutions, and industry partners, can accelerate the development of scalable models that support workforce well-being while improving patient safety outcomes.

Why is the contribution of industry needed to achieve the expected impacts?

***Contribution of industry:** Large companies that are members of the IHI industry partners (i.e. COCIR, EFPIA, EuropaBio, MedTech Europe, Vaccines Europe) contribute to the programme, primarily through 'in-kind' contributions (e.g. their researchers' time, laboratories, data, compounds). At least 45% of each project's total costs have to be in-kind contribution.*

Industry partners can play a critical role in scaling and advancing this model by contributing expertise, tools, and infrastructure that support implementation and evaluation.

This may include:

- Development of digital platforms to facilitate access to support services
- Data analytics to evaluate utilization, engagement, and impact
- Integration with existing healthcare technologies and workflows
- Support for training, simulation, and workforce development

Industry collaboration can help translate this model into scalable solutions that can be implemented across diverse healthcare systems, ensuring broader reach and sustainability.