

CHICAGO RESILIENCY NETWORK

Building trauma-informed, healing-centered workplaces that are better for employees and better for business



THE CHALLENGE

Employers across the Chicago region are experiencing internal challenges with recruiting, retaining, and advancing their workforce. Organizations are hearing more frequently about the need for healing-centered practices to address employee trauma and improve employee performance. Not everyone has a diagnosed mental health condition, but virtually every person has mental or emotional health needs that can be exacerbated in a busy or stressful work environment and that have become more prominent because of COVID-19.



The **Corporate Coalition of Chicago** is an alliance of companies whose mission is to reduce systemic inequities in the region by identifying and implementing new ways to deploy their capital, capabilities, and employee enthusiasm.

The challenges of trauma and toxic stress are extraordinary

- Roughly 50 percent of Americans experience at least one traumatic event in their lives, and 20 percent manage a diagnosed mental health condition each year. But only 39 percent of employees say their manager is equipped to support them if they had a mental health condition.
- Businesses spend on average more than \$15,000 annually for each employee experiencing mental distress.
- For every dollar spent on mental health treatment, organizations saw a return of \$4.

Chicagoland residents are particularly hard-hit

- Living within 7.5 blocks of a violent event increases symptoms of trauma by 43 percent; living within 4.5 blocks increases symptoms by 69 percent.
- Economic disinvestment, systemic racism, persistent poverty, gun violence, police mistreatment, and other conditions create chronic and complex traumas experienced by residents from the South and West sides of Chicago and South Suburban Cook County.

The pandemic has introduced or deepened trauma in everyone's lives

- According to a Pew study, 21 percent of U.S. adults had a high level of psychological distress at the pandemic's one-year mark.
- The City of Chicago, in its Recovery Task Force Advisory Report, has prioritized addressing new and old traumas.

THE RESPONSE: CHICAGO RESILIENCY NETWORK

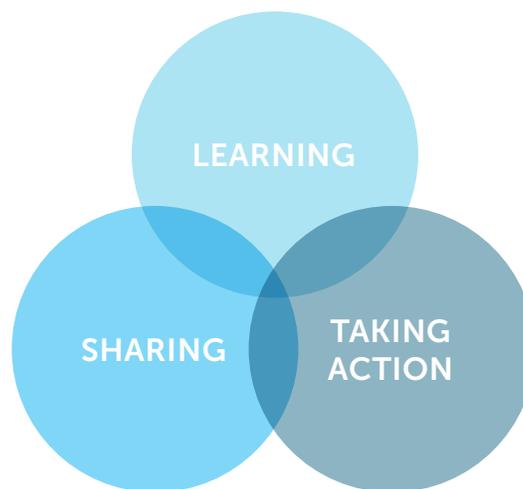
Launched in Fall 2020, the Chicago Resiliency Network is a cohort-based program for employers aiming to improve their workplaces by helping employees grow and thrive while achieving better business outcomes. As depicted below, the program has three components: Learning, Sharing, and Taking Action.

Three components of the Chicago Resiliency Network Program

Learning: Cohort members participate in a learning series twice per month, building skills and a foundational understanding of resiliency practices.

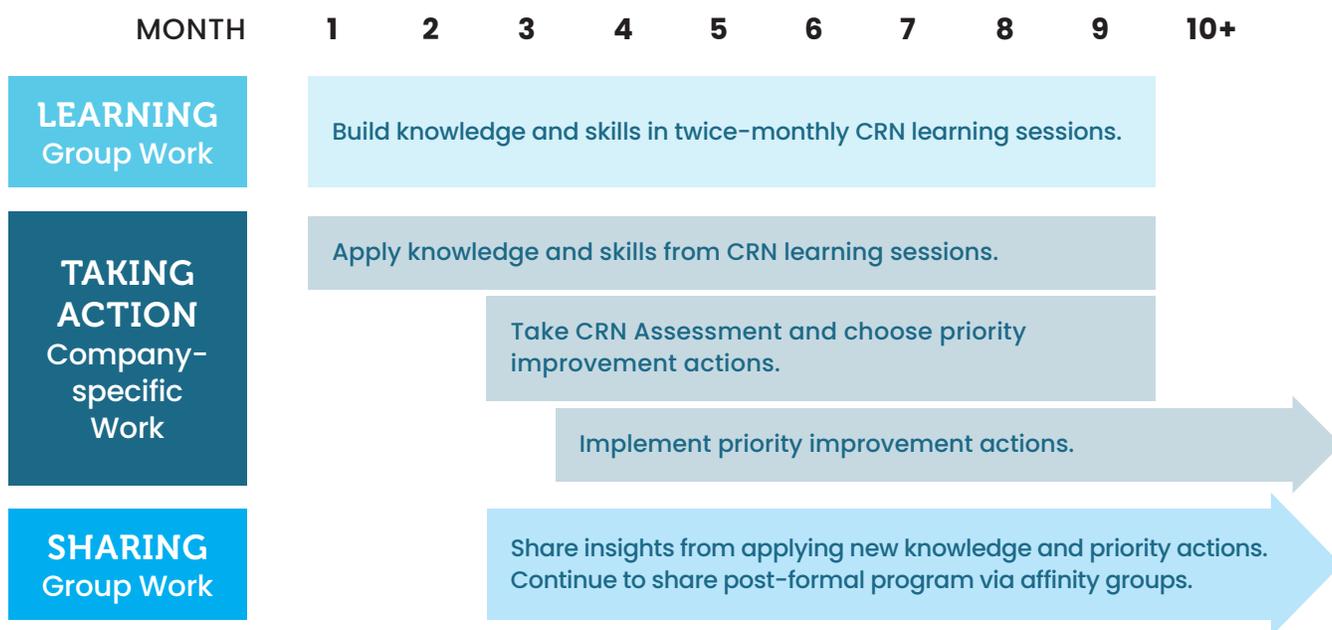
Sharing: Cohort members share their own experiences, challenges, solutions, and resources in meetings and smaller affinity groups to accelerate shared progress.

Taking Action: Cohort members take action in ways that work for their organization, based on ideas in the learning series, a customized assessment, and catalog of services and expertise. Some actions can be small, ongoing changes in practices, and some can be broader efforts, such as front-line manager training, a localized pilot, or accessing employee voice.



As depicted below, these components are interwoven throughout the nine-month program, creating a virtuous cycle of learning, doing, and sharing across cohort members, with the goal of continuing individual and organizational growth beyond the formal program.

CRN Cohort Timeline



Impact

Taking care of people is taking care of business. The two rise and fall together, and the Network aims to have a positive impact on both:

- **Employees will feel more supported in the workplace**, individual differences will be seen as strengths, and employees will feel more comfortable asking for and receiving support that will help them thrive at work and in life.
- **Retention and productivity will increase**, the costs of attrition will decrease, organizations will be more effective as their leadership becomes more diverse, and companies will be better able to deliver on the promise of building more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces.

Cohorts

The Chicago Resiliency Network is designed for organizations, large or small, in all industries and sectors. Members are at different places along their journey toward healing-centered workplaces; the Network provides appropriate resources and support as they get started.

The inaugural cohort, comprising ten companies,¹ launched in December 2020. The response from members about the content and opportunities for shared learning has been overwhelmingly positive. Cohort 2 is currently in formation.

Participants

Each company in a cohort selects at least two participants with the ability to apply resiliency practices in day-to-day work and influence long-term actions within their organization. Ideally, participants include a leader within Human Resources (e.g., CHRO, HR Lead) and a business unit leader (e.g., Call Center leader, Plant leader, Retail location leader).

Cohort 2 Timeline

- **June 30, 2021:** Confirm Cohort 2 participants
- **July & August:** Onboarding
- **September 10:** Half-day orientation
- **June 30, 2022:** Last formal day of Cohort 2
- **July 1, 2022 and beyond:** Ongoing sharing among CRN companies

Fees²

- For-profit organizations: \$25,000
- Non-profit organizations: \$10,000–15,000, depending on size

To learn more and/or to join CRN's Cohort 2, please contact Denean Pillar-Jackson at 773-263-8555 or CRN@corpcoalition.org.

¹ Cohort 1 members include AT&T, Blommer Chocolate Company, Comcast, ComEd, Freedman Seating Company, Northwestern Medicine, NORC at the University of Chicago, Rush University Medical Center, Sinai Health System, and Wintrust Financial

² Members of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce have the opportunity to be reimbursed for 50 percent of the program cost, contingent on renewal of a State grant to the Chamber