

The Workaround Skillset

1. System Awareness & Strategic Navigation

- Understanding where flexibility exists within policies and procedures
- Identifying leverage points where advocacy can shift outcomes
- Working within constraints without reinforcing harmful structures

2. Trauma -and Violence- Informed Practice

- Seeing the individual beyond the intake form, prioritizing unique needs, agency, and strengths
- Being able to build trust quickly, especially in crisis situations
- Recognizing trauma responses and adjusting interactions to avoid re-traumatization

3. Ethical Courage & Advocacy

- Willingness to challenge norms and push against bureaucratic inertia
- Advocating within institutions while protecting individuals from harm
- Holding systemic inequities in view while taking immediate, practical action

4. Creativity & Problem-Solving

- Finding non-traditional solutions within restrictive environments
- Collaborating across roles to piece together resources and supports
- Anticipating barriers and proactively finding workarounds

5. Emotional Intelligence & Resilience

- Managing moral distress when systems fail people
- Practicing boundary-setting to sustain long-term advocacy work
- Engaging in collective care to prevent burnout and isolation
- Demonstrating Power Literacy in navigating resistance, power issues

Workarounds as a Path to System Change

Workarounds are not stopgap measures. They reveal the possibilities within systems. By naming, sharing, and institutionalizing these adaptive skills, the exception becomes the rule, shaping services that are responsive, humane, and equity-driven by design.